

## Kathleen O'Brien, IHM



"Sister Kathleen O'Brien grew up the middle child with two brothers and two sisters. Her parents had emigrated from Ireland in the 1920s and settled in Sacred Heart Parish in Dearborn, where she attended grade school. During high school at St Mary Academy, she realized she had a call to live her life as an IHM Sister. She was an eager student studying theology and English and being trained as a teacher. Her first assignments were teaching primary children in IHM schools in Michigan. During summers, she began working at Catholic University on her MA in English and eventually began teaching English at IHM High school in Westchester, Illinois. She loved teaching both levels.

In 1968 when the Congregation created Provinces, Kathleen was appointed Northwest Province Secretary and Treasurer. It served as a real challenge for her and a wonderful opportunity to get to know the members. Subsequently, she became part of the IHM Formation Team, ministering to sisters who had not yet made final vows. It was another graced time for her to come to know the Community.



As a result of Assembly 72, the Congregation was led to an expanding awareness of social injustice and a call to minister to people at the margins. While volunteering as a member of a prison support group, Kathleen discerned a call to become a prison chaplain. After preparation and training, she ministered in the federal prison in Lexington, Kentucky and later at the Texas state prison in Gatesville, Texas.

Those 15 years of ministry expanded her consciousness. She was changed and deeply touched by the many men and women to whom she ministered. They showed her the power of

the grace of God over the long haul, showed her that every life is a unique story and taught her that we simply cannot judge another. . .we don't begin to know. While ministering in

prison, she learned how the prisoners' children were adversely affected by their parent's incarceration. So, after leaving prison chaplaincy, she became a CASA volunteer, a voice for neglected and abused children in the court system. Later she became a member of Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking.



In 1994 Sister Kate, as she was then known, was elected to the IHM

Leadership Council. It was a remarkable experience working for six years as part of such a creative, collaborative team ministering to the IHM Community and beyond. One memorable focus was the engagement of the members in planning the sustainable renovation of the Motherhouse. Then, after a few years assisting Sister Marie Sweeney in Campus Ministry at Marygrove College, Kate began her final ministry. She joined the Mercy Memorial Hospice Team as chaplain, ministering to patients and families and leading funeral services. This intense teamwork has fostered many lasting friendships.

Kate celebrates her jubilee as a member of the IHM Community with deep gratitude to God for the loving support, deep friendships and the Providential leading of the Holy Spirit all down the years.