

Radiant Justice in IHM Mission and Identity



Kathleen Schultz, IHM

IHM *Monograph Series*

Core Educational Beliefs

Inspired by our founders, Theresa Maxis Duchemin and Louis Florent Gillet, the Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) have served the people of God in education since 1845.

The mission of the IHM-sponsored educational institutions includes personal and social transformation, which bear witness to the liberating mission of Jesus.

We believe our sponsored institutions are partners in mission by fostering excellence in education and by living into the following deeply held beliefs:

- a commitment to the **liberating mission of Jesus** with special focus on those who are poor, abandoned or oppressed;
- the **development of a Christian community** that witnesses to a profound respect for each human being and an acceptance of all persons;
- challenging students to make **decisions in the light of Gospel values** and global realities;
- encouraging students to **act on behalf of justice**;
- a commitment to eradicate the causes of oppression and injustice through a **feminist perspective** that empowers all;
- **ecological consciousness** that challenges all to recognize the interconnectedness and interdependence of all Creation and nurtures relationships that protect our common home; and
- a **holistic educational process** that fosters self-motivation, flexibility and openness to change.

Introduction

Stories are key ways to keep alive a people, a vision, a dream. We tell stories to help people know who we are; where we came from; and where we are going. There are individual stories and group stories. When a community tells its story, it is never singular; rather each storyteller relates the facts from her/his perspective. Each of the particular insights helps us to understand the whole.

Storytelling is what these essays you will be reading are all about. They tell the story of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) of Monroe, Michigan, and the values we have tried to integrate into our sponsored educational institutions. We are telling the story primarily to you, the board members, administrators, faculty and staff of these institutions, so that you will get to know us better and join us in keeping our vision alive.

Over the last decade, the IHM Mission Integration Sponsorship Committee (MISC) has continually asked itself how we can make the IHM values come alive in our institutions now that there are fewer IHM Sisters. In the past, parents and students attending IHM schools could easily say, “it is an IHM school” and have a sense of what that meant. As times changed and fewer IHM Sisters were visibly present in these schools, we found ourselves needing to be clear about what makes this school an IHM school.

We formulated seven educational belief statements that seemed to capture this spirit. They are listed below. But statements that exist only on a page don’t come alive. They need a story to give them flesh, to make connections and to convey the energy necessary to keep living them into the future.

To try to bring these beliefs to life, the MISC invited some IHM Sisters to be part of a collaborative effort to write about key belief statements. We wanted the narrative to be historical and interpreted through each author’s unique lens. As a writing group, we reviewed each other’s essays multiple times, checking for historical accuracy and making sure the interpretation offered would resonate with the congregation.

We are pleased to offer these essays as a significant resource for you as you assume greater responsibility in living out the IHM vision in your institution. Although each essay is published singularly, we hope you will find them interesting enough to read many if not most of them. Each essay tells its own story but all the essays tell a much fuller story of how IHM evolved and how it has and is affecting all of you in our sponsored schools.

We look forward to talking about the essays with you and would suggest planning time on various meeting agendas to reflect together on the story and how it impacts you and the future of your school. These essays are an inaugural step in our committee’s dream of having all current and future stakeholders in IHM institutions be so steeped in the IHM vision and so energized in living it out that the story of what makes an IHM school IHM continues well into the future.

*Nancy Sylvester, IHM
Chair of the Mission Integration
Sponsorship Committee*

Photos within the text of Radiant Justice are listed by page and captioned at the end of the essay.



Welcome and Overview

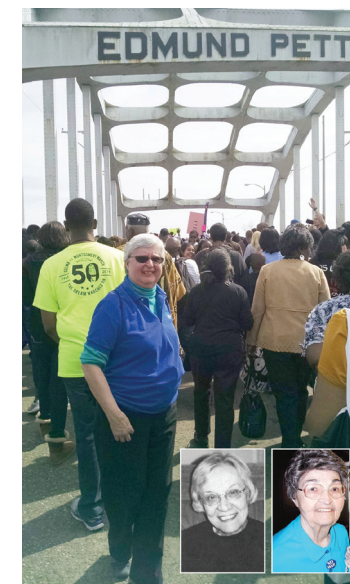
As readers and writer, all of us step into this essay with a personal and family narrative. Each narrative has led to present choices that bring personal values and professional skills to bear in guiding, for a time, the development and destiny of an IHM-related institution or work. In this sense, each trustee, director, employee or IHM Associate has “joined” the IHM mission.

As readers and writer, we meet briefly through these pages, but we are enjoined toward a deeper meeting. For all of us, the trajectory of justice unfolds where biography and world meet. This is true for all of us: readers, writers, for the IHM congregation as a whole and for all of us “citizen joiners” within our planetary community. “Welcome Reader” then, as a starter greeting is weighted with connection, immediacy and the urgency of our time to work for the flourishing of life.

By way of overview, this essay will unfold in several steps. Beginning with a brief reflection on the spiritual heritage of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (the IHMs), the narrative offers a short description and working definition of how justice is realized in history. From this starting point we begin following the radiant thread of justice, seeing how the work of justice has been contemporized in IHM history since the mid-1960s. This section includes a brief look at foundational Scripture and communal texts of great import for IHMs as well as watershed moments in our communal life. In the process of recounting this history, we will several times

use a broad sweep approach – somewhat like an old-time “newsreel” at the movies – in order to see the context of societal and ecclesial events that were changing IHM realities.

Then we will turn and give special attention to the question of women’s experience and



a feminist perspective in the framework of justice. We focus on the first and second waves of feminism, the import of religion in the socialization of women, IHMs experience as women in the Church and some useful ways of

understanding feminist perspective. Then we take note of the status of women in the third wave of feminism evident since the 1990s, seeing present realities of gender inequality in a global perspective.

Finally, we ask what the 50-year retrospective tells us about IHM mission and identity, briefly recap the method and metaphors of the essay and look to the continuing call of justice in early years of the 21st century. Hopefully, as we recognize that there are very significant challenges ahead, we will be able to affirm together that the continuing call to intention and action is addressed to each of us and the communities to which we belong.

Justice and IHM Identity: *The Foundational Story*

The lesser prophet Joel of the Jewish Scripture offers a simple way to grasp the thread we will be following: **“Justice will be radiant: there will be plenty to eat; even maidservants will prophesy and dream.”** (*Joel 2:26-29*)

Here, in brief words, the prophet joins a most basic human need and the deep interiority of human consciousness known through utterance and dreams. Singly and joined, the prophet's images typify the shining forth of God as radiant justice: in the abundance of Earth's gifts for the flourishing of life and in the insight and meaning that even one of low social standing utters. This simple pairing is expressed in contemporary terms as "bread and roses."²

The thread of justice is strongly and deeply woven into the IHM story. Perhaps it is even the dominant thread. With certainty, we can say that justice is the thread marking the deepest IHM passion and vision, expressed both in spirituality and active presence in the world.

IHM CONSTITUTIONS, CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE 2

Jesus announced his own redeeming mission in the words of the Prophet Isaiah:

"The Spirit of God is upon me;
therefore God has anointed me. God has
sent me to bring glad tidings to the poor;
to proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of
sight to the blind, and release to prisoners;
to announce a year of favor from our God."
(Luke 4:17-21)

“Justice will be radiant:
there will be plenty to eat;
even maidservants
will prophesy and dream.”
(Joel 2:26-29)

This thread rises out of our specific IHM history and several foundational texts of IHM identity and mission as a community of Catholic women rooted in the tradition of Alphonsus Liguori.³ Several of these important texts for IHMs are found in our IHM Constitutions, the community's rule of life. It is from these source texts, in prayer and communal reflection, that IHM Sisters take deep inspiration.

The foundational text of greatest meaning for IHM Sisters is from Luke's Gospel. This text is also often cited as one greatly loved by St. Alphonsus. In it, likely for rhetorical effect, the Lucan writer has Jesus read well-known words from the book of the prophet Isaiah. The chosen words are an unequivocal characterization of the manner of being and action of the spirit of God. In this event following his baptism by John, Jesus is seen unrolling the scroll and reading the text in his own home synagogue. In this way, as the author of Luke's Gospel begins the narrative of Jesus' public life, the words prefigure and offer insight for us in understanding Jesus own mission.

In short, for the IHM congregation and its members, the justice thread in IHM mission and history is rooted in this fundamental understanding of God as love and compassion, especially for the poor and most abandoned as expressed in the Alphonsian heritage. This understanding establishes, and so requires, response to the demands of justice as a fundamental moral imperative.

The Alphonsonian heritage was central to the intention of the IHM co-founders, Rev. Louis Florent Gillet and Mother Theresa Maxis Duchemin. Gillet, a young missionary member of the Redemptorist order, had been prepared in its spirit and traditions. And Theresa, fashioned deeply by the spirituality and teaching of her community, the Oblates Sisters of Providence in Baltimore, was intent that the new religious foundation in Monroe would be modeled on the religious rule rooted in the spirit of Alphonsus.

Justice: *What's It All About?*

As human communities, we experience justice as fairness, as redress when wrongs have occurred, as freedom and release from bondage and systemically as bread, employment, education, health, housing, opportunity and participation. Justice then, as effective love, is inherently contextual and historical. The following can serve as a basic understanding for our exploration: Justice is the fundamental equality and fairness in inter-human and inter-species relationship that holds everything in right balance and, in that measure, reflects the justice of God as found in the Judeo-Christian tradition.



Because God's justice is always not-yet, the realizations of justice are always partial. But each partial realization creates new conditions for continued building toward a wider and greater justice. In our time, Dr. Martin Luther King reminded us of this fact when he quoted from writings of abolitionist Theodore Parker, a Universalist minister, who in 1853, eight years before the Civil War, wrote the famous words: "The arc of the moral universe is long, ... and it bends toward justice."

In relation to our exploration, the point is to envision the arc and its bending. Justice comes in historical time and it has this character of “tending toward” completion and wholeness. Justice is never just once achieved but is always sought after. Because of this “tending toward” character, the work for justice is ongoing and, given the IHM charism and mission, it may always be a calling for IHMs in ministry.

In addition, because of all we have detailed here, transformation must also be acknowledged as another significant aspect of our exploration.

