

## Mary Bea Keeley, IHM



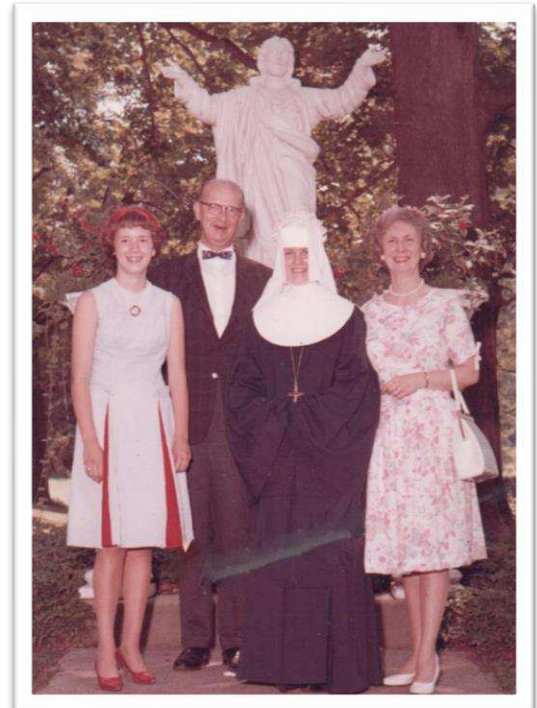
Sister Mary Bea Keeley grew up attending Catholic schools in the Philadelphia area. The sisters “seemed joyful, had fun together, supported each other and seemed to love their ministry. I was attracted to that; I wanted to serve and teach little children.” She spent 36 years with the IHM Sisters of Philadelphia, primarily as a teacher, before joining the IHM Sisters of Monroe.

In 1994 Sister was working as a high school Admission Director and had begun studying for a master’s

degree in holistic spirituality/spiritual direction at Chestnut Hill University. It broadened her thinking. “I encountered the importance of social justice issues, ecology and feminism. I understood how hierarchal our church, society and community are.” During her internships at the Jesuit Center in Wernersville, Pennsylvania, as she associated with Spiritual Directors from other congregations, Sister Mary Bea began questioning the thrust of the IHMs in Philadelphia. Having met IHMs from Monroe, she realized her thinking was more aligned with theirs. She felt welcome each time she came to Monroe and was taken by the Sisters’ “feisty intellectualism.”

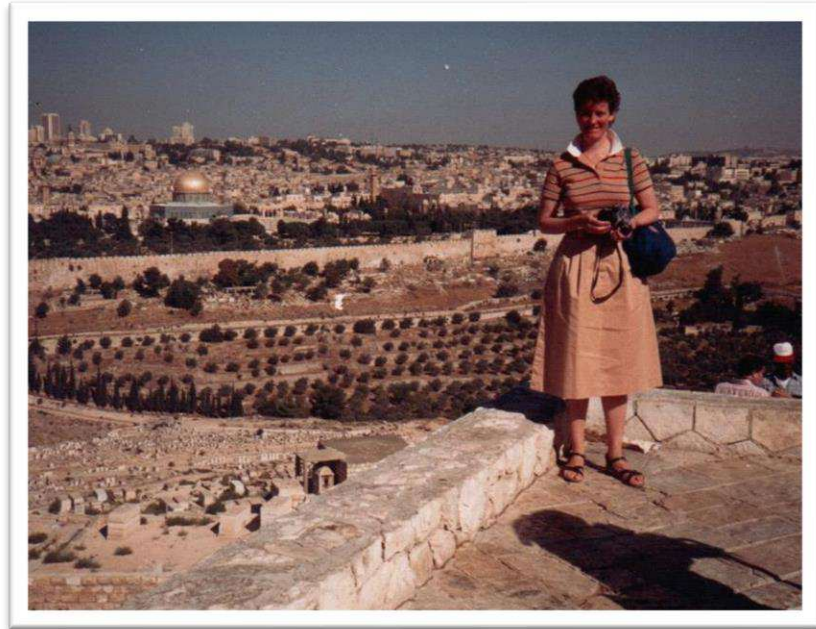
After four years of discernment, Sister Mary Bea took a “huge jump” and joined the IHMs of Monroe. It was the right decision, but it was challenging to say goodbye to friends in Philadelphia, knowing she would not be around to grow old with friends she made when she entered religious life. Even harder was moving so far away from her sister Anne and her family.

On Dec. 31, 1999, she received a call from Mae Kierans, CSJ, Director of Guest House for Women Religious offering her the position of Spiritual Councilor. So, a month later she moved to Michigan and was learning this new ministry and feeling at home in it.



In the ensuing years, she ministered at Visitation in Monroe, followed by four wonderful years as Pastoral Ministry Manager in the newly built CCRC, Fox Run, in Novi, Michigan.

Sr. Mary Fran Gilleran called her in 2007 to become the next Vocation Director. After some discernment, she accepted the position. She enjoyed seven challenging years speaking out about the IHM Congregation, finding creative ways to showcase IHM life and meeting with women discerning a call to religious life. She felt privileged to share their lives and help them discern.



Next came an invitation to minister as Pastoral Care Director at the Retirement Center established for the Mercy Sisters and lay residents in Chicago. "I learned so much about the Mercy community and the inspiring legacy of Catherine.McAuley, their foundress. I came away richer for this experience."

Perhaps God was saving the best for last, "I spent the last five years as Director of Pastoral Care at IHMSLC. The Health Care staff with whom I worked inspired me greatly, and the opportunity to be with Sisters and lay residents at vulnerable times in their lives was a treasure. All I can say is I've been so richly blessed."