

fall 2021

ihmpact

sisters, servants of the immaculate heart of mary

A new turning point: remembering how we came here

By Kathleen Schultz, IHM

In the past year, IHM Sisters celebrated the 175th Anniversary of our 1845 foundation. The year of celebration allowed time for reflection and conversation, yielding deeper insight and understanding. We can see more clearly the import of ecclesial and social changes we have experienced from the late 1960s forward, including evolving dimensions of IHM mission in our real-world context.

WITH JESUS, WE SHARE
THE JOYS AND HOPES,
THE GRIEF
AND ANGUISH
OF ALL OUR
SISTERS AND BROTHERS
IN THE HUMAN FAMILY.

— from *Gaudium et Spes*
(1965) and found in the
IHM Constitutions, Article 10

Founded as a teaching order for education, the first decades of IHM ministry linked us to our early sponsored institutions and to the more widely spread

system of Catholic parochial schools. Over time, Monroe IHMs initiated sponsorship of eight schools, two of which continue today, Marian High School and Detroit Cristo Rey High School.

While the demise of the extended Catholic school system played out nationally and locally over many years, it was clear early on that a significant shift for IHMs as school educators was inevitable. This social context then coupled with other changes underway in the ecclesial arena, caused an even greater impact.

Encouraged by the directions of Vatican II, IHMs turned to live more deeply our distinctive charism — the needs of the abandoned poor — and its expression in our time. This period of sweeping change thoroughly repositioned IHMs in our community life and our ministries. Our communal direction and the choices of individual IHMs began to change, issuing into multiple new ministries and engagements at every level, manifesting an energy, direction and shape not seen before.

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Immigration policy and racism: bedfellows from the beginning

By Sarah Nash, IHM Associate

Coordinator of the IHM Justice, Peace and Sustainability Office

When you hear the word “immigrant” who comes to mind? If you are like me, you automatically thought of a brown-skinned person from Latin America



who speaks Spanish. But why is that? The reason is that our implicit biases about race and migration have deep structural roots. Immigration laws in the United States have evolved to keep immigrants of color out and when immigrants of color have been allowed, they have been treated as either dispensable or suspect.

In 1790, the first Congress established that only “free white persons,” of “good character,” were eligible for naturalization. In 1882, the Chinese Exclusion Act was passed. Later laws excluded other Asian immigrants. In the 1920s, “national origin” quotas gave preference to northern European immigrants. During the Great Depression, President Hoover deported 1.8 million Mexicans, 60 percent of whom were U.S. citizens. World War II labor shortages brought millions of Mexicans to the United States through the Bracero program as temporary workers. In the 1950s, when their labor was no longer needed, 1.3 million Mexican Americans were deported. The 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act eliminated national origin quotas but replaced them with new restrictions on immigration from Mexico and Latin America.

When most immigrants coming to the U.S. were white, there were virtually no restrictions on allowing them to access social safety net programs like Social Security or Medicaid. However, in the 1970s, when immigrants increasingly became non-white, new rules were added. Today’s undocumented immigrants face much harsher consequences than my white European ancestors did for the same offense of “unauthorized entry.” And Latinx U.S. citizens are profiled by police for being suspected “illegal immigrants.” While immigration concerns are often framed in terms of national security or economics, it is frequently racism that is at the root. We cannot rebuild our broken immigration system without addressing the role that racism has played in constructing it.

Congratulations to Jane Herb, IHM, and Amata Miller, IHM



LCWR has about 1,350 members, who represent nearly 80% of the approximately 38,000 women religious in the United States. Founded in 1956, the conference assists its members to collaboratively carry out their service of leadership to further the mission of the Gospel in today’s world.



Mary Jane Herb, IHM, IHM President, began her presidency of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious at the annual LCWR meeting in August.

In its tripartite governance structure, the LCWR president, president-elect and past president work in collaboration and consultation with one another; Sister Jane is in her second year of a three-year commitment. Margaret Brennan, IHM; Sharon Holland, IHM; Carol Quigley, IHM; and Nancy Sylvester, IHM, have also served in this leadership role.



On Aug. 13, the LCWR presented three Lifetime Achievement Awards. One of the inaugural recipients is Sister Amata Miller, IHM, an economist who has taught countless sisters and students about economics as a tool for social justice. Sister Amata has taught

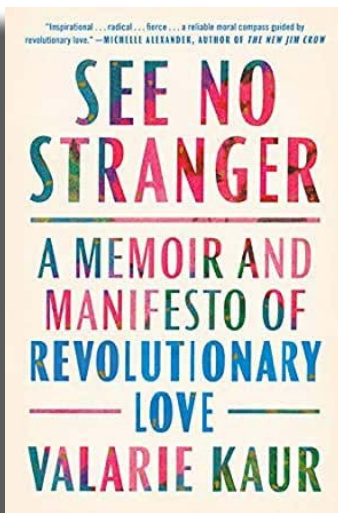
economics at Marygrove College in Detroit; St. Edward’s University in Austin, Texas; St. Catherine University in St. Paul, Minn.; and at countless workshops across the country. As Sister Amata said in an interview with Global Sisters Report, “If you want to change the world, you’ve got to understand it.”

Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, and Sister Joyce Meyer, PBVM, were also honored.

See No Stranger:

A Memoir and Manifesto of Revolutionary Love

By Valerie Kaur,
Reviewed by
Danielle Conroyd,
Director of the IHM
Sustainable Campus
Planning Office



This is a book for a world in transition. Kaur says her book is for anyone who feels breathless and asks, “How do we breathe through the world we’re in and push to transform it?” Revolutionary love is Valerie Kaur’s answer to that question. A civil rights activist, filmmaker and lawyer, a woman of color and Sikh American, Valerie Kaur grew up on 40 acres in Clovis, Calif.

She began writing her book during a year spent in a remote part of the rain forest in Central America with her family. During her tumultuous journey of awakening, Kaur discovered the practices of revolutionary love. There are three parts to her story:

Part One: *See No Stranger* is about learning to love others. It means looking at the face of anyone and saying, “You are a part of me I do not yet know.” This practice captivated me.

Part Two: *Tend the Wound* is about learning how to love, even our opponents. Kaur defines an opponent as any person whose beliefs, words or actions causes violence, injustice or harm. Tending the wound is the labor of remaking the world.

Part Three: *Breathe and Push* is about learning to love ourselves, a feminist intervention according to Kaur. It is prioritizing the choice to care for our own bodies and lives. Revolutionary love is demanding labor, but it is also creative, transformative and joyful labor. Revolutionary love is how we last.

Systemic racism refers to the systems in place that create and maintain racial inequality in nearly every facet of life for people of color.

In a similar way, prejudice that is systemic is experienced by intersex and transgender people because of social constructs around gender. These people are born into one set of cultural stereotypes and eventually move into another. In their journey of becoming whole, they have learned how to behave and interact “properly” in one way. It is not inherent to who they are.

Religion itself, which should provide an introduction to a personal journey with God, can create (either accidentally or through some human frailty) artificial divisions among us because of race, creed or gender.

Unconscious stereotyping can take root and become more conscious and alienating and even destructive. This kind of labeling with regard to gender is no different in its effects than any other kind of stereotyping. The resulting division that is created lessens both sides of any relationship. It ultimately makes the journey to God more difficult by generating the illusion that people can judge what they simply don’t understand.



Stereotypes

By Jamie O’Brien

It is the challenge for each of us to move beyond any stereotypes whatsoever.

In May 2015, I had the opportunity to make a Biomimicry retreat in northern California. Biomimicry emulates Life's 3.8 billion years of experience. As retreat participants, we invited Nature/Life to be our teacher, model and mentor. Each day, we were immersed in a different ecosystem, learning its various biological and relational components. We asked questions. How do birds in flight avoid running into each other? How do schools of fish work together to avoid predators? How are the young ones protected? Our hope was to learn from various ecosystems so we could apply some of our learnings to social innovation questions.

By Gloria Rivera, IHM

Intersectionality

How does Nature handle waste?
How does Nature exemplify various leadership styles?

As retreatants, we knew we were part of elegant systems and designs sharing their riches with us. The entire experience was powerful for me, in particular the day we spent in a nearby forest preserve with its magnificent redwoods (2,000 and 2,500 years old!). This was a community in communion able to move water from the ground up and supplementing it by the moisture provided by the daily fog, allowing the canopy to support a different ecosystem than the one at ground level.

It was clear that the forest as a whole was responding to the needs of every tree, bush and seedling as well as attending to other inhabitants of the forest. This was possible via an amazing underground fungal network, the "wood-wide-web!" In the silence, this forest deeply touched my heart affirming that Life creates conditions conducive to Life!

Within gender theory, the concept of intersectionality was introduced in the 1990s to emphasize how power relationships should be understood as dynamic interactions. (Collins 1998; Crenshaw, 1993-94 p. 163.) For example, when we consider gender inequality, we need to notice how race, class, homophobia, transphobia, discrimination against disabilities interact and impact one another. We cannot just look at one issue without noticing that the inequalities in each one are interconnected. They intersect. So, we study each system and its biases and all the interactions among systems.



This issue of *ihmpact* invites us to look at several topics from the perspective of intersectionality. As we ponder them, we must note and address the multiple issues and systems of oppression within each one.