Transformation does not mean “a simple change” nor even simply change. Like justice, transformation is not a straight-line process, and while there is always more to realize, no step on the way is insignificant. Transformation is “something more,” both in terms of individual/group learning and change and terms of spiritual growth. Being more profound than surface translation of perspectives or even the deepening of personal meaning, transformation is open to the radical decentering of the separate self-sense and to growth in authenticity.

As the unfolding story will show, *IHMs believe that transformation is possible both for individuals and for communities that open themselves to deep transformation through their experience and communal practice. IHMs believe that the pursuit of justice is a vital and necessary path leading to profound transformation in our personal, communal and societal lives.*

Contextual Factors: The Changing Times

In the early years following the 1965 close of Vatican II, IHMs were often asked (particularly by cradle Catholics), “Why did IHMs leave education?” Many Catholics assumed that the forms of institutional Church presence they had known would always prevail. Answers given often cited two major reasons. Particularly in Michigan, the first reason was the impact of the defeat of the November 1972 Proposal C ballot issue. This provision would have required the state to assume primary responsibility for financing elementary and secondary education, thus reducing reliance on local property tax for school financing.

Reliance on local property tax as the principal revenue source for schools had allowed a significant and growing disparity of expenditures per student in violation of Michigan’s Constitution. This constitution designates responsibility to the state for financing elementary and secondary education as well as for providing equal educational opportunity (in the equal protection clause). The 1972 Proposal C was a constitutional route to reform initiated by moderate Republican Governor William Milliken. By way of context, we should also note two additional facts: earlier statutory routes toward reform in financing education in Michigan⁴ had failed. And, two years earlier, in November 1970, Michigan voters had adopted (by passing a Proposal C in that year’s ballot) an amendment to the Michigan Constitution. That amendment (Article VIII, Section 2) prohibited state aid to non-public schools. Thus, had Proposal C of 1972 passed, Michigan citizens might easily have seen many rounds of debate over acceptable mechanisms to provide state support for religious schools without breaching church and state separation.

The outcome of the 1972 vote was very significant for diocesan (Church-sponsored) systems of parochial education in which many IHMs were engaged. Historically, these were the schools where IHM presence in education (in addition to a limited number of IHM-sponsored schools)

IHM CONSTITUTIONS, ARTICLE 10

With Jesus, we share the joys and hopes,
the grief and anguish of all our sisters
and brothers in the human family.
(*Gaudium et Spes*)

was the most extensive. The demise of the extended Catholic system played out nationally and locally over many years⁵ and was often entwined with multiple other issues – race, poverty, changing urban demographics, Church allegiance, the end of post-war economic expansion and the decline of many major urban centers of industrial America. Because of this fact, a very significant shift for IHMs as school educators was inevitable over time. This contextual development, occurring during a period of wide social and political ferment and change in the United States (from the 1960s well into the mid-1980s), had great impact, coupling with other major developments already underway in the ecclesial arena.

Ecclesial changes are the second reason often cited for IHM “change” in ministries, changes that issued from the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965) in its various documents and the renewal that the Council ushered in throughout Catholicism worldwide. Vatican II had particular impact for religious and their way of life and thus for their places of ministry as well and their formal “sponsored works.” This fact is dramatically clear in IHM history, as it is in the history of many other communities of U.S. religious.

Particular documents of Vatican II spoke with great urgency to the Church as a whole, and religious communities worldwide took the

Council documents to heart. The pastoral constitution of the Council, *The Church in the Modern World (Gaudium et Spes)*, was particularly significant. Its initial words (“The joys and hopes,” *gaudium et spes* in Latin) serve as a touchstone for assaying the overall thrust of the document. Since 1973, these words have been present in the IHM Constitutions as Article 10.

Two other documents, the Decree on the Adaptation and Renewal of Religious Life (*Perfectae Caritatis*) issued by Pope Paul VI in October 1965, and a second one like it nearly six years later, an Apostolic Exhortation (*Evangelica Testificatio*) in June 1971, encouraged all religious to renew “... in the spirit of the charism of the founders.” The IHM congregational charism (the special gift or



spirit of the order), Alphonsian in character, calls us to attend to the needs of the poor and most abandoned. Thus, encouraged by the directions set out by Vatican II and turning to understand more deeply our distinctive charism and its expression in our time in history, IHM communal and individual choices began to change, manifesting an energy, direction and shape not seen before.

Following the close of Vatican II, the 1966 IHM Chapter (meetings that occur every six years to review our communal life and elect new leadership) evidenced the first wave of new directions and major shifts of emphasis for IHM life arising from the Council's deliberations. This Chapter marked the entry of IHMs into an era of Vatican II-inspired changes. IHMs were to pass through these changes within the culture and life of the United States, the world's most affluent nation, during a time period in which post-war America was becoming post-industrial America in the rapidly globalizing world economy.

In short, the many fundamental changes that followed for IHMs were catalyzed by the major social and ecclesial developments we have described here. In retrospect, we know that these factors were the “perfect storm” that rearranged IHM religious life in the second half of the 20th century. The impact of these developments was seen very dramatically in IHM ministry choices.

New Take on an Old Question

Retrospect often provides deeper grasp and nuance to what we understand about many aspects of life. Today, if asked the same question about changes in IHM ministries, IHMs might reply first with initial comments about the role of education in modern democratic societies. In fact, a deep understanding of education's social role actually re-contextualizes this aspect of IHM history from the 1845 foundation forward.

The mission of the congregation and its historical engagement in education was always about the work of justice. This is so because education is inherently, systemically, about justice. While the Catholic educational setting was also intended as a locus for faith instruction and formation, it was also inherently nation-building. The major task of education is to prepare individuals and, over time, whole communities to shape and participate in societies of fair distribution, stable employment, inclusion and democracy, care for the young and the needy, peace-making, Earth care and full participation in the cultural, labor, business, professional and neighborhood associations of civic life. These defining elements are the ways justice is enacted at the societal and political levels in modern societies. Because this is so, understanding education in a framework of justice becomes fundamental and critical to understanding and fulfilling its purpose. This is true for advanced developed nations and for developing societies across our globalized world, as well as for fashioning a global community of nations in which all planetary life can flourish.

IHM CONSTITUTIONS, ARTICLE 11

In our struggle to live the Gospel today, we recognize our call to serve the needs of God's people not only through the traditional works of mercy, but also by working with others to eradicate the causes of injustice and oppression and to help create structures that will promote justice and peace and bring unity among all peoples.

Thus, from the mid-1800s on the Michigan frontier with French settler families, to Detroit and multiple towns and urban centers in Michigan and Ohio, to locations across the Midwest and other states, to Puerto Rico, Latin and Central America and Africa, IHM presence in institutional settings of formal education has always been about justice.

And, as IHMs were to increasingly understand, the societal task of education, while assigned primarily to the socializing institution called formal education, can and does take place in many contexts. These contexts also include multiple settings of informal education in other arenas of civic life (such as social agencies, nonprofit organizations, for-profit professional and business endeavors, etc.). They include broad efforts of civic education and citizen awareness leading to legislative change, policy development and solidarity campaigns within and across national boundaries. Effort to influence public opinion through print and electronic media is another important context.

Thus, from 1971 forward, through a process of “open placement” whereby individual IHMs identified and discerned their own places of work both in and outside parochial structures, new ministries appeared. Individual discernment always included assessing one's own interests, having required and needed skills and competencies and consultation with elected leaders and members of the community.

But, once released to discern in a wider sphere of choice and action, the characteristic passion, creativity and commitment of IHM Sisters found expression in new ways. A very great number of these choices opened into “justice ministries,” even as all IHM ministries, including the ongoing IHM presence in formal education and a variety of new Church ministries, were increasingly infused with the imperatives of building a just, nonviolent and sustainable world.



Early in the years of rapid change following 1966, IHM Sisters participated in a congregation-wide gathering, Assembly 1972. In the process of exchange, sorting out and coming to agreement about affirmations of the Assembly, it was evident that IHMs had already discerned through experience one of the most significant aspects about enacting Gospel imperatives of justice in contemporary society. One of first affirmations of Assembly '72 articulated the insight: the need to address structural causes of domination and oppression and to build alternatives grounded in equality, nonviolence and mutuality.

Critical Consciousness for *System Change*

Taking a new path requires a great deal of learning. Some stumbling about is to be expected and some mistakes are likely. Rarely do we learn and find the way forward without the ancient rule being in play: three steps forward, two steps back. All of this is true about IHMs as we learned, grew and changed in the Vatican II era.

From the 1970s forward in both Church and social contexts, IHMs, as a community and as individuals, were assisted by the ferment and learning that surrounded us. Through the influence of Vatican II, worldwide Catholicism was understanding better the questions and needs of people of present-day societies and the importance of “reading the signs of the time” in the light of faith. In the framework of Vatican II’s embrace of the modern world, Catholics affirmed that God’s revelation continues today and our encounter with God is mediated through understanding our lives and experience in the world. This turn to experience was key to much that followed Vatican II, along with other theological understandings and developments. Along with the opening to new and wider experience, IHMs also had the great benefit of continuing biblical and theological learning.



During this time, understandings coming from political theology in Europe and liberation theology in Latin America assisted in motivating and describing for many thousands of U.S. Christians a useful model of reflection and action. The model is more than a simple heuristic device that aids learning or problem-solving by experimental or trial-and-error methods. It became widely known and used as “the pastoral cycle”⁶ and is similar in orientation to “How Do We Do Liberation Theology?” a paper prepared by Christians actively engaged in social and political change in various countries, particularly in Latin America.

Reflection-Action Model of the *Pastoral Cycle*

There are four elements of this well-known reflection-action model. The process begins in the issues and problems of lived experience, proceeds through analysis using the social sciences, to reflection using the resources of faith and culture and then to fashioning action for change with strategies, tactics and skill sets at work.

Questions are often used in the process of this reflection-action model, and they serve as a hermeneutic or interpretive key in the process of understanding and acting on the realities confronting us. The questions “Who benefits? “Who suffers?” employ a hermeneutic of suspicion. These questions help to uncover the real nature of what is before us. The question “What is to

be done?” expresses a hermeneutic of hope, engaging us in the dynamics of choice, decision, action and change.

In these contemporary questions, IHMs can hear echoes of the text from Luke’s Gospel based on the prophet Isaiah, “The Spirit of God is upon me ... to bring good tidings ... liberty ... recovery ... release ... to proclaim God’s favor ...,” and the central concern for the poor and most abandoned coming from Alphonsus to Gillet and Maxis.

