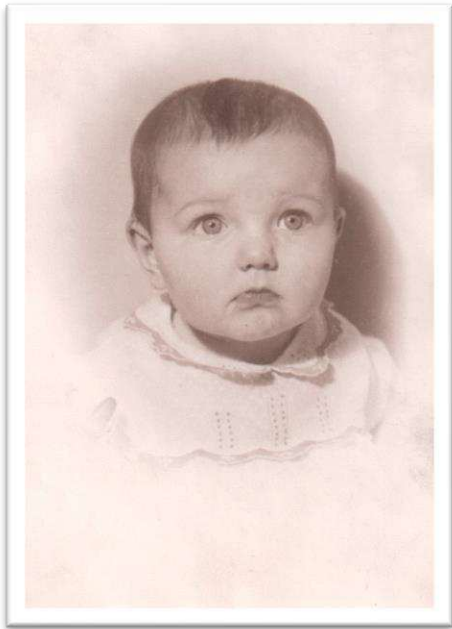


## Valerie (Mary Keith) Knoche, IHM



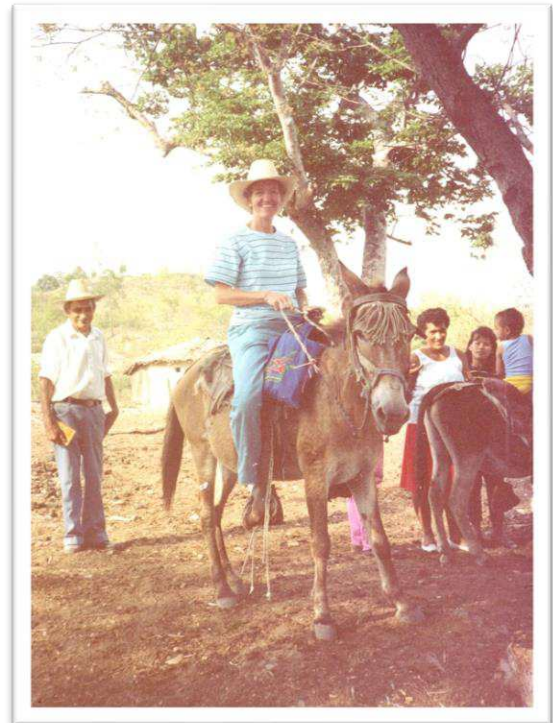
Valerie was born and raised on the east side of Detroit, the fourth child of Frederick and Helen (Mullins) Knoche. The Knoche children consisted of seven boys and four girls, all of whom were taught the values of faith in God, hard work, kindness, generosity and unconditional love by their wonderful parents. Valerie remembers her parents showing her and her siblings a little Mission magazine depicting starving children worldwide and encouraging them not to waste food. Her parents supported her grade school's desire to purchase and name "pagan babies" that lived in faraway countries so they could have a better life. These acts of generosity and instruction were truly the mustard seeds that led her to become a missionary and serve the poorest of the poor.

Valerie's parents worked hard so their children would have a Catholic education. The Racine Dominicans taught her in grade school at Assumption Grotto and the IHM Sisters at Rose of Lima High School. Witnessing how the IHM Sisters reached out to all people with a generous heart, she wanted to be a part of that community of selfless and caring women. She entered the IHM Sisters in Sept. 1962.

After graduating from Marygrove College, Monroe Campus, with a degree in Elementary Education, Valerie began teaching ministry at St. Charles Grade School in Newport, Michigan. After four wonderful years, she chose to go to Puerto Rico, where she taught English at La Merced in Cayey.

In 1973, Valerie attended a Latin American assembly of the IHM Sisters, where it was decided to make a preferential option to serve the poor. This was the clear opening to commence with starting a mission in Honduras. Three IHMs stationed in Puerto Rico volunteered for the mission: Karla Bair, Anne Marie Hughes and Valerie Knoche."

Valerie served the Honduran people for 32 years, from 1973 - 2005. The IHM Sisters lived and



ministered in large, remote parishes with one priest. Their ministry included evangelization, home visitation, formation of basic Christian communities, the celebration of the Word and the formation of women and men to become Delegates of the Word and catechists. Community development was an instrumental part of the sisters'

mission work. They worked diligently with the people to improve living conditions, including safe drinking water, growing vegetables and basic health education. Due to their efforts, medical and dental teams from the U.S. volunteered to join the Sisters to improve conditions for the needy.

When the mission in Honduras closed in 2005, Valerie returned to Michigan. Since her return, she has served as the Hispanic Minister for the North Macomb Vicariate of the Archdiocese of Detroit. Part of her ministry includes being a member of *Strangers No Longer*, which aids immigrants and advocates for a comprehensive and humane immigration policy.

Valerie's heart is overflowing with gratitude for the abundant blessings from family, friends, community and ministry over the years.

