

*“It’s about relationship with God; relationships with whomever. That’s why I love where we are now. The table is so much bigger.”*

The Grey Nuns of Ottawa taught Sister Camille Brouillard throughout her school years in Massachusetts.

Being a bit of a troublemaker, a religious vocation was not part of her thinking. But one of the sisters who taught Sister Camille planted the seed that she may have a calling. Ultimately, “It was my deep relationship with God” directed her toward religious life. Her father was not happy with her decision because he would miss her, but her mother (whom Sister Camille remains grateful to have been able to care for during her final days) was supportive. She spent 15 years as a Grey Nun.

She took some time to discern with a friend who was a Trappist monk and realized her ideas about growth and change were more aligned with the IHM community than the Grey Nuns. With her first visit to Monroe, she knew she belonged.

“Sister Margaret Brennan was talking about IHM spirituality and the deep spiritual relationship with God resonated with me. And the sisters, even the elderly, were so full of life. I knew this is where God wanted me.”

In 1978, Sister Camille arrived to begin her life with the IHMs. She initially lived at the Motherhouse, visiting with the residents, working in an office and other tasks that allowed her to get to know the community. The sisters helped her feel comfortable and welcome.

After a year, Sister Camille became a pastoral minister at St. Joseph Parish in Monroe. She completed a degree in social work at Marygrove College and began to work with Haitian refugees in Florida. She was impressed by the Haitians’ strong commitment to faith to help them through difficult times. She ministered at a clinic that cared for Haitian children infected with HIV/AIDS. She and her co-workers went into the children’s homes to work with their families, which she describes as “a real learning experience.”

After 14 years, she took a year of renewal and returned to Detroit to live with IHM novices. She then worked in transportation at the Motherhouse and ministered as a social worker for the IHM Health Care Center. Now, Sister Camille does activities with the sisters in the Memory Care Unit, a ministry she loves. “It’s just being in the present and loving people and enjoying.”

Her greatest joy in the IHM community is “the energy for justice and peace. The education, too! It’s exciting because ministry isn’t confined to one or two things. It’s wherever your gifts take you. I’ve always felt that where one of us is, we’re all there. There is something about it when we all get together, an energy we have.”