- ▼ Our experience of the COVID pandemic provides opportunities to examine interactions among caste, class, race, health, education and economic opportunities.
- ▼ Concerns about migration allow us to note in the story of each migrant the complexity of issues that drive people to leave everything behind to seek asylum.
- ▼ Environmental injustice points to interactions that, in the name of progress, damage the lives of the most vulnerable, usually communities of color.
- ▼ The issue of gender in the Church notes the systems that collide to keep the current patriarchy in power.

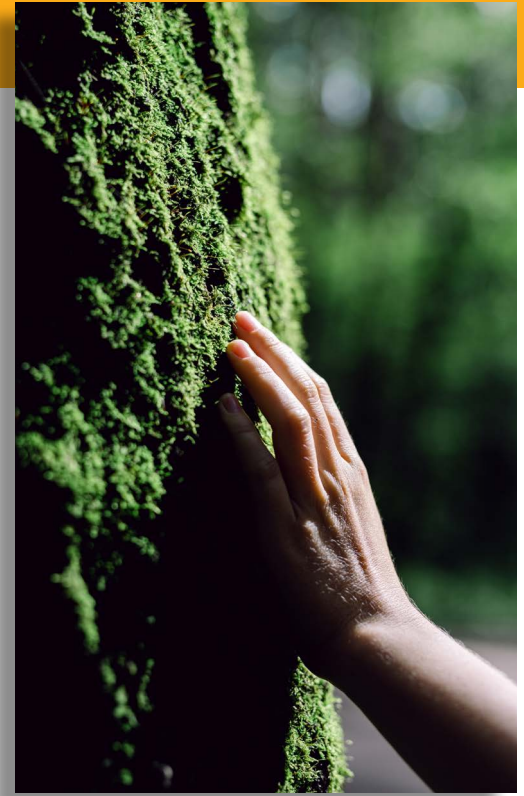


Photo by SHVETS Production

and communion

These are examples where we find the intersectionality of multiple systems of oppression at play affecting not only our human life but the life of all species. We are one human family, one Earth community with a common destiny. (Earth Charter Preamble)

Over the past 175 years, IHMs have evolved into a community seeking COMMUNION with all of creation. As we examine our own participation in the intersectionality of the systems within which we live and minister, we are invited to claim ways in which we may have contributed to biases, inequalities and oppression. Pope Francis invites us to live out of “integral ecology,” attending to social, economic and Nature’s ecosystems as interconnected, if we are truly committed to care for Earth, our home.

In closing, let me take us back to the forest. As my time there was ending, I realized how much I had gained. There was one more treasure in store.

I learned that when a redwood tree dies it continues to give life up to 10 times the length of its life. For the redwood trees I met during my retreat this translated into 20,000 to 25,000 years of

ongoing life-giving. What a legacy! What a new understanding of “life after death.”

As we move from intersectionality to communion, what is our calling now? What will be our legacy (IHM and other)? Will we dare to risk significant changes for the sake of the children of all species?

In memoriam

(May 1 — July 31, 2021)

Read more about
our remarkable sisters,
please visit:

<https://ihmsisters.org/who-we-are/members/in-memoriam/>



Helen (Edward Marie) Walling, IHM
Aug. 19, 1924 - July 31, 2021



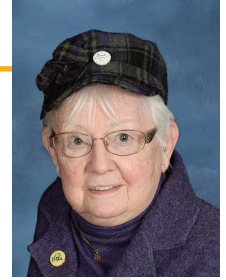
Donna Kerr, IHM
June 16, 1927 - July 19, 2021



Grace Mary Olfs, IHM
July 6, 1930 - July 18, 2021



Therese (Therese Michelle) LeBlanc, IHM
Sept. 11, 1930 - June 16, 2021



Rosaline Carbott, IHM Associate
April 29, 1931 - June 13, 2021



Evelyn (Marie Augustine) Booms, IHM
Aug. 13, 1934 - May 6, 2021

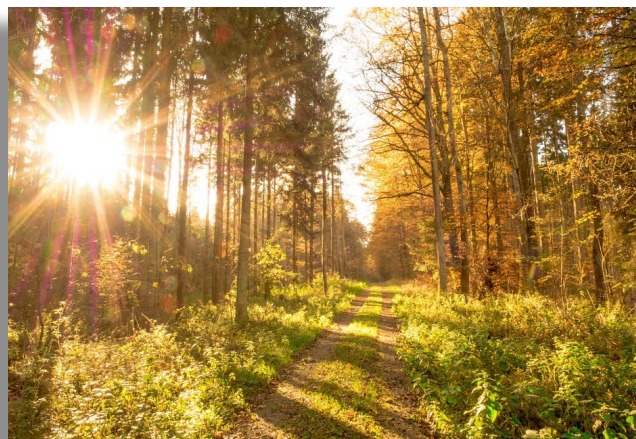


Doreen (John Magdalen) Lynch, IHM
March 14, 1934 - May 3, 2021

Seeking communion

By Margaret Chapman, IHM,
IHM Leadership Council

Jesus said, “I have come to bring life, life to the full.” (Jn 10:10) I believe the theme of communion and intersectionality, so beautifully captured in this issue of *ihmpact*, reflects the meaning of this Scripture passage for us today. As Catholic Christians, we are called to seek communion with all our brothers and sisters and all of creation. This call is becoming more urgent in our time. As Jamie O’Brien reflects, old patterns of behavior, fueled by biases and stereotypes, are making our journey to God — the fullness of life — more difficult.



