

Then & Now
Marie-Esther Haflett, IHM



Sister Marie-Esther was born Pamela Rose in Baltimore, Md., in 1943. Two years later, she and her family (mother, father, sisters Lyndell and Bonnie) moved to New York and then to Florida. Growing up she attended 13 different schools. This cultivated her ability to adapt to new situations.

She grew up Episcopalian but converted to Catholicism while she was in high school. In the 11th grade she felt the calling to religious life. The parish priest gave her a book of 300 American religious communities. She read through the whole book and narrowed her choice to either the Monroe IHMs or the Adrian Dominicans. Monroe sent her a packet of information and Adrian sent her an application. She decided she liked the Monroe approach better and was put in touch with IHM Sisters in Miami.



She entered the IHMs in 1961 and went on her first mission in 1966, teaching at Epiphany and St. Timothy. She also studied at the University of Detroit and earned a master's degree in mathematics. In 1972 she traveled to Puerto Rico and ministered there for the next six years.

In 1978 Sister Anne Marie Hughes asked her to go to Kenya to teach and be with Sr. Margaret Lorenger. She was there for about six years. Although she had a master's degree in mathematics, she was asked to teach economics in grades eight through 12. She studied to get a master's degree in economics at the University of Notre Dame. When she completed the program, she was offered a scholarship to complete a Ph.D., which she did.



Her next assignment took her to Zimbabwe where she taught mathematics. Mugabe took over and political difficulty ensued. The country underwent many changes that made it difficult for foreigners to stay. Sister Marie-Esther left and went to South Africa to teach at Mankwe Christian College of Education.

After a home visit, she was travelling back to South Africa. She sat next to a priest who told her about a Catholic university just being formed in South Africa. She wrote to the president of the university. He said he felt her letter was "sent from God," and asked her to come right away.

She went to Uganda Martyrs University where she served as dean of business and as registrar. While she was dean, she started mathematics, economics and computer science programs. She also served as dean of science and associate professor. As the university

grew, more and more teachers came. Many of her students are now professors at the Uganda Martyrs University and other universities, as well. She was there 14 years.



She came back to the Motherhouse to live in 2010. Two days a week she helps Sister Jeannette Boudreau at the Mercy Education project in Detroit. There she helps women learn remedial math to earn a GED and a chance at a better job. Most of her students now are between 30 and 75 years old.

In her free time, she enjoys knitting and needlepoint.