

*"There are no coincidences. I call them God-incidences."*

Sister Laura Hardage was the only child of loving parents, and her life has been a miracle from the start. When doctors told her mother that her pregnancy was not viable and recommended she terminate the pregnancy, she did not; her parents felt so blessed to have Laura in their lives.

Sister Laura attended Epiphany Elementary School in Detroit, where the IHMs taught her. She was inspired by their love for God and their happiness; the seed to join the community was planted during those years. She attended public high school but continued her relationship with the sisters through the Sodality in the parish.

She credits Mother Teresa McGivney for her decision to join the community. "There was something extraordinary about her. She had a joy and a love for God that radiated from her." Mother Teresa invited her to enter the community and that was enough to convince Sister Laura.

She began her teaching ministry at St. Mary of Redford, St. John, Jackson, Michigan, and then back to St. Mary of Redford. During this time, her mother died from cancer. The loss was very difficult; however, by leaning on God, she felt peace and joy. The sisters she lived with were a huge support and "such a gift," she says.

After teaching at St. Mary, she went to Sacred Heart, Auburn Heights, Michigan, to teach and then became principal. She pursued her master's degree in administration at Wayne State University. She became the first principal for Lake Michigan Catholic Schools, the merged primary and middle schools of Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, Michigan.

"Being in formation during Vatican II and studying the Scripture and the Vatican II documents with Sister Margaret Brennan was a blessed time for me," Sister Laura notes.

She taught sixth and seventh grade in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a time of grace when she "really realized the power of the Holy Spirit" in her life. She then served in North Carolina in parish pastoral ministry, eventually becoming the director of Young Adult and Campus Ministry for the Diocese of Raleigh." I enjoyed those ten years, especially the 'Encounter with Christ' retreats with college students and the young adults in the workplace."

Following a year of renewal, Sister Laura served as a director of religious education at a parish in Phoenix before entering a year's residency in clinical pastoral education (CPE) in Phoenix. She then ministered as a certified hospital chaplain in Lexington, Kentucky, for 16 years before returning to Monroe to serve on the Pastoral Care staff at the Motherhouse.

As