Thus, from the late 1970s forward, virtually every IHM became acquainted with this model as a means to link faith and justice, using the reflection-action practice (both explicitly and implicitly) in discerning ministries and in determining next steps in her work, in personal choices and in community directions. IHMs learned the model in study groups, through personal and professional reading, in workshops, courses, immersion experiences and through its use in IHM community processes.⁷



In short, the reflection-action model is a way to get behind or below socio-political realities and beyond our everyday consciousness to comprehend realities more critically. Deepening critical consciousness is a prerequisite for bringing about systemic change that IHMs had identified in the Assembly ’72 affirmation: to undo “the causes of injustice and oppression” and to create “structures that promote justice, peace and unity. ...” This model, in addition, has the great virtue of being a tool for communal reflection as well as for individual use. Thus, critical consciousness undoes what the philosophers call the “myth of the given” by helping us see that issues and problems we face are not “just the way it is” but that they serve particular interests and arrangements and they can be changed.

In summary, this model of reflection-action linking faith and justice makes us aware of the real context of our life together in our communities. It helps us to use our minds critically, relying on key social sciences. It encourages a healthy suspicion about why things are as they are. And finally, it fosters our communal relationship as we search together for the way forward, relying on each other and the presence of God with us.

Weaving the Thread of Justice

From 1972 through to the present, there were many important markers in the unfolding IHM expression of justice. A veritable catalogue of issues and engagements related to justice, peace, sustainability could be assembled from the directions and statements of IHM Chapters, corporate stances of IHM leadership and IHM members and from IHM ministries both old and new.

Seen by decades, the emerging justice emphasis in IHM life is very apparent.

Pre-1960s	IHM are strongly positioned in parochial educational institutions and four IHM institutions; broad social concern and awareness are evident, along with strong emphasis on Catholic social teaching.
1960s	These were years of the Second Vatican Council and the IHM 1966 Chapter; the surrounding social/ecclesial contexts evidence great ferment, energy and hope.
1970s	IHMs begin to focus on structures that promote justice, peace and unity in their ministries and in IHM communal life.
1980s	It was a time of institutional and personal growth and significant internal development, plus deepening of feminist understandings. IHMs affirm the claim of the materially poor and focus on education, the laity, women and realities of aging.
1990s	IHMs focus on eco-justice at all levels: personal, institutional and societal.
2000s	In this period there were several foci: nonviolence; right relationship; HIV-AIDS; sustainability; alternative school for girls in Detroit; and greater priority to needs of the materially poor in Monroe and Detroit.
2010s	IHMs focus on contemplative stance and exploring our place in an evolving universe; giving priority to conversations on our evolving understandings of God and our relationships in the Church; reverencing our internal diversities; and implementing collaborative leadership more fully.

Even this meager detail is instructive about the scope, intensity and depth of the changes IHMs encountered in the past 50 years. Together, in a great variety of ways, IHMs were weaving the radiant thread of justice into the pattern of our lives at every level, expressing in new ways the IHM spirit and charism for our time.

The specifics of these many changes bridged across institutional settings, disciplines of knowledge, professional backgrounds, planned opportunities and random challenges in our communal

life. Touching into individual and local community choices, locations and types of ministry in both Church and society and into our institutional development and planning, virtually no individual IHM and no aspect of our communal life were unchanged.

Thus, IHMs engaged in writing and implementing new content for course offerings and infusing justice into existing programs at all educational levels, from primary level through university (in social sciences, economics, Scripture, theology, psychology, race and gender studies). We worked to implement an extensive array of new initiatives as individuals and as a corporate body in our

IHM CONSTITUTIONS, ARTICLE 13

In that discernment, we urge one another to be conscious of the poverty, hunger and injustice suffered by the great majority of the human family and to make choices which clearly reflect that, with Mary of the Magnificat, we stand with and for the poor.

personal choices and in our local communities, including where we live, greater simplicity in how we live, accompanying the poor in places of our ministries and daily life, and welcoming, wherever possible, refugees and displaced people to live with us.

New individual ministries began to appear in direct service among the poor, the homeless, and those in prisons and jails, in food programs and in treatment programs for addiction, physical violence and victimization in sexual abuse; in gender-specific programs for women and intervention programs for children.



IHMs began to work in legislative lobbying, policy advocacy, voter registration, electoral education and corporate responsibility.

The scope of engagements grew with the issues and opportunities. Some IHMs undertook regular efforts in international solidarity, human rights campaigns, and protest and action on U.S. foreign policy, war-making and militarization. Regular fundraising for Latin and Central America, Africa, Palestine and the Middle East, a key aspect of solidarity work, was also where IHMs engaged. IHMs organized participation in rallies, campaigns, demonstrations and direct actions of nonviolent resistance and civil disobedience on domestic and foreign policy. Others focused on issues of poverty, urban development, labor and strike support and programs focused on single issues such as nuclear power and nuclear energy, HIV-AIDS, immigration, human trafficking, reduction of carbon emissions and low-cost energy alternatives.



Then, particularly since the early 1990s, IHMs increasingly focused as educators and standard-bearers on issues of environmental racism, global warming, practices of sustainability, Earth care, the local food movement, community food gardens, food justice and food sovereignty, with a deepening engagement of education and action in all of these critical arenas.

As these years passed and IHM-sponsored works and individual ministries were changing, the IHM congregation as a religious institution also initiated new endeavors in our corporate and communal life and at the public level. The first IHM Social Justice Committee for our self-education and for wider projection on issues and actions for justice was initiated in 1966. Then in 1972, the IHM congregation was one of several U.S. religious communities that inaugurated Network, a Catholic social justice lobby in Washington, D.C., with IHMs serving on the Network staff and as board members. Subsequently and for many years following, the IHM congregation co-sponsored with

other Detroit area religious women's orders an inter-community justice office, Groundwork for a Just World, located in Detroit.

IHMs also initiated new internal policies and procedures to strengthen our own justice practices. These efforts ranged from shaping a process for corporate statements of the IHM members and leadership, to proxy voting on shareholder resolutions,

to criteria for choices in our investment portfolio and employment policies. By the early 2000s we had added comprehensive "greening practices" in our offices and in the purchasing, use and recycling of manufactured and natural goods.

The Blue Nuns Go Green

In the last half of the 1990s, through a creative deliberative process over three years, IHMs arrived at a mix of choices for a major green renovation for our IHM Motherhouse. This communal decision required the following three years to complete. Subsequently, the renovated building was recognized by the U.S. Green Building Council for Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), a certification recognizing best-in-class building strategies and practices. As we all entered the new millennium, IHM publicly projected sustainability as a moral mandate for the 21st century and began to develop campus practices to reduce our carbon footprint and advance choices for sustainable living.

These practices at the campus level included certifying designated acres of our land for organic farming, fostering and seeding indigenous flora, developing swales and wetland areas on the campus property and culling the woodlots in a sustainable fashion.

These same commitments directly informed our choice in the sale of a portion of IHM land in 2012 to a long-standing Monroe-based company that is a leader within its own industry in environmental commitment. In that sale we fashioned agreements to preserve an area designated as a remnant oak savannah on the historical IHM acreage for use in ecological learning and as green space within the city of Monroe.



In all of these choices and practices as well as new efforts that continue today, we attend to the needs of the environment and all species affected directly by the IHM presence in Southeast Michigan within our Great Lakes bioregion. Even as our institutional presence in schools and in parishes has changed, we have worked intentionally to use the renovated green Motherhouse, its multiple Earth-conscious features, and the Monroe campus itself as a learning lab for sustainable living in the 21st century and beyond.

Threading Justice into the *Wider Community Fabric*

An evening gathering of IHMs and Associates in spring 2002 provided an unexpected opportunity to see in a dynamic way the strength and depth of what many years of growth and change had effected among IHMs.

Thirty IHM Sisters and Associates had gathered in the IHM residence on the Marygrove College campus for a self-initiated quarterly gathering for reflection, prayer and discussion on IHM corporate presence in Detroit. This was a communal practice that had been taking place for more than five years (May 1997 through fall 2002). In an upending decision, the evening's planned agenda was set aside in favor of a process designed over supper to assist staff from the IHM Development Office get "the lay of the land" on IHM ministries in Detroit.

Uncaptured by any media or formal minutes, the evening imprinted in the memory of many who participated, and a few brief notes taken by some present allow this reconstruction. Together that night, we heard and witnessed signs of the matured IHM impulse and passion for education, justice, peace and sustainability as enacted in places of IHM ministry all over the metro area, with greatest concentration in the city of Detroit.

Even how we arrived at the process for sharing that evening is instructive about IHM capacities in the field of work and ministry. We divided into several groupings based on sectors of the city where we worked or lived. Each group quickly conducted a census on the number and type of works/ministries represented by IHMs and others in their area. Major areas of emphasis in the works represented were noted, along with significant aspects of daily activities and emergent realities. From this review, various key stories surfaced for sharing.

Then, when all were ready, one person from each sector opened with overview comments from their group. Others from the same grouping briefly added details of interest and significance. The add-on comments often noted strong resonance with IHM Directional Statements that everyone in the room could recognize.

Thus unfolded a rich and moving "live report" ... conflict and peer mediation training in a small eastside school; seniors organized in outreach and support for other seniors; testimonies at City Council hearings with neighborhood groups; lobbying groups traveling to Lansing to dialogue with elected representatives on policies impacting women and children; testimonies prepared for statewide hearings about Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), welfare and jobs policy; empowerment work with women caught in addiction, in abusive relationships and in the criminal justice system; solidarity actions for Palestinians in the occupied territories; plans for witness and actions at the annual

School of the Americas Watch; research on national models and initial planning for an alternative middle school for girls in Southwest Detroit.

As reports and storytelling progressed, some knowing individuals called out, "Tell about when ..." to highlight a recent event for what it typified – a new moment in the struggle for justice, or a "small v" victory in building a culture of peace. Other individuals were asked how many years they had been engaged in their work, or "Just how many hats do you wear in that place?" Others spoke about local organizations they regularly worked with (non-IHM, likely not Catholic, possibly not "faith-based," but clearly "simpatico"), as well as about co-workers, friends and supporters in their locales. Occasionally laughter broke out as scenes and events were described. After some reports, a reflective silence held before another person took to speaking.