Our recently deceased Sister Beverly Hindson, in one of her funeral reflections, invited those gathered to “walk in the light she has so generously shared, not in the shadow of her death.” There seem to be so many areas of darkness in our world today. The writers in this issue have shed light on some of these areas: inequalities, false judgements and artificial categorizations and call us to see with new eyes. New vision will ultimately re-orient our actions toward communion. As Biomimicry reminds us, Life will create conditions conducive to Life.

COVID communion

When the pandemic began, Sister Kathy Onderbeke, IHM, was pastoral administrator at Ss. Francis and Clare parish in Birch Run, Mich. Traditional ways of being in communion with others — liturgy, prayer services, gathering to celebrate or to — mourn were not options, so she looked for creative ways to make connections, to build community.

“Early on in our encounter with the pandemic, I began an installation of doves at Ss. Francis and Clare Church, one for each person in Michigan who died from COVID-19,” she says. “It was one way to honor each of their lives as well as those who struggled with being unable to say good-bye, be at their bedside or gain comfort from the hugs of others in their time of loss.

“Those who helped me cut the doves prayed for each person and the family/friends they left behind. We know prayer is not a cure-all; it doesn’t take the pain and impact of all the lives lost away. It is however,



a way to help us hold this reality and connect to the presence of the Spirit within and among us. People from different faith communities and all walks of life would pause outside for a moment of prayer or remembrance as they passed by whether on foot, in a car or on their bike.

“Prayer is a way not to ‘tune out’ but rather to ‘tune in’ and be inspired to do our part to honor and protect the lives of others.”

Environmental racism

By Pat Nagle, IHM

There was a time when the environmental movement was focused on wilderness conservation and care for endangered species. We cannot disparage those efforts for they awakened us to our relationships with our larger selves. Throughout this early period little, if any, attention was given to people of color or their environs. After all, pollution is invisible, as were people of color.

In the ‘70s Robert Bullard, considered the father of the environmental justice movement, began to articulate that all communities are entitled to protection and healthy living environments. The focus, however, was not on systemic causes of environmental degradation.

Fast forward to 2021, where we hear of the endangered species of black people, indigenous, Latinix communities and immigrants. We have seen this reality in Flint, Mich., with the lead poisoning of the drinking waters, in Detroit with the shutting off access to water in poor neighborhoods — people of color could not pay the high water bills. We see it in the Rio Grande Valley where toxins are dumped in neighborhoods of people of color. As Gloria Rivera said in her opening piece, “We cannot just look at one issue without noticing that the inequalities in each one are interconnected.” It is imperative that we look at systemic causes — all aspects of peoples’ lives are part of the whole. How do we proceed?

Katharine Morris, scholar and activist at the University of Connecticut, said in a TED Talk on May 6, 2021, “We need collaborative organizing with representatives from different sections of the community ... and we must do it with LOVE.”

- L — LISTEN TO LEARN AND DEVELOP A COLLECTIVE GENIUS
- O — ORGANIZE WITH AN OPEN MIND
- V — VALUE A VARIETY OF PERSPECTIVES
- E — ENGAGE EVERYONE IN EVERY WAY POSSIBLE

LOVE is the way!



**Sisters, Servants of the
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Today we are at another turning point.

While in the grip of a worldwide pandemic, we have been able to see better into the prevailing conditions of life for a great majority of U.S. citizens as well as some of our nearest neighbors. These conditions include inadequate education, substandard jobs and poverty-level family incomes, insecurities from poor or no health coverage; discrimination due to gender identity; the daily experience of racial disparities and entrenched racial bias; deepening impacts of climate change; and the forced immigration to escape poverty, violence and corruption.

As individual IHMs and as a community, we recognize the challenges and difficulty of living faithfully in the realities of our times and learning to read “the signs of the times.” To be sure, this expression offers no easy accommodation to the ways of the world. Rather, it alerts us to see the invitation of God anew in every historical time, calling us to respond in the way of the One we follow and the manner of those who walked before us.

ihmpact

Urged by the love of God, we choose to work with others to build a culture of peace and right relationship among ourselves, with the Church and with the whole Earth community.

—IHM Mission Statement

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