



## *IHM Overseas Update*

**FALL 2021**

**Number 49**

### **Programa Asociad@s IHM/ICM en México**

Nuestra comunidad IHM, como otras congregaciones, hemos estado en búsqueda de más vocaciones y otras maneras de trabajar en ministerio relacionándonos con otras personas.

En la actualidad entendemos el concepto de vocaciones en una más amplia diversidad. Valoramos la oportunidad de relacionarnos con personas que se identifican con la espiritualidad, carisma, trabajo y vida comunitaria nuestra.

En Ciudad Juárez, Chih, México, desde el inicio de nuestra misión hemos promovido este programa entre personas laicas que sienten el deseo de conocernos más y participar más cercanamente en nuestros ministerios. Desde el 1990 empezamos la experiencia del programa con una laica asociada en la oración con nosotras, Teresa Delgado. Estamos seguras que ella sigue orando por nuestra congregación desde la presencia de Dios.

En el 2015 iniciamos de nuevo el proceso con un matrimonio: Valentín "Pancho" Alanís e Hildelisa Ávila. Juntos habíamos trabajado en las Comunidades Eclesiales de Base y seguimos juntos algunos años en el Centro de Derechos Humanos Paso del Norte. Ellos se reunían cada dos semanas con la Hermana Carmen Armenta por dos años. Hicieron su compromiso en su Capilla hace 3 años y renovaron este año en su casa con su familia y la comunidad IHM/ICM.

Hildelisa y Valentín han vivido hace años una misión con su compromiso de justicia y paz, en particular ahora para las personas que han sido víctimas de desaparición forzada y sus familias. También han realizado trabajo pastoral con las personas vulnerables en varias comunidades de su parroquia. Nosotras consideramos que la presencia cercana de ellos como asociad@s nos ha ayudado a motivarnos a continuar profundizando nuestra misión como comunidad IHM/ICM en México.



*Carmen Armenta IHM, Norma Dominguez and Ramiro Garcia at a formation session for IHM Associate candidates.*

*“... nos comprometemos a la mutualidad en el ministerios, deseando que nuestro amor, reverencia, y apoyo mutuo se reflejen en la forma de afirmar, alentar y trabajar con nuestros co-ministros y con cada una de las personas entre las cuales servimos”. Constituciones IHM. Capítulo 2 Art. 17.*

Toda la comunidad de Sta. Elena ha sido generosa en abrazar esta propuesta de asociación desde la cultura mexicana. Ahora estamos

acompañando 5 personas más como posibles asociad@s en Juárez, México. Son dos matrimonios: Ramiro y Sonia, Maria Eugenia y Ernesto y una persona laica Norma, quienes han participado mucho tiempo en la iglesia y también en cuestiones de justicia social. Las hermanas IHM/ICM: Carmen, Antonia y Maureen, estamos compartiendo con ellos cada lunes.

Desde lo que ellos han vivido y han conocido de nuestra congregación en estos años de trabajar cercanamente con nosotras en la Capilla Sta. Elena de la Cruz, la experiencia de la formación como asociados ha sido muy profunda para ellos y para nosotras.

Creemos que el Programa de Asociados IHM-ICM es de gran ayuda para las personas, porque en la actualidad están en búsqueda de un aspecto espiritual más profundo en sus vidas y de cómo poner más en práctica sus dones y talentos, no solo dentro de las actividades religiosas eclesiales, sino también en nuestra sociedad y en los



*Hildelisa Avila (IHM Associate), Carmen Armenta, IHM, Maureen Kelly, IHM, Guadalupe Armenta (Carmen's sister); seated: Valentin "Pancho" Alanis (IHM Associate)*

ambientes diversos (escuela, trabajo, comunidad, política, social, etc.) en los que participan cada una de ellas.

Consideramos que esta relación de asociación tiene la capacidad de superar fronteras culturales y sociales para enriquecer la vida de las personas y nuestra misión IHM/ICM también en cualquier lugar donde estamos sirviendo como comunidad.

Escuchamos en nuestras Constituciones un llamado a responder a las necesidades humanas y vivir nuestro llamado participando con otras personas asociadas que quieren trabajar por el Reino y continuando con la misión redentora de Jesús. Creemos que el Programa de Asociad@s ayuda a responder al llamado sinodal que el Papa Francisco nos propone realizar en nuestro trabajo pastoral.

