

*"Your truth is caught, not taught."*

When she was 4, Sister Jannita Marie Complo saw IHM Sisters in their blue habits; she misidentified them as the Blessed Mother. Her mother corrected her and told her they worked for God.

"I decided right then and there that's what I would do," Sister Jannita recalls.

She grew up in Monroe and attended St. Mary Academy. During her senior year of high school, she told Sister Marie Chantal she was not going to college; she would become a sister. Surprised, Sister Marie Chantal replied, "I expected you to be on a trapeze in a circus."

Undeterred, Sister Jannita found a sponsor and set her plan in motion. In August 1953, she enthusiastically arrived at the Motherhouse with anticipation and the assurance that she "was going to work for Jesus." When she received her religious name, she was given her own: Jannita. She was so pleased that she jumped up and hugged Mother Teresa McGivney.

Sister Jannita taught first grade at St. Thomas Aquinas (Detroit) and St. John (Monroe) before teaching at Marygrove College. She earned her doctorate in curriculum development from Wayne State University. While writing her doctoral dissertation, she created Dramakinetics, which uses movement and drama to foster a child's kinesthetic intelligence.

"When I first began teaching, I noticed that regardless of children's intellects or abilities, they had one thing in common. They could all use their bodies to express themselves," Sister Jannita explains.

After she earned her doctorate, she became the director of student teaching at Marygrove. Through her Dramakinetics classes, many teachers have used this method to develop the potential in children.

Sparked by an interest in Native American dance, Sister Jannita received a grant to work with the Jemez Indians in New Mexico. She documented her movement activities with the Jemez Indians in her first *Dramakinetics in the Classroom* book. While ministering in New Mexico, she received an Honor Award for Meritorious Service from the United States Department of the Interior and an Outstanding Administer from the National Indian School Board of Education.

When she returned to Monroe, Sister Jannita started the Children's Creativity Center to provide a learning space for children with special needs. When it opened, she advertised in the *Monroe Evening News*, "Just as IHM co-founder Theresa Maxis did in 1845 to draw students to the first St. Mary Academy." In the 19 years, the center was opened, she and her staff served more than 500 children. Her new challenge is to update Dramakinetics to include the elderly with dementia. She is currently writing a handbook for caregivers.

She notes, "I have always been blessed that the community has allowed me to use my talents. My superiors saw potential and I was able to develop it through education. Other blessings

were the ordination of my brother and the growing expansion of Dramakinetics in Cincinnati.”