

Sister Mary Ann Hinsdale grew up in Chicago, the oldest of 11 children. She began her primary education at St. Simeon School and then the family moved to Westchester, Ill., and joined Divine Infant Parish. The archdiocese opened Immaculate Heart of Mary High School and staffed it with IHM Sisters; Sister Mary Ann was a member of the second graduating class.



Impressed by the excellent education she received from the sisters at IHM, she wanted to be like them. She had received a journalism scholarship to Marquette but entered the IHM congregation instead. “I was attracted to the sisters’ enthusiasm, creativity and spirituality,” she recalls. “Ironically, I was never really interested in teaching, and I still remember when, as a postulant, I woke up and thought, ‘Oh my God, they’re all teachers!’”

Sister Mary Ann feels she was allowed to grow up in the community, because she joined right after high school. “I entered during a time of flux, but this just deepened my call,” she says. “I knew that this is what I wanted to do, what God wanted me to do, and that they were the same thing.”

She completed a bachelor’s degree in theology and German from Marygrove and studied in Germany for a semester. After graduation, she lived in the formation house in Washington, D.C., where she earned her master’s degree in religious education from Catholic University. She also earned her teaching certificate in English “on the side.” The Washington years, with anti-Vietnam war protests and lobbying for public transportation, made for exciting times for this young IHM.

After graduation, Sister Mary Ann taught at Immaculata High School in Detroit for two years before becoming director of Campus Ministry at Marygrove College. Invited by Margaret Brennan, IHM, to do a doctorate in theology, she chose the University of St. Michael’s in Toronto. Her dissertation, under the direction of Gregory Baum, focused on Hans Küng, with whom she studied in Tübingen, Germany, thanks to a fellowship from the World Council of Churches.

In 1982, she began teaching theology at St. John’s Provincial Seminary. During her five years there she got a chance to do the journalism that she had “given up,” serving as editor of Spinnaker, the IHM’s newspaper. When St. John’s closing was announced, she moved to the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass. After 13 years at Holy Cross, she was invited to Boston College to become director of the Institute of Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry. She continues to teach at Boston College today as associate professor of theology. During her time in New England, Sister Mary Ann was elected first as secretary, and later, president, of the Catholic Theological Society of America.



Sister Mary Ann finds her greatest joy in accompanying students: “Mentoring future theologians, particularly women, is a way to shape the church of the future.” Sister Mary Ann says she would not be who she is without the IHM community and is profoundly grateful to the congregation for all that she has been given.