Through this energetic and enthusiastic process, vital information and learnings poured out about various works and engagements, the kind of roles that IHMs take up and numerous thriving collaborations advancing neighborhood and community development, stability and resilience. That night, in simple well-grounded narratives, IHMs recounted their presence and engagement in 34 different settings of ministry.⁸

Nearly 40 years after the close of Vatican II, this evening afforded deep insight into the rich gifts and honed skills of IHM Sisters and Associates working in very diverse ministries, often against great odds. Even more profoundly, it revealed the manifold ways the radiant thread of justice was being woven within the living fabric of communities, institutions, parishes and neighborhoods where IHMs are in mission.

Feminist Perspective: *Making a New Whole*

To this point in our exploration we have used the time period of post-Vatican II years to understand how the radiant thread of justice, rooted in foundational stories and texts, has been contemporized in recent IHM history. But we should not move out of this historical viewing before looking, even if only briefly, at the experience of women in the framework of justice. In this look back, we will see how IHM Sisters came to an important statement in 1987 on feminist perspective.

Ours was a simple manifesto:

"Reflecting on our experience as women in the Church and society, and sensing the need for a critical understanding of what we have experienced ourselves individually and corporately, we consciously choose to educate ourselves to the feminist perspective, and to operate from our understandings as they develop." (IHM Assembly 1987)

Brief statement of context; simple proclamation of intent. Thus, the phrase "feminist perspective" arrived in the communal lexicon of the Monroe IHMs.



In this uncomplicated statement, IHMs embraced an orientation toward discerning justice based in our experience as women. In a patriarchal society and Church in which men hold positions of power and dominance and, as such, mediate control as heads of family, bosses at work, leaders of government, masters in the economy and clerics in the religious sphere, seeing things from the viewpoint of women is relevant to everything.

Use of the word “manifesto” here carries the feel of the times, as there were many manifestos during those years of change. While to some it seemed a long time coming, the process of how IHMs arrived at this statement in a summer Assembly is instructive in itself about feminist perspective.

Again, the “newsreel approach” can help us reconstruct, bringing the swirling developments

of this period and its sweeping social movements before us. While very precise detail might be interesting, it is not needed for our purposes. Some readers may be old enough to remember bits and pieces – or even more – about this period of great social change in America. Other readers may be young enough to have “no fillers” for thought or feeling, and they will rely on family hearsay, teachers or possibly even photos in a coffee table book. And that, at least in part, is what comes of “an era” – just small bits and pieces that can be retrieved from memory and a great deal of the significant meaning for those who lived through it seeming to be “lost on the next generation.” But “lost” is truly a great misnomer because of the multitude of small and large changes, now indistinguishable, that have entered into the fabric of daily life.

In addition to a brief reconstruction of key events of this period, we will also hear voices of other commentators – two poets, a psychologist, two theologians. These voices may help us gain perspective as they speak from different and wider frameworks of experience and thought.

For IHMs, arriving at the statement “... to educate ourselves in the feminist perspective ...” was not without a careful search and wide learning in many areas. It was not without dialogue, discussion, disagreement and discernment. It was not without struggle and tears. It was not without reversals, continuing assessment and needing to renew our focus and purpose. While this short essay does not allow us to chronicle each of these passages, nor to offer a basic primer on feminism, nor to discourse at any length about the import of “perspective-taking” for adult development, viewing some key aspects of the IHM process of change is possible. We move forward to do just that.

New Light on Women's Experience

Recall that from the early '60s on, a second wave of U.S feminism, like the first wave from 1848 to 1920 for universal suffrage, brought its challenge right into mainstream America. That “second wave” was roughly concurrent with the Vatican II renewal period to which religious women's communities were so attentive, as we have noted.

Throughout this period, far-reaching changes were underway across our society. Let the newsreel images move across your mind: the Civil Rights Movement; protest and conflict about the war in Vietnam; unparalleled racial unrest, anti-racism struggles and advances for equality across the racial divide. There were unprecedented events and struggles for gay rights, and great demonstrations to mobilize resources and direct attention to the concentrated poverty in our major cities and the widening drug culture. In the women's movement, issues of work, sexuality and family brought people to rallies, meetings and conferences. Through all of this ferment, the post-war change in the U.S. economy was slowing growth and expansion and greatly impacting working people, families and communities. In all of these areas of change, there were gains and losses, struggles and disappointments, serious mistakes and significant breakthroughs.

For some people of faith, the women's movement, possibly more than any other single struggle of that time, brought to light the significant link between proscribed behaviors and choices arising in large part from religious upbringing and corresponding cultural values. As in previous eras, religion, through its institutions, teachings and internal culture, continued to serve the social order by thoroughgoing socialization of women to silent oppression and subordination both in domestic life and in society, mediated considerably through religious language and thought.

*I was trained to be numb, I was born to be numbered and pegged,
I was bred and conditioned to passivity, like a milk cow.
Waking is the sharpest pain I have ever known ...*

*I used to shuffle and giggle. I kept my eyes down
tucking my shoulders in so I would not rub the walls
of the rut, the place, the role ...*

*“Why do you choose to be noisy, to fight, to make trouble?”
you ask me, not understanding I have been born raw and new.
I can be killed with ease, I can be cut right down,
but I cannot crawl back in the cavern
where I lay with my neck bowed.
I have grown. I am not by myself.
I am too many.*

– Marge Piercy, excerpt from “The Judgment”⁹

Using character, voice and metaphor, Detroit-born poet and novelist Marge Piercy captures in powerful ways the social reality of this kind of female socialization. In “The Judgment,” a poem written early in the 1980s, Piercy typifies the woman socialized to passivity and subordination in an unforgettable way. She is “... *like a milk cow*,” Piercy writes, docile and obedient to the role others have ordained for her. She goes on in “... *the rut, the place, the role* ...” as assigned her, supporting the established order.

Socialization to accept gender inequality is based philosophically in an essentialist understanding of human nature and typifies woman’s nature as receptive, passive and naturally inferior. This perspective supports role definition for women as helpmate to the husband and mother by vocation. Historically, this framing located woman’s rightful place in the domestic sphere of the family unit and only by exception in other roles and social institutions. The religious overlay on the essentialist framework attributed woman’s subordinate social position to her “God-given nature.”

Thus, under religiously justified oppression of gender inequality, women suffered misogyny, sexism, battery, sexual violence and rape (including in marriage), dangerous abortions, gender discrimination, sexual harassment, sex trafficking and thoroughgoing exclusion from education, opportunity and social presence over many decades (actually centuries of decades). In the late 20th century, the high incidence of women’s deaths from HIV-AIDS¹⁰ must be added to this listing, given continuing strictures in the Catholic Church against artificial contraception and thus of condom use.

In these years – through their ministries, in civic participation and in widened exposure and engagement in social and political life – IHM Sisters were coming to understand the full significance for all U.S. women of the struggles for change that were occurring. As members of a woman-defined and women-led institution (the religious institute itself), IHMs knew exemplary women whose capacities, creativity, leadership and skills had fostered institutional growth and mission expansion and whose spiritual and intellectual contributions reached well beyond boundaries of IHM congregational life and institutions.



Many IHMs had also seen women in their birth families exercising tremendous courage and creativity to foster and uphold family life. Some mothers also took roles outside the home in work for the needs of their families or to exercise personal choice beyond the domestic sphere in the social and cultural life of their communities. Some IHMs had attended single-sex high schools and colleges, seeing firsthand the leadership of competent

educated women. Further, as professional educators, we found ourselves teaching and encouraging growth, development and opportunity for women and girls among our students (both female and male) and with our co-workers, friends and families.

These experiences offer “contrary evidence,” countering the orientation of traditional female socialization and leading to what we note in Piercy’s lines – an awakening of a different consciousness. And so, curiously, there is a turn. When questioned as a troublemaker, the reply is clear: “*I cannot crawl back ... I have grown ... I am too many.*”

Experience shared, especially in a communal context, often delivers us into growth and change. Whether in a social movement, work group, religious community or university classroom, places of open inquiry and honest exchange foster new understanding. In this way we discover that our individual experiences are not singular and wholly remarkable. Our personal stories often reflect a common experience that many others share in the particularities of their own lives.

As a poet and writer, Piercy comments in one of her volumes in the same vein: “... I have never made a distinction in working up my own experience and other people’s. ... I imagine I speak for a constituency, living and dead, and that I give utterance to energy, experience, insight, and words flowing from many lives.”¹¹ In such social contexts, we are also better able to perceive and understand the importance of our active engagement, as individuals and as members of a society, in fashioning the alternatives we desire for ourselves and our communities.

By 1987, IHMs as a community were 15 years past our watershed 1972 Assembly in which we highlighted the need for analysis, structural change and building alternatives. From 1987 forward, in our internal community life, assemblies and publications, IHM Sisters actively explored and educated ourselves and others about feminism, patriarchy and sexism and other related issues. These issues included authority and decision-making; inclusive language; women’s voice and experience as reflected in the literary canon and in social and cultural life; critique of papal and episcopal statements on the vocation of women; feminism and ecology; the history of U.S. women religious; and multiple other topics.

Even a cursory review of an internal IHM “news and views” publication¹² gives evidence of the great curiosity, intelligence and energy that characterized the process among IHMs as we sought to critically understand and engage a very wide range of issues for our own lives and for our time. The emergent themes were characteristic of the deepening consciousness that comes with understanding one’s own experience. They included the developmental process of expressing one’s own voice and authoring one’s life; attention to context and particulars in making judgments and choices; concern for relationship, connection and mutuality; understanding the sources and power of religious socialization; finding new approaches to decision-making and collaboration; giving status in decision-making to those most affected by decisions and choices; and a pervasive concern for equality and inclusion of those denied dignity, choice and participation.



Coming also in this same period, IHM leadership put in motion a task force to reclaim IHM history from an interdisciplinary feminist perspective. The working group, Claiming our Roots (COR), undertook study and work together over several years preparing essays that became a publication titled *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*. This 1997 book of 13 essays was a first effort to re-appropriate IHM

history from a feminist perspective in several key areas: the years of foundation and subsequent split of the congregation; the IHM orientation toward and patterns of socialization, spirituality and internal governance; and the role and history of IHMs in education and in advancing a model to prepare U.S. religious professionally as parochial classroom teachers.

With the stimulus of many contextual factors – wide social ferment, countering experience and contrary evidence – and despite the weight of our own socialization as women and as religious, IHMs were grasping more clearly for ourselves the ways patriarchy had historically shaped and was yet constraining our lives and choices as religious women.

Through all of this, over several years and in multiple ways, experience teaches and reflection deepens. Looking back, we might say the 1987 IHM articulation/manifesto was just waiting to be written.

Feminisms of the Second Wave

Issues and concerns for human rights are always tied to broad social visions as well as to concrete projects for life in human communities, whether in existing or in desired political-economic systems. Implicitly these visions arise from an outlook (some would say a philosophy) about the nature of people and our place and purpose in the big scheme of things. Broad visions, worldviews, daily issues then get further examination in frameworks of theory that are based in life experience and can be reliably supported by empirical data.

While points and distinctions from feminist theory were not foremost on the minds or in the daily parlance of most IHMs, the many issues of concern for women were. Then and now, perhaps like most readers (both female and male) of this essay, IHMs are very practical feminists. Many of the goals of social struggles for women in this period (from the late 1960s and through the 1980s)

advanced a *feminism of equality* like that of the first wave for women's rights in the U.S. (1848 to 1920). This was the movement that secured the franchise for women in the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. In a framework of fundamental equality, men and women being similar, whatever holds for men should hold for women in access to education, work, social opportunity and equal status before the law. Wherever inequality is the fact or the norm, equality could be advanced in the nation's courts as a matter of rights.

Following the initial years of the second wave, other feminist views were apparent. In 1982, Carol Gilligan,¹³ an American ethicist, psychologist and feminist, published *In a Different Voice*, a groundbreaking work describing an ethic of care that patterns women's moral life and reasoning in contrast to a (quasi-legal) ethic of rights attributed to men. This view of Gilligan's (and other writers in the same frame) would later be called a *feminism of difference*. In an interview some years later¹⁴ Gilligan commented,

“My research on identity and moral development led me to identify the ethics of care as a ‘different voice’ – a voice that joined self with relationship and reason with emotion. By transcending these binaries it shifted the paradigm of psychological and moral theory. The ethics of care starts from the premise that as humans we are inherently relational, responsive beings and the human condition is one of connectedness or interdependence. ... The questions then become how do we come not to care; how do we lose the capacity for empathy and mutual understanding?”

“... Within a patriarchal framework, the ethics of care is a ‘feminine’ ethic, whereas within a democratic framework it is a human ethic, grounded in core democratic values: the importance of everyone having a voice and being listened to carefully and heard with respect. ...”



In yet a later example of framing feminism, Catholic theologian Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, advanced a feminism of equivalence in her book *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*. Johnson employs this framework in her use of theological language and symbolic talk about God. As Johnson begins her work, she lays out reasons for the linguistic options that guide her study.

“Theoretically I endorse the ideal of language for God in male and female terms used equivalently, as well as the use of cosmic and metaphysical symbols. In actual fact, however, male and female images simply have not been nor are they even now equivalent. Female religious symbols of the divine are underdeveloped, peripheral, considered secondarily if at all in Christian language and the practice it continues to shape. ...

“... Extended theological speaking about God in female images, or extended draughts of this new wine, are a condition for the very possibility of equivalent imaging of God in religious speech ... (the) choice to use mainly female symbolism for God, let me state clearly, is not intended as a strategy of subtraction, still less of reversal. Rather, it is an investigation of a suppressed world directed ultimately toward the design of a new whole. Shaping this kind of speech is not an end in itself but must be received as an essential element in reordering an unjust and deficiently religious situation.”¹⁵

Thus, through these years of significant engagement and learning, IHMs came to understand that “feminist perspective” is oriented toward criticism and activism to overcome inequalities, patterns of discrimination and sexist bias and to empower women in every sphere of society – the social, economic, political, cultural, educational, legal and religious.

The words of poet Alice Walker¹⁶ can remind us that there is even more to the impulse of feminism. At the end of “Remember?”¹⁷ – a text that comes at once from personal trauma as well as visionary seeing – Walker speaks simply of the separate but closely linked roots of justice and hope. Then she offers the flowers of justice and hope “together.”

Any handy dictionary can remind us of all that is held in Walker’s choice of the word “twin:” that which is indistinguishable, paired, mirrored, closely linked and “mothered forth” together. We might imagine that the roots that engender both justice in our time and hope for the future grow in the soil of experience and struggle. Thus, born of suffering, experience

REMEMBER?
(AN EXCERPT)

I am the woman
offering two flowers
whose roots
are twin,

Justice and Hope
Hope and Justice
Let us begin.
– Alice Walker

allows us to deepen in compassion. Walker’s simple images and words remind us that feminism, at its deep source, is about human freedom and respect for everyone’s full personhood, dignity and capacity. Together, justice and hope assist in fashioning what Elizabeth Johnson calls “the design of a new whole.”



Fundamental human values are what feminism is all about. If they are genuinely held, these values will then, necessarily, be expressed in everyday cultural life. They will show up in a great variety of ways: in respect for individual dignity and personal autonomy; in balancing domestic and societal roles; in opening access to education, equality in earning and opportunity in the world of work and positions of decision-making and authority; in recognizing competency, achievement and leadership in all arenas (including those historically closed to women). In short, feminism means effective solidarity with all who confront insurmountable barriers and suffer under oppressive burdens.

Feminist Perspective:
IHM Sisters and
Ecclesial Experience

Increasingly IHMs brought our widened experience and learning to inform the dilemmas we experienced as women in the Church. Along with other women, religious women and IHM Sisters had experienced the patriarchal culture of exclusion, subordination and limitation in ecclesial life in many ways: through exclusive language in Scripture and liturgical expression; in unjust salaries in Church employment; in exclusion from the priesthood; in tokenism about including women (lay and religious) in the exercise of leadership, authority and positions of power; and in disregard of voice and choice in matters of the religious community’s internal life, including in self-governance and in expression of our experience and concerns.

There is no blueprint for stepping into the future. And so, as in many other moments of challenge, IHMs formulated our approaches as we moved forward. We learned to operate steadily in ways more congruent with and expressive of a grounded feminist consciousness. Over time that consciousness has helped us reshape our own decision-making processes, our relations with Church hierarchy and the ways we handle among ourselves differences we experience about Eucharist, the Church and some areas of Catholic doctrinal teaching. The story of seeking and obtaining approval of our 1988 Constitutions is illustrative.

In 1988, the year following our “simple manifesto,” IHMs were faced head-on with deciding on issues of communal belief and practice that offended certain declared and implicit patriarchal limits and strictures. As a congregation, we were in the last stages of a very long process to present a revision of our IHM Constitutions for formal approval in Rome, a process that had included two critiques from and dialogues with the Congregation for Religious and Secular Institutes (CRIS) and the subsequent curial office responsible for religious women’s communities.

Following the 1987 summer Assembly, the elected 1988 Chapter delegates prepared a Statement of Belief¹⁸ to preface the final Constitutions document. The statement addressed several areas in which IHMs were united communally but also aware that advancing our understandings and a worldview out of our lived experience could not be heard or accepted in a patriarchal Church. The two words “feminist perspective” from the earlier 1987 Assembly certainly provided no great clarity about the specific next steps toward an outcome mutually acceptable both for Rome and for the communal word IHMs had articulated in the revision to be submitted. Twice over, in 1983 and 1987, we had shaped and reshaped certain formulations within the text being prepared.

IHMs had arrived at our expression by questioning and probing our own experience. We had shared and dialogued with each other about that experience and its meaning, where we agreed and disagreed and on how to advance our learnings and concerns. We had prayed together, celebrating the articulation and the communal process we had experienced coming to it.

In the 1988 Statement of Belief, we recognized that work for transformation of our world is the priority claim for IHM attention and efforts over having a continuing struggle and engagement with the official Church. The statement also acknowledged our awareness of God’s ongoing revelation in the non-Christian world, the striving toward unity across all cultural traditions and the challenge we experience in living the IHM Constitutions in light of continually expanding horizons. Finally, the Assembly of 1987 had already recognized the text of the proposed revision “as a faithful articulation of our experience and understanding of religious life.” Thus, the revised draft was formally approved by the Chapter in summer 1988. The submission to Rome followed shortly thereafter. Subsequently, in November 1989, the congregation received the final approval of the Church for the 1988 IHM Constitutions.

Justice, Women’s Experience and *Explanatory Power*

What we have examined so briefly here about justice and feminist perspective will be helped by two final considerations. One has to do with relating justice to other IHM values. A second has to do with being clear how justice and the feminist perspective are experienced, understood and advocated by IHMs.

Justice is central to the emergent matrix of IHM values. Justice may be distinct in focus, particular to a given historical moment, enmeshed in unique political, economic and social contexts and articulated in specific campaigns and calls for action. But justice is inseparable from the values and imperatives of peace, nonviolence, Earth-care, sustainability and right relationship. For IHM Sisters, response to all these concerns of our time arise from a contemplative/reflective awareness as well as critical thought and active engagement

with the needs of the world. All are sustained though a unitary movement of prayer, compassion and service.

At a theory level, many believe that a fundamental dualism is at the root of what we recognize in the gender polarities of present-day societies as well as in the

paradigm of power that governs them. Further, many believe that such dualism (or binary thinking) is the root of human separation from nature in that binaries, in a context of unequal power, necessarily mean separation, subordination and “lower ranking” of one pole of the binary. Thus, we

end up with masculine over feminine, mind over body, culture over nature. This way of understanding connections between the many dimensions of our world’s imbalance and disparity leads, by yet another route, to the call in this historical moment for a way of viewing the world that is more holistic, focused on relationship and connection.



Shaking the Tree

Vine and branch we're connected in this world of sound and echo, figure and shadow, the leaves contingent, roots pushing against earth. An apple

belongs to itself, to stem and tree, to air that claims it, then ground. Connections balance, each motion changes another. Precarious,

hanging together, we don't know what our lives support, and we touch in the least shift of breathing. Each holy thing is borrowed. Everything depends.

– Jeanne Lohman, from *Shaking the Tree*¹⁹

Secondly, IHMs recognize that even a broad framework like “feminist perspective” can become rigid, narrow and oppressive if advanced or viewed as a prescriptive “should” rather than a source to enlighten life experience with explanatory power. Explanatory power, and the unleashing of imagination and courage that comes from it, is the central concern for IHMs. As noted earlier, IHMs are very “practical feminists.”



As this unfolding narrative illustrates, because of its deep root and wide expression, feminism is not a closed reality. Like all “isms,” feminism loses its efficacy for inspiring growth and change when it closes off personal or public consciousness from a wider empathy and compassion. That wider empathy joins us with all who suffer diminishment and exclusion, all who are barred from the exercise of their deepest and highest capacities as living beings. And in our time, in the early years of the 21st century, IHMs include in that empathic embrace the living Earth and all species life.



Catholic theologian Elizabeth Johnson, CSJ, offers this simple “definition” of feminism:

“Taken from the Latin, femina, [feminism] signifies a stance which advocates the flourishing of women as precondition for genuine human community.”²⁰

Another Catholic feminist theologian, Anne E. Patrick, SNJM, offers her working definition of feminism, somewhat like Elizabeth Johnson’s:

“There are many definitions and types of feminism, and feminists differ widely in their analyses of injustice, levels of commitment to liberating action, degrees of explicitness of commitment, and opinions about specific problems and their solutions. I have defined the term “feminist” broadly to indicate a position that involves a solid conviction of the equality of women and men and a commitment to reform society so that the full equality of women is respected, which also requires reforming the thought systems that legitimate the present unjust social order. Both aspects of this definition are important.”²¹

IHMs today remain committed to what we learn for the understanding and practice of justice from our own experience as women and from taking a feminist perspective on that experience. We do so because we recognize the import of “feminist perspective” for ourselves, for repair of the human social fabric and for healing our separation from the natural world.

Taking a “Feminist Perspective” Today

It is likely that today, none of us can imagine U.S. women being barred from voting. The achievement of this marker in gender equality is so ingrained in our understandings and expectations that it would seem impossible to return to the former outlook and the legal/social norms that held sway prior to 1920. This experience is true in many areas of our lives today and possibly are too numerous to elaborate. But if we were to conclude that full gender equality has been achieved we would be wrong. We only need to listen critically to the nightly news or read beyond our usual daily distractions on the internet to have our eyes opened.

Sometimes we lose sight of what it means to achieve victories that really change the whole game. Or we think that struggles for women’s equality are good for historical study and to appreciate the courage of those who labored for rights we now enjoy. But now that we have come this far, we ask, aren’t such efforts unnecessary? We might even protest: what difference does “taking a feminist perspective” really make today in my life and for those around me?

So, let’s examine the situation. While the issues are complex and many factors are in play, the realities show that full gender equality is still really a long way off. In short, we will find it all depends on where we stand in the picture.

Many millennials in American colleges today are angry about the burden of education debt they will carry into their lives after graduation. Knowledgeable young women are even angrier, because they know their earning power will be markedly different over a lifetime, by nearly \$1 million, from their male counterparts. They realize that not only an immediate salary/wage gap is ahead for them, but a lifetime resource gap.

Gender inequality with its attendant sexism, despite significant gains (particularly in developed Western nations), is still the rule of the day. While “officially” U.S. men and women are equal, deep disparities continue to exist and, regrettably, many in our society are accustomed to ignore the signs of gender oppression. Chief in that list is the exploitation of women in advertising and commercialization that objectifies the female body. Many teens and young women are beset by issues of self-esteem, body image, dieting and eating disorders, body enhancement, the “cult of thin” and striving to be sexually pleasing at too early an age. Parents, counselors, teachers and pastors are the ones who see firsthand how these issues play out, often with serious mistakes and great heartbreak.²²

Gender inequality is behind the low priority given to battery and rape in the criminal justice system, behind the earning disparities between men and women in corporate and professional positions of all kinds. It is behind the overall wage gap for women compared to men, including in Church employment. In the Church, where the great majority of pastoral workers are women with families, economic inequality is also bolstered by the clerical-lay divide.

The absence of paid parenting leave (for both parents); the complex passages to advanced

promotion in the corporate world; the limited number of women in legislatures and executive office of political life; women being barred from holy orders and positions of authority in some denominations; victimization in sex trafficking and drug culture; limits to success and promotion in the STEM²³ fields of work: all of these realities are strongly rooted in the sexist bias and the oppression of gender inequality. And the dangers and limitations for women are even more dramatic when linked to race and class. That these limits are no longer absolute should not distract us from understanding the facts and seeing the truth of the situation.

We can also reflect on the international context to appreciate and understand the import of the “forward pull” of Western women’s experience in raising expectations about the status of women everywhere. The third wave of feminism, in evidence since the 1990s, is clearly international and global in character.

Feminism in a *Global Framework*

The “facts of life” in some countries across the globe are bitter and stark realities. One aspect of these bitter facts is exemplified by the experience of then-15-year-old Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan. Malala was shot in the head in 2012 by the Taliban because she wanted a primary level education for herself and other girls of her town and province in northwestern Pakistan.

These are more of the “facts of life” for immense numbers of women: that women, both the young and the mature, are barred from education. There are honor killings



and women shunned and disfigured, some stoned to death, for violating customs of dress, social mixing and sexual behavior or for having been violated and victimized by rape. In some countries, there are high rates of abandonment of female babies and in other places child marriages, genital mutilation, inequalities of inheritance laws and the use of rape as a tactic of intimidation in war. All of these realities are rooted in the oppression of gender inequality.

While some of these realities may be ages old, in our present interconnected world, the how and when of overcoming them have much to do with examples of daring and courage like Malala’s. Today, she is the youngest recipient

in history of the Nobel Peace Prize. In 2014, the UN poster celebrating International Women’s Day presented Malala with her statement of an essential truth: “We cannot all succeed when half of us are held back.”

Making whole the human community has everything to do with the advance of women and girls, and that advance is directly tied to education. Malala sees the big picture and is leading the way. But change has to do also with what ordinary women and men elsewhere do by example, by advocacy and by solidarity. Thus, the advance needed is tied to U.S. women and men who take seriously the experience of women, essentially a “feminist perspective,” and who actively choose ways to uphold and bring forward those who are held back.

Today, IHM Sisters continue to use the feminist perspective to understand our own lives in Church and society as well as the needs and issues of women and the marginalized in whatever locations. By way of example, the leadership body of 80 percent of U.S. women religious (about 50,000 in number in 2015), a body in which IHM leaders participate,

**“We cannot all succeed
when half of us
are held back.”**

– Malala Yousafzai, 2014

took a formal resolution in their August 2012 Assembly in the name of their communities to “... collaborate in order to abolish human trafficking, a form of modern day slavery.”

Subsequently, IHM Sisters (following one of our own Chapter 2000 Directions and the 2012 Assembly Resolution of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious) are educating ourselves and others in the issues of trafficking and assisting victims trafficked in the U.S. Annually, the number is between 18,000 and 20,000 people. While close to 80 percent of trafficking victims are female, we are concerned as well for male victims as we work to expose and end this form of sexual and labor exploitation. We participate in public actions to bring attention to trafficking and spread information to those most likely to see its signs when and where it is occurring – in

“Recognizing the escalation of violence in our world, and especially its impact on women and children, we choose to act with diligence in the pursuit of peace and non-violence.

– FROM IHM CHAPTER 2000 DIRECTIONS

hotels and motels, at truck stops and during gatherings of large crowds in public venues for sports or music events. Because of our proximity to the border into Canada, Michigan and northwestern Ohio are places of very high human trafficking.

On other issues when IHM Sisters educate and act – on HIV/AIDs, poverty and inequality,

hunger, water rights, food security, worker rights, women’s ordination, climate impacts, immigration, internal displacement and refugee flight, arms sales, military build-up and nuclear power – the perspective coming from women’s experience continues to inform and enlighten our work. As we enter the 21st century, IHMs are found in classrooms, parishes, human service agencies, retreat centers, neighborhood programs, social media, print and online publications, in research and writing and in myriad active engagements in advocacy, protest and public witness.²⁴

In all of this, we also remember another incontestable related fact: where women are in trouble, children are in trouble. Thus, IHM Sisters believe that understanding our experience and our life realities as women is important for ourselves, for women and children everywhere and for entire communities. Wherever people across the globe are working against the forms and effects of gender bias and inequality, we are becoming “whole” as nations and peoples.



🔥 The 50-Year Retrospective: *What Does It Yield?*

The deep story found in the IHM narrative we have been following across 50 years (from the mid-1960s to now) is that of weaving the radiant thread of justice in our time. Action for justice is a living and vital strand of the IHM charism rooted in the Alphonsian tradition, mediated by co-founders Louis Gillet and Theresa Maxis to all those joined, as members and friends, with the congregation of the Sisters IHM of Monroe.

This 50-year period of history has been for IHMs a spirit-led process of responding to the signs of the times and learning together to “... speak God’s word with boldness and to risk deeds our own hearts could never dream. ...” (IHM Constitutions, Article 16) While the IHM story will surely continue unfolding in the years ahead, we can now, with great gratitude and trust, affirm the following from the half century of growth and dramatic change since the mid-1960s.

Today the justice dimension of IHM identity and mission, expressed in spirituality and in active presence in the world, strongly marks IHM reality. As individuals and as a community, IHMs continue to be drawn, with characteristic vision and passion, to action on behalf of justice as a transformative path.

• *IHMs believe that transformation is possible both for individuals and communities that open themselves to transformation through understanding their experience and through engaged communal practice.*

• *IHMs believe that understanding our life experience as women, with all its matched and unmatched threads as the raw material for a whole cloth of meaning and purpose, leads to transformative growth.*

• *IHMs believe that the pursuit of justice in our time is a vital and necessary path leading to deep transformational change at personal, communal, societal and planetary levels.*



Radiant Justice, *Bending the Arc*

Often we find that gift and task are twinned realities; as we experience the one, we most always find the other inextricably bound to it. So now we turn to let the gift of all we have experienced and learned in this study lead us back to the task at hand. We use the IHM Mission and Vision statements to focus our intention and effort. As we noted at the outset, you too – readers of these pages – are joined to the IHM mission and vision at this time, nearly 175 years since the founding of the community.

The IHM Mission and Vision

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.

The IHM community envisions and is committed to bringing about the dream of God on planet Earth through respect for, nurturing of and promoting the liberation and well-being of all persons and all of nature as God's good creation.

As we started out in this essay, we sought to “... envision the arc and its bending.” Now, as we conclude, we know that intention and action, the means of bending the arc toward justice in our time, must follow. As an encompassing movement of inclusion, action on behalf of justice will always mean leaving no one and no part of life out of our concern until our world bends graciously into the fullness of radiant justice.

Looking back we recognize that our nation has come a great distance in the past half century. But we also recognize we have not come far enough and that great challenges, planetary challenges, are ahead for the whole of humanity. Reading the signs of our times – the many traumatic events, bitter realities, seemingly intractable and difficult issues that we face today – force this realization upon us. Yet, intertwined in all of this complexity and dynamism are the seeds of immense possibility.

The next step then is, necessarily, a question, a call and a challenge for each of us as individuals. If we recognize the challenge, we also implicitly realize that our choices will be more powerful if we are joined with others in groups dedicated to learning and acting together.

In this essay, a kind of “associative logic” has led us as we traversed across five decades of history, seeing the changing contexts and the social and ecclesial realities of those years. We moved forward without a prescriptive list or pre-set requirements, using only a very few “markers” out of IHM communal life as starting points – some key events, a few written statements, significant external developments, various internal processes. Having started out together on a journey, it was as though we were to watch together for what was “arriving” – the emergent learnings and outcomes, all the while teasing out some basic meaning and insight.

Two powerful metaphors – radiant justice and bending the arc – have helped our understanding, throwing light on the whole engagement – from the writing, to the reading,



to the now of “moving on.” By metaphoric means we have been envisioning our world, our communities, our lives “made whole” by justice, by right relation, by inclusion. These two rich images – and others that we may find as we travel on – will continue to enlighten and inspire us as we go forward on our respective paths.

A select annotated bibliography and other resources for working with this essay are available on the IHM website as given in Endnote 24. These resources may help you to build further on the personal insights and important learnings you have gleaned from this study. Hopefully your initial reasons for looking into this 50-year history of the IHM story are now newly framed and your purpose renewed and deepened.

Today, in the second decade of the third millennia, a moving sentence from the Earth Charter (2000) turns us in the forward direction we are all seeking:

“Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.”²⁵

Awakening. Resolve. Quickenings. Celebration.

We go forward.

“In the spirit of our founders, who in a different time risked everything, we too find ourselves at the threshold of an uncertain future. Together with those who share our vision and values, and in solidarity with those who are made poor and marginalized by existing structures, we choose to move forward with profound trust in the power of the Spirit, living the liberating mission of Jesus Christ.”

– FROM THE IHM CHAPTER 2012 STATEMENT

ENDNOTES

1. The epigraph for this essay is by Marge Piercy from her poem, “Stone, Paper, Knife,” as found in a collection of the same title, published by Alfred Knopf, New York, NY, 1983, pages 143-144. The calligraphy of the Piercy excerpt is the work of Detroit-area artist, Rose DeSloover, former art faculty member and professor emerita at Marygrove College in Detroit. DeSloover is also an IHM Associate.

2. “Bread and Roses” is a poem written by James Oppenheim to celebrate the movement for women’s rights. It was published in *The American Magazine* in 1911 and is closely associated with the Lawrence textile mill strike of 1912. During the strike in protest of a reduction in pay, the women mill workers carried signs quoting the poem that read “We want bread, and roses, too.” “Bread and Roses” was set to music by Mimi Fariña in the 1970s, and has become an anthem for labor rights, particularly the rights of working women in the United States and elsewhere.

3. Alphonus Liguori (d.1787), the 18th century founder of the Redemptorist order, was born in 1696 to an old noble Italian family near Naples. He was the first of 11 children. By age 16, Alphonsus had completed study for doctor of laws and, by age 20, was practicing as a civil and canon lawyer. He was ordained to the priesthood in 1726 at age 30. Caring for the poor wherever his journey took him was the hallmark of his calling.

In 1732, Alphonsus realized that he desired to live with and among the poor to whom he was devoted in his preaching. He set out to gather others in this same calling and they adopted a new way of living when they were preaching, calling it a “mission among the people.” This was the beginning of the Congregation of the Most Holy Redeemer, known today as the Redemptorists.

Liguori was a gifted, passionate and practical preacher. He was particularly able to reach ordinary and poor people who had little or no education. Being also gifted in music and composition, he wrote simple spiritual songs to teach and comfort the poor in their faith. As a moral theologian (unlike most of his contemporaries), his emphasis was on love, gratitude and devotion in the life of faith. Having been canonized in 1839, he was declared a Doctor of the Church in 1871.

For further information, see the website of the Baltimore Province of the Redemptorists:
<http://redemptorists.net/redemptorists/saints/alphonsus/>

4. Between 1970 and 1994, 11 attempts at financing reform in Michigan were focused on these same two concerns (providing for education and for equal opportunity). It took Michigan nearly 25 years (using the Thomas Report of 1968 as starting point) to usher in a new model for school financing. When it came, it was quite inglorious with a vote to eliminate the property tax as the means of fiscal support for the schools without a corresponding plan for revenue replacement. This one change, however, began to reduce the continuing and growing disparity that arises from funding tied to local property taxes.

5. In the earliest history and through successive decades of Catholic education in the United States, great numbers of Catholic immigrant citizens moved into mainstream U.S. society with the help of elementary, secondary and college educations from Catholic institutions. The process of building a strong middle class was still underway throughout the years of the expanding post-war economy in the 20th century. In this historical context, the “justice dimension” of Catholic education was very apparent.

However, at a later point, roughly from the mid-1970s forward, large portions of the U.S. population (identified by class, race and ethnicity) were increasingly outside the mainstream in educational achievement, employment and opportunity and without access or adequate means to improve their situation. In this situation, those same educational institutions then appear and function (relatively) more as the “status quo.” In these changing circumstances – as early as the late 1960s – some individual IHMs began to see the need to find other ways to advocate for and direct greater energies in the service of those not included.

By the end of the 1990s, other patterns affecting Catholic schools were dramatically apparent. By then, there remained a limited number of Catholic schools in suburban settings serving markedly more affluent students mostly of Catholic background, and a markedly reduced number of urban Catholic schools serving lower income students, often predominantly from racial and ethnic minority communities, and often of Christian or religious background other than Catholic. Typically, the urban schools are seriously under-resourced. The dilemmas and limits of these patterns will not change in the absence of a renewed commitment to urban Catholic schools by national and local ecclesial leadership as part of the mission and presence of the Church, as well as finding strategies for the long-term financial sustainability of these schools.

Various studies of these rapid and extensive changes are available. See the following lengthy article, “Can Catholic Schools be Saved?” in *National Affairs*, Number 7, Spring 2011, by Andy Smarick (<http://www.nationalaffairs.com/publications/detail/can-catholic-schools-be-saved>). A short archival piece at CatholicHistory.net, posted on Jan. 9, 2009, cites several additional sources for further reading: <http://www.catholichistory.net/Spotlights/SpotlightSchools.htm>. Finally, a 2011 report, “Sustaining Urban Catholic Elementary Schools: An Examination of Governance Models and Funding Strategies,” by Erik P. Goldschmidt, PhD, MDiv, and Mary E. Walsh, PhD, is a national study of strategies currently utilized by urban Catholic elementary schools.

6. Joe Holland and Peter Henriot, SJ, *Social Analysis: Linking Faith and Justice*, Maryknoll: Orbis, (1983).

7. It is both important and useful to understand that this model is not the same “See-Judge-Act” methodology of Catholic Social Action. In that earlier framework (derivative from the Christian worker movements of Europe), the outcomes of moral judgment were somewhat “given” and assumed to be adequately found and articulated in Church teachings. This was due in part to the strong emphasis given to “following the teaching of the Church” over the primacy of individual moral conscience and the right of self-determination of people. Sometimes in the earlier instance, “the teachings” clearly and directly supported the interests of the Church, the hierarchy and ecclesial property and position in the national social and political environment.

In the reflection-action framework of the pastoral cycle, the “what is to be done” is uncovered in the situation using a hermeneutical lens of interpretation to see the situation critically. Then the community, searching together in faith, uses the resources and symbols of faith and culture to enlighten the path and choices leading to change. In this way, seeking as a community to understand what the God of liberation is asking, the community “uncovers the path” or the action to be taken.

8. The stories and reports at the gathering of the IHM Corporate Presence in Detroit in spring 2002 came from IHMs and IHM Associates in the following ministry locations and programs: Freedom House; Groundwork for a Just World; Women ARISE; Day House; Crossroads Meals; Manna Meals; the MOSES, Jeremiah and Ruth Community Organizations; Hope Takes Root Community Garden; Women in Black; Michigan Coalition for Human Rights; Michigan Peace Team; St. Rose Senior Center; Dominican Literacy Center; Neighborhood Service Organization (Geriatric Services); Marygrove College; Adult Education programs in Detroit and Hamtramck Public Schools; Catholic parishes of St. Suzanne and St. Anne de Detroit; parish schools of Holy Redeemer, Gesu, Most Holy Trinity, St. Mary of Redford, St. Jude, St. Matthew, St. Cecilia, St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Martin DePorres; two diocesan high schools – Bishop Gallagher and Bishop Foley – and two alternative Catholic schools – Our Lady of Guadalupe Middle School for Girls (sponsored by the IHM Sisters, Religious Sisters of Mercy, Religious of the Sacred Heart and Sisters of St. Joseph, Kalamazoo) and Loyola High School (Jesuit-sponsored).

9. Excerpt from poet Marge Piercy from the poem “The Judgment,” found in *Circles on the Water: Selected Poems of Marge Piercy* published by Alfred Knopf, New York, NY, 1992, pages 135-136.

10. See statistics on women and HIV/AIDS both in the United States and around the globe in these sources: UNAIDS Gap Report 2014; UNAIDS Fact Sheet 2014; U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (last updated July 2014); amfAR, The Foundation for AIDS Research at <http://www.amfar.org/about-hiv-and-aids/facts-and-stats/statistics-women-and-hiv-aids/>.

11. Found in the Introduction to *Circles on the Water: Selected Poems of Marge Piercy* published by Alfred Knopf, New York, NY, 1992, page xi.

12. In 13 editions of the IHM publication *Spinnaker*, dating from 1987 to 1995, there were more than 22 items on feminism and related issues presented through articles, interviews, book reviews, reports on local projects and commentary on societal and IHM events.

13. Carol Gilligan is a U.S. psychologist, feminist and writer known for *In a Different Voice*, published in 1982. Her work was influential in articulating new understandings about ethical choice and decisions for women. Presently she is a professor at New York University. A full profile of Gilligan and her work is available from *Psychology's Feminist Voices*: Laura Ball (2010). Profile of Carol Gilligan also available in A. Rutherford (editor), *Psychology's Feminist Voices Multimedia Internet Archive* at <http://www.feministvoices.com/carol-gilligan/>.

14. For citation on Gilligan's 2011 interview, see Ethics of Care website: <http://ethicsofcare.org/interviews/carol-gilligan/>.

15. Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, New York: Crossroad (1993), pp. 56-57.

16. Alice Walker is an American novelist, poet and short story writer, feminist and political activist. In 1983, Walker won the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction as well as the National Book Award for *The Color Purple*, her most well-known literary achievement.

17. "Remember?" is the lead poem from Walker's collection titled *Horses Make a Landscape Look More Beautiful*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers (1985), pp.1-2. The poem is also included in *Her Blue Body Everything We Know: Earthling Poems 1965-1990 Complete*, New York: Harcourt Brace (1993), pp 317-318.

18. The Statement of Belief is dated June 23, 1988. It appears in the IHM Constitutions approved by the 1988 General Chapter.

19. From *Shaking the Tree*, by Jeanne Lohmann, published 2010 by Fithian Press; page 15.

20. Elizabeth Johnson, *She Who Is: The Mystery of God in Feminist Theological Discourse*, New York: Crossroad, (1993), p. 276, note 16. A Catholic feminist theologian, Johnson is a Distinguished Professor of Theology at Fordham University and a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Brentwood.

21. See *Global Sisters Report* of June 17, 2015, "The Vatican, 'feminism' and U.S. women religious" by Anne Patrick. Patrick was professor of religion and liberal arts emerita at Carleton College in Northfield, Minn. A member of the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, Patrick was awarded the John Courtney Murray Award (the Society's highest honor) by the Catholic Theological Society of America in 2013. <http://globalsistersreport.org/column/trends/vatican%E2%80%98feminism%E2%80%99-and-us-women-religious-26826>

22. Mary Pipher, *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Lives of Adolescent Girls*, New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1994. Pipher writes in the line of Gilligan, both building on and departing from aspects of Kohlberg's

research on moral development. Despite some later disparaging commentary from within her profession, Pipher's book continues to be widely received with great support and enthusiasm by young women, parents, teachers, school counselors and therapists.

23. STEM is a term that refers to the academic disciplines of science, technology, engineering and math. Women have historically been underrepresented in these fields of study and work. Both scholars and policy-makers explore the many reasons for the gender gap in these fields as well as ways to foster and increase diversity in academic preparation and workforce development in the STEM fields. <https://www.ed.gov/STEM>

24. Use this link to the website of the IHM Sisters for resources and action on human trafficking and many other current issues: <http://ihmsisters.org/living-justly/peace-and-justice/current-issues/>.

These resource pages are organized using the structure of the Earth Charter. Each section includes individual issue pages with a description of the issue, the IHM response, prayer materials, an annotated bibliography and recommended actions to take. *Sign up on the action page for regular notices.*

25. These words are the ending text of the Earth Charter, an ethical framework for building a just, sustainable and peaceful global society in the 21st century. The Charter is a product of a decade-long, worldwide, cross-cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values. The Earth Charter project began as a United Nations initiative, but it was carried forward and completed by a global civil society initiative. The document was finalized and then launched as a people's charter on June 29, 2000, by the Earth Charter Commission, an independent international entity, in a ceremony at the Peace Palace in The Hague. <http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/discover/what-is-the-earth-charter/> The IHM Sisters of Monroe endorsed the Earth Charter in 2004.

PHOTO IDENTIFICATION

COVER: Father Louis Gillet, "Who Is Like Fire" ©1997 SSIHM, and Mother Theresa Maxis, "The Holder of the Fire" ©1995 SSIHM

The icons of IHM co-founders, Louis Florent Gillet, CSSR and Mother Theresa Maxis were written by Nancy Lee Smith IHM. An artist and iconographer, Smith works from St. Joseph Studio located on the IHM campus in Monroe, MI

Page 2: The epigraph for this essay is by Marge Piercy from her poem, "Stone, Paper, Knife," as found in a collection of the same title, published by Alfred Knopf, New York, NY, 1983, pages 143-144. The calligraphy of the Piercy excerpt is the work of Detroit-area artist, Rose DeSloover, former art faculty member and professor emerita at Marygrove College in Detroit. DeSloover is also an IHM Associate.

Three montage images include the following: IHMs gather with the *Nuns on the Bus* during the nine-state bus tour bringing attention to priorities in the U.S. national budget proposal of June 2012. **Back Row, L to R:** IHMs Gloria Rivera, Paula Cathcart, Ann Nett, Elizabeth Walters, Genevieve Petrak, Barbara Stanbridge, Mary Ann Ford, Roberta Richmond and Sarah Nash (coordinator of the IHM Justice Peace and Sustainability Office); **Front Row, R to L:** IHMs Alice Baker, Barbara Beesley, Melissa Hug (IHM Associate), Ann Wisda, Pat McCluskey, Margaret Alandt, Marge Hughes, Nancy Sylvester, Gail Presbey of UDM Faculty, Helen Ingles, Marie Cyril Delisi, Eileen Semonin, and Judy Eliassen. **Other photos:** Theresa Grekowicz IHM, Michigan Farm Workers March, 1979; Anne Marie Murphy IHM, with neighborhood boy at Ste. Pierre Episcopal Clinic in Mirebalais, Haiti, 2007

Page 3: Margaret Alandt IHM, at the Pettus Bridge in 2015, the 50th anniversary of the historic Selma March. Insets are Shirley Ellis IHM, and Beth Reiha, both of whom went to Selma in 1965.

Page 5: Button collection of Theresa Grekowicz IHM, from multiple campaigns on various issues across many years

Page 7: IHM General Superior and Presidents, 1954 through 2000 **L to R:** IHMs Mary McCann (1994); Margaret Brennan (1966); Carol Quigley (1982); Dorothy McDaniel (1988); Mary Kinney (1976) and (center) Anna Marie Grix (1954)

Page 9: Marie Cyril Delisi IHM, program director of Epiphany Educational Center, with student Javeon Brinson, in a tutoring session, April 2015

Page 10: Suzanne Sattler IHM, SHARE Foundation president, with translator Oscar Chacon and members of the Comunidad Ignacio Ellacuria, Chalentenango Province, El Salvador, 1995

Page 11: IHM marchers, Peace March, Washington, D.C., 1983

Page 13: Peggy Devaney IHM, chaplain at Oakland County Jail, in conversation with a resident inmate, 2006

Page 14: Sharon McNeil, IHM Associate, and other garden workers ending the season at St. Mary Organic Garden, IHM campus, Monroe, 2003

Page 15: Middle-school students at the DTE solar panels on the IHM campus during the Great Lakes Water Festival in 2014

Page 18: President Mary Jane Herb (2012-2018) signs letters for legislative action on IHM priority concerns.

Page 20: Marjorie Polys IHM, leading the invocation at the protest at Williams International, Walled Lake, Mich., 1984

Page 22: Seven of the 18 member committee of the Claiming Our Roots Project (COR) attend a conference on the History of U.S. Religious Women in 1995; COR completed a feminist history of the Monroe IHMs in *Building Sisterhood* in 1997. **L to R:** IHMs Dorothy McDaniel, Jane Shea, Marita-Constance Supan, Ellen Clanon, Maryfrances Barber, Joan Glisky and Celeste Rabaut

Page 23: Graphic by Nancy Ayotte, IHM, featuring natural forms and IHM taglines

Page 25: Annette St-Amour, IHM, with lay and religious participants of the Trauma Healing Workshop in South Sudan, 2016

Page 27: Rose Ange Leddy, IHM, and other volunteers of Habitat for Humanity for Blitz Build - Monroe, August 2002

Page 28: Dorothy Eddy, IHM, offers her art for planet awareness.

Page 28: IHM Peacemakers in Fort Benning, Ga., for a demonstration to close the School of the Americas, 1998 including (**L to R**) IHMs and Associates – Therese Terns, Barb Beesley, Carolyn Kerwin, Mary Laird, (Unidentified) and Mary Jean Schoettle

Page 31: Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan interviews in the United Kingdom at the UNICEF-sponsored Girl Summit to mobilize efforts to end genital mutilation (FGM) and child, early and forced marriage, 2014

Page 32: IHMs Barbara Beesley, Gloria Rivera and Paula Cathcart at the Water Rally, Detroit, 2014

Page 33: Lisandra Pedraza Burgos, IHM, and young friends water a neighborhood garden in San Juan, Puerto Rico, 2000.

Page 35: Women’s March: IHMs, Associates and friends, Lansing, Mich., January 2017

Assistance in identifying photos and detail for captions for Radiant Justice came from the following: Jennifer Meacham, IHM Archivist; Sarah Nash, Coordinator of the Justice, Peace and Sustainability Office; Danielle Conroyd, Project Director and Sharon Venier, Staff Assistant both of the Sustainable Campus Planning Office; and IHMs Alice Baker, Suzanne Sattler, Gloria Rivera and Kathleen Schultz.

Kathleen Schultz, IHM

Kathleen Schultz, IHM, entered the IHMs in 1960, and earned her bachelor’s degree from Marygrove College. Following a master’s degree in religious studies from the University of Detroit, she did post-graduate work in political sociology at the University of Michigan. After several years in formal education at senior high school and adult levels, Kathleen served for eight years as national executive in the United States for an ecumenical organization of political Christians within the international movement of Christians for Socialism.

These years were followed by 19 years in Detroit’s community-based programs for alternative sentencing. She was first community education coordinator at Team for Justice, and then executive director of Women Arise, offering therapeutic, educational and vocational programs for women in the criminal justice system.

Kathleen has done extensive writing and editing since the mid-1970s as part of editorial groups for various publications and was self-employed from 2006 to 2017 in grant writing, editing, research and organizational consultation.



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610 West Elm Ave. • Monroe, MI 48162 - 7909
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RADIANT JUSTICE IN
IHM MISSION AND IDENTITY
IHM Monograph Series

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