*“Compartiendo un compromiso común para participar en la misión redentora de Cristo nos animamos mutuamente en nuestros diversos ministerios, reconociendo que una variedad de dones enriquece a la comunidad y promueven al Reino de Dios de múltiples maneras.” Capítulo 2 Art. 21.*

Hermanas IHM/ICM, Misión Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México:  
Maureen Kelly, IHM  
Maria Antonia Aranda, IHM  
Carmen Armenta, IHM

### **IHM / ICM Associates Program in Mexico**

Our IHM community, like other congregations, has been in search of more vocations and other ways of working in ministry by relating to other people.

Today we understand the concept of vocations in a more diverse way. We value the opportunity to connect with people who identify with our spirituality, charism, work and community life.

In Ciudad Juárez, Chih, Mexico, since the beginning of our mission, we have promoted this program among lay people who feel the desire to know us better and participate more closely in our ministries.

Since 1990, we began the experience of the program with a lay woman associated in prayer with us, Teresa Delgado. We are sure that she continues to pray for our congregation from the presence of God.



In 2015, a married couple: Valentín “Pancho” Alanís and Hildelisa Ávila worked in the Ecclesial Base Communities and continued together for some years in the Paso del Norte Human Rights Center. For two years, they met every two weeks with Sister Carmen Armenta. They made their commitment in their Chapel three years ago and renewed this year at their home with their family and the IHM / ICM community.

Hildelisa and Valentín have lived their mission for years with a commitment to justice and peace for the families who have been victims of enforced disappearance. They have done pastoral work with vulnerable people in parish communities. We consider that their close presence as associates has helped motivate us to continue to deepen our mission as an IHM / ICM community in Mexico.

*“... we commit ourselves to mutuality in ministry, desiring that our love, reverence, and support of one another be reflected in the way we affirm, encourage, and work with our co-ministers and with each of the persons among whom we serve” IHM Constitutions Chapter 2 Art. 17*

The community of Sta. Elena has been generous in embracing this association proposal from the Mexican culture. Now we are accompanying five more people as possible associates in Juárez, Mexico. There are two married couples: Ramiro and Sonia, Maria Eugenia and Ernesto and a lay person Norma, who have participated for a long time in church and social justice. The IHM / ICM sisters: Carmen, Antonia and Maureen are sharing with them every Monday.

From what they have experienced and known about our congregation in these years of working closely with us in the Chapel of Santa Elena de la Cruz, the formation experience as associates has been profound for them and for us. We believe that the IHM-ICM Associates Program is of great help to people. Those who are in search of a deeper spiritual aspect in their life want to put their gifts and talents into practice, not only within ecclesial religious activities, but also in our society and in the diverse environments (school, work, community, political, social, etc.) in which each one of them participate.

We believe that this partnership can overcome cultural and social limits to enrich lives and our IHM / ICM mission also wherever we are serving as a community.

We hear in our Constitutions a call to respond to human needs and we live our call by participating with those who want to work for the Kingdom and continue the redemptive mission of Jesus. We believe the Associates Program helps us to respond to the synodal call that Pope Francis proposes for us to carry out in our pastoral work.

*“Sharing a common commitment to participate in Christ's redeeming mission, we encourage one another in our diverse ministries, recognizing that a variety of gifts enriches the community and furthers the Reign of God in multiple ways”*  
*IHM Constitutions Chapter 2 Art. 21.*

IHM/ICM Sisters, Mission Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua, México:

*Maureen Kelly, IHM*  
*Maria Antonia Aranda, IHM*  
*Carmen Armenta, IHM*



### **Sue Rakoczy: *Bonum Commune***

Each year at graduation at St. Augustine College, we present a *Bonum Commune* award to some person who has contributed significantly to the 'bonum' of the 'commune', the good of the community, be it the country, the church, academic life, or the institute itself. For the past four years, I have written the citations for the award, which included one for Albert Nolan OP and the local Archbishop Buti Thlaghale. I would like by way of this *Overseas Update* to present Sue Rakoczy a *Bonum Commune* award in testimony for her incredible contribution to the academy, the church, and the larger South African Society. Such a citation is usually 3-4 pages in length, but here it will be shorter.



Sue entered the IHM community in 1967 after completing her BA at Marygrove College, and in the heady — and tumultuous — years just after the conclusion of the Second Vatican Council. She would study at Fordham and then earn a doctorate at Catholic University of America. Upon completion of her studies she worked for a short time in the diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Missouri as a staff member of the Center for Pastoral Life and Ministry working with laity.

Shortly, the possibility of working in Africa was moot. As Sue recalls, the world was wide open, and the church was 'new and fresh' in Africa. With the blessing of the IHM community, off she went in 1982 to spend six fruitful years in Ghana. There were obstacles, however. Her original invitation was to teach at a seminary, but that was withdrawn. Instead she served at a retreat center, making lifelong friends and 'honing' her spirituality skills.

In 1989, at the invitation of Mary Jo Maher, Sue came to Howick in South Africa and began to teach at St. Joseph's Theological Institute. Here, her academic gifts flourished. She taught in the undergrad program and soon was also teaching postgrad students at the neighbouring University of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal). The unique Cluster arrangement of the Institute with neighbouring theological faculties gave her a wide spectrum of ecumenical contacts and broader teaching possibilities. Sue was involved in establishing the publication arm of this Cluster, and helped edit *Grace & Truth*, the theological journal of the Institute. When she retired as Book Review editor after many years, one of her colleagues was aghast: 'Oh no! Who will do all this work now? We will need four people to replace her.'

At St. Joseph's Sue taught systematic theology and spirituality, establishing a course in Women Doing Theology (using her own text as the basis), and offering a course in Spiritual Accompaniment which drew students from beyond the Institute. She also coordinated the postgraduate programs in Catholic Theology and Christian Spirituality through the University, supervising students at every level. A list of her publications and presentations extends to three full pages and deals with a variety of topics. These topics include Ecofeminism, HIV-AIDS, spiritual direction, and social justice, and

figures such as Dorothy Day, Dorothy Stang, Florence Nightingale, Wangari Maathi and Thomas Merton.

Her biannual production of this *Overseas Update* was established and maintained by Sue. The update draws from often reluctant writers to produce a written record of the engagement of all who have been involved in the overseas ministry of the IHM congregation.

One needs not mention her substantial involvement in the ongoing spirituality project of the IHM's which is known to us all.

Sue's 'Bonum' to our 'Commune', both the IHM community here and elsewhere, to the Church in South Africa, to the academic life of the country would certainly merit her such an award now as she brings to a successful conclusion 39 years of meaningful ministry on the continent and 54 years of life in the IHM community. Thank you, Sue. *Siyabonga kakhulu!*

*Judy Coyle, IHM*

### **South Africa: The Struggle Continues**

Bad news seems to be piling up in South Africa – not to mention disturbing news all over the world. A fourth wave of Covid-19 is expected here in November; proper HIV/AIDS medication has been mostly not available for several months. The latest job results are grim, at 44% unemployment, said to be the worst globally. In July there was serious arson and looting in KwaZulu-Natal and Johannesburg areas. There were



drive-by shootings of ANC municipal election voters. Former President Jacob Zuma was sentenced to jail time for contempt of court while facing more counts of corruption. It seems like winter in South Africa. It takes faith to believe that things are actually improving.

Meanwhile the three of us IHMs in South Africa are continuing our various ministries of education from preschool to higher degrees, as well as outreach to the most vulnerable among us. Donors in the U.S. have made it possible to give daily sandwiches to children who are not receiving food at school. Children in our preschool also receive a hot meal in addition to educational preparation for first grade. Seminarians and lay people are given opportunities to study theology and other life skills. A support group for HIV-AIDS continues to assist people to connect with clinics and hospitals and to provide transport to receive two Pfizer shots. With no expectation

of quick outcomes, we continue to offer education and healing and to learn from the country where we will always be guests.

Some days it seems like things are the same as the day each of us arrived in South Africa. On other days, we trust in the Spirit who is transforming the whole world one person and one community at a time. It is a privilege to walk with people of other cultures and to face the challenges that life brings us both here and in the U.S., knowing that Jesus did not turn his face from suffering and by his commitment he overcame everything, including death. We look toward to spring in South Africa.

*Peg O'Shea, IHM*

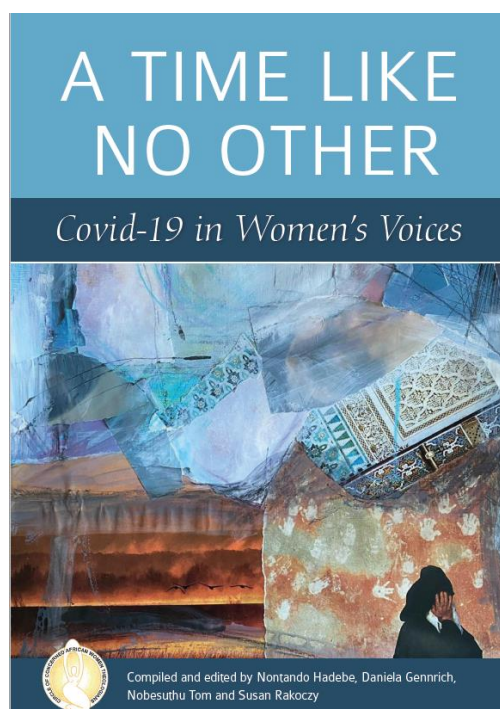
### ***A Time Like No Other: COVID 19 in Women's Voices***

I have been a member of the South African Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians since the mid 1990s. The Circle was founded in 1989 by Mercy Oduyoye of Ghana to encourage women to meet and support one another to write and publish their theological reflections. Circles meet in many African countries and have been very productive.

In March 2020 when the COVID-19 lockdown began in South Africa, a small group of Circle members including myself, organized ourselves as a Friday afternoon sharing group on Zoom. One Friday in April we decided to work towards a book on women's experiences of the pandemic.

Four of us — Nontando Hadebe, Daniela Gennrich, Nobesuthu Tom and myself — began to work as the editorial team and put out a call for submissions. We have a wide network and to our delight the contributions began to fill our mailboxes. We received heart-rending reflections of death and stories of resilience. There were poems, prayer services and artwork. Women wrote honestly of how very difficult the pandemic has been and continues to be for them, especially when there was a violent man living in the house. Gender based violence (GBV) increased so dramatically that at one of his "family meetings" on Sunday evenings President Cyril Ramaphosa named GBV as "a second pandemic". The youngest contributor who was ten years old sent her artwork.

I did much of the copy editing and I was moved by the women's reflections as I read them. The other members of the team helped find funding through various national and international contacts. A local artist donated her beautiful paintings for the cover and as divider pages.



Slowly, the book took shape in six sections: Tribute and Trauma, Lament, Ministry Challenges, Trials and Faith, Ministry Challenges and Hoping. We deliberately titled the final section “hoping”—as a verb of action, not a noun of possession.

August is National Women’s Month in South Africa and so we had our launch via Zoom on the 9<sup>th</sup>, National Women’s Day, a public holiday. Over 130 people attended. The print run was 370 copies and they sold rapidly. “We Will Speak Out SA”, a faith-based organization working to end gender based and sexual violence ([www.wwsosa.org.za](http://www.wwsosa.org.za)), has provided a [link to the pdf of the book](#).

In September, a launch sponsored by Future Church drew over 200 people. People clamoured for the book—but had to read it online. We are hoping for a US publisher and are also raising money for a second print run.

It is a truly significant Circle publication and I am very glad to have been part of the team which brought it to birth.

*Sue Rakoczy, IHM*

### **The Future of the *Overseas Update***

This is the 49<sup>th</sup> issue of the *Overseas Update*. It was first published in 1994 when the province structure ended and was replaced by Mission Units. I have edited it during these years and it has met a positive response.

However, I will retire from my teaching ministry in South Africa and will return to the United States. At the October Corazones Sin Fronteras/Hearts Without Borders Mission Circle meeting we discussed the Update’s future. I proposed that after I return to Michigan, I will edit a final issue-- #50—an important milestone for celebrations—as the Spring 2022 issue. It will be a retrospective of IHM overseas ministry these past 27 years.



So, the call for articles is really a call for memories. Anyone who is ministering overseas or has done so is invited to share an event, honor someone now gone to God, and/or reflect on what your overseas experience has meant to you.

This issue will be published in May 2022. The deadline for “memories” is April 2, 2022.



## ***Overseas Update Format***

The *Overseas Update* is available in a digital format on the IHM website ([www.ihmsisters.org](http://www.ihmsisters.org)) and via email to South African friends. Doing our share to save the trees!

## **Thanks to**

all those who pray for our ministries and contribute in various ways to them, to Calley Duffey of the IHM Communications Office for the layout and Annette St. Amour, IHM who coordinates the distribution of the *Overseas Update*.

A special thanks to Dorothy Diederichs, IHM who assisted with the distribution for many years.

## **The Next and Final Issue**

will be published in May 2022. Please send any news and articles to Sue Rakoczy, IHM ([srakoczymonroe@gmail.com](mailto:srakoczymonroe@gmail.com)) by April 2, 2022. Thank you.

