

Margaret (Frances Margaret) Gaffney, IHM



Frank and Margaret Gaffney lived in Akron, Ohio with their children. The oldest, a girl, died soon after birth. She was followed by Frank, Joan, Margaret and Michael. The family belonged to St. Vincent's Parish, which had been staffed by IHMs; but, before Margaret began first grade, they were replaced by Dominican Sisters. After the sixth grade, her parents wanting her to have the same good IHM education as they did, transferred her to St. Mary for grades 7-12.

During this time, Margaret participated in a variety of sports and social activities. She also struggled back and forth with a call to join the IHM Sisters. She discussed her quandary with Sister Marie Edward Patton who helped her discern. Over her years there, she had come to understand the basics of social justice by participating in Sodality. She also felt drawn to the IHM's prayerful spirit. So, Margaret made the decision to join IHM after graduation.



After formation at the Motherhouse, following the practice at the time of staying only a few years at a "mission," Margaret taught in six schools from 1954-71. From 1954-1960, she had primary grades at St. Frederick Pontiac, St. Raymond Detroit and St. Mary Mt. Morris. Then, in 1960, she was assigned to go out of state, first to St. Michael Miami and then, in 1966, to St. Mark Cleveland. It was there that she took part in social action demonstrations. In 1969, she returned to Michigan. to teach at St. Joseph, Erie and minister to the people of Luna Pier. Then, as a result of Proposal C, St. Joseph closed its school and Margaret's ministry and life changed.



A St. Joseph parishioner circulated and then delivered a petition to Margaret asking her to apply for a teaching position at the Mason Consolidated School in Erie. They wanted her to continue being an influence in their lives. She was hired and taught many of her former students. She remained in the district from 1971-1998 where she was an elementary school teacher, a Director of Reading for K-12, a state and federal grant writer and an elementary school principal. Then, in 1992, Margaret was elected as first assistant of the Northeast Province and continued her full-time ministry at Mason.

In 1997, she opened the school year as a principal and then became the Acting Superintendent of the Mason Consolidated School District. Her educational preparation and experience, as well as her reputation in the school district, were major considerations in making the appointment. She retired from formal education in 1998.



After retiring, she went to Ireland to study Celtic spirituality. Returning to the United States, she participated in an Adrian Dominican program that prepared spiritual directors. Then, IHM asked her to serve as Director of the Visitation Retreat center on the IHM campus.

Now, Margaret is a spiritual director and directs retreats. She reflects, "My life has been a great journey. I kept falling into positions that were always challenging and dedicated to the IHM mission."