



Founders' Day exhibit highlights creative expression

From the first classes offered in 1846 up to this very minute, creative expression has been pursued and taught by IHM sisters. A widely varied collection of artifacts, art pieces, weavings and photographs are on display as this year's Founders' Day exhibit sponsored by the IHM Archives.

Called "Experiences and Expressions of the Arts," the exhibit features creativity by and about sisters, beginning with icons of Mother Theresa Maxis and Father Louis Gillet done by Nancy Lee Smith, IHM.

The theme of the exhibit comes from a 1999 article written by Julie Slowik, IHM, and Mary Clare Yates, RSM. "To do or participate in the arts is to be present to life," they wrote. "Within us, the arts center and sustain the underlying spirit of



creation; it is ours to seize with joy."

The IHM sisters have been engaged in the arts from the start. The first curriculum included embroidery, music, lacework and painting. Naturally, they sewed their own habits. Mother Mary Joseph Walker, who died in 1864, is represented in the display by her delicate and richly colorful drawings of flowers (above).

Also on display are:

- Pages of illuminated manuscript

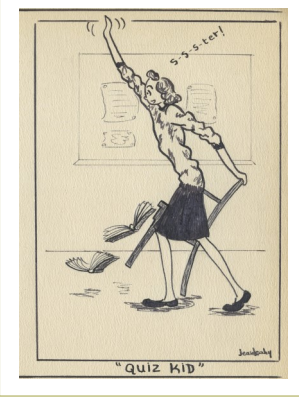
- Weavings
- Sculpture next to a photo showing the artist working on the piece
- 12 Pages of Life
- A 1961 painting we call "the blue nuns" that inspired the theme of the exhibit
- A piece of the coupler board from the 1940 organ built for the Motherhouse chapel
- A sister's painter's palette
- Handwritten music
- Calligraphy
- Gardening
- Book publishing and illustration

Finally, visitors are invited to create their own square of art and leave it on display. Everyone is encouraged to "seize the joy" of creative expression.

The exhibit will be open until Jan. 25.



One of the sisters in the exhibit is John Louise Leahy (1925-2016). She taught art at Marygrove College for 40 years, traveled Africa on a Fulbright study tour that led to her doctorate and was a credentialed art therapist. But before all that, young Jean Leahy already was drawing daily life at Immaculata High School and at Marygrove College.



Mystery 'arrival' preserves poignant story

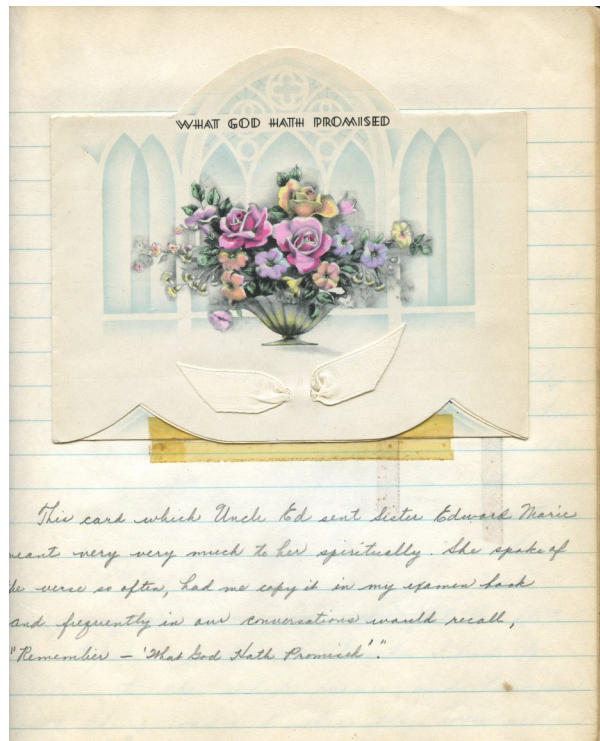
It is not unusual to arrive for work in Archives and find someone has left us a "gift." Sometimes it's papers; once it was a typewriter. Many don't include the donor's identification.

Recently the unattributed submission was an 8½-by-7-inch spiral-bound notebook with a brown cover. Postcards and holy cards were pasted inside. Many pages are covered in good handwriting and signed "S E M."

On the first page the heading is "St Mary Convent Sept. 12, 1936." Ahh, at least we have a specific place and time.

The next page, Jan. 10, 1937, still at St. Mary's, talks about "We are running out of salt...." and asking the reader to send some. On the facing page there is a postcard addressed to Mrs. E.H. Karber, Detroit.

Several pages in, we see the writer's name: Sister Edward Marie. Today, we have an indispensable database in Archives that has been lovingly developed by Sister Fran Mlocek. By plugging in the religious name Edward Marie we get Sister Edward Marie



Ufford. Her ministry list is unusually brief: Entered on Feb. 11, 1930; taught at St. Vincent in Akron. In 1933, she returned to the Motherhouse.

The notebook reflects correspondence during the last three years of her life. At the end of the notebook are newspaper obituaries. She died on Sept. 14, 1939, of tuberculosis.

Sister Edward Marie was born Marie Catherine on Feb. 8, 1909, in Detroit. Her father was killed in WWI and her mother died six months later. Her mother's sister, Delia, and her husband, Ed Karber, took in the children.

After attending St. Brigid School and St. Mary Academy, Catherine entered the congregation. Her sister, Ann Marie, followed her into the convent in 1935.

The notebook appears to have been created after Edward Marie's death by that sister, Mary Solanus Ufford, IHM. Sister Mary Solanus died in 2003.

Those letters included hopeful updates on her health, concerns for her aunt and uncle, gratitude for their visits and gifts, and community chatter.

Just before Lent, 1939, she describes the

banging outside her window. "They are working steadily on the Chapel," she wrote. "This cement mixer makes so much noise you can't even think."

From her mission at Wayne, Sister Mary Solanus arrived home in June. She writes about their last summer together as "grand in many ways. Sister and I talked of such deep matters that summer that I began to wonder what she was thinking about or planning on. ... When I registered surprise she told me that she wasn't going to be around much longer. When I burst into tears my reward was a well-worded lecture on selfishness. Then she went on to bequeath me her most loved possession – her ring."

A final letter, written to her sister a day or two before her death, but delivered after, ended with this, "Will write again in a few weeks or sooner if anything turns up. Keep me posted on everything, particularly if Wayne falls off the map. You're getting lots of prayers off of me. Lovingly, S. Edward Marie S. of M."

When life revolved around school days

Can there be a more classic IHM photo than a sister in a classroom? This is Sister Marie Ange Payette teaching on Dec. 12, 1952. Although the school is not identified, Sister Marie Ange taught at St. Mary Academy in Monroe from 1938-1953. The picture was taken by her brother, Everette J. Payette, a well-known commercial photographer in Monroe. Ev visited his sister often after she retired to the Motherhouse, usually with camera in hand. Sister Marie Ange died on Feb. 28, 1992, at the age of 84.

In a strange twist, her brother died in a car wreck after suffering a heart attack just one week later, March 5, 1992.

This photo prompted these Facebook comments:

Lynn Sims: I had Sister Marie Ange for a teacher in grade school at the Academy!! LOVED HER!!!!

John Zarb: The IHM archives tell a story of dedication, mastery of subjects, leadership, caring and selflessness.



Michele Matuszewski: This well "could" have been my classroom. I remember the name and the date is spot on. I was in 4th grade at SMA in 1952-1953.

Shirley Boryczka: This photo brings back so many memories...the nuns dedicated their life for us.

Sisters' labor on the farms was vital contribution during summers



We remember the iconic wartime vehicle, the Willys Jeep. Built to ferry soldiers during World War II, 1941-45, the Willys made a wildly successful transition into civilian life. In this 1949 photo, the Jeep is either a photo prop or actually was taking IHM Sisters out to the fields.

Always a workhorse, the Jeep undoubtedly was appreciated on the St. Mary Farms, as was the labor of the sisters. During summers at the Motherhouse in Monroe, sisters were expected to fill time relaxing, taking classes AND working, often picking and preserving the fruits and vegetables from the IHM farms.

Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

610 W. Elm Ave.
Monroe, MI 48162
www.ihmsisters.org
Follow us on Facebook
Phone: 734-240-9695

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Director: Jennifer Meacham, Archivist
jmeacham@ihmsisters.org

Editor: Deborah Saul
dsaul@ihmsisters.org



Since 2000, all IHM sisters have been encouraged to submit individual chronicles to the IHM Archives. These records about your own life and ministry over the course of a year or more add breadth and depth to the documented history of the IHM Sisters. Your contribution will enrich the future record of the IHM, so please be sure your life's story is included in the community's story.

Mystery photo: Was this a promotional shot about a nun's life?

We have to admit bewilderment over this 1960s-era photo. The two nuns at the check-out counter are Sister Barbara Torzewski (left) and Sister Helena Woods. Sister Barbara does not remember where or why the photo was taken, but says matter-of-factly, "It must have been staged; we never would have bought Sugar Pops." A tiny photographer's stamp in the corner of the original photo says, "Coville, Dearborn." Sister Barbara and Sister Helena both taught at Sacred Heart Elementary School, Dearborn, but for only one overlapping year: 1963-64. Sister Barb remembers doing weekly shopping for the convent at a nearby A&P, but they had to shop for more than two dozen sisters. This cartful clearly is not their usual weekly trip, begging the question: Why was this photo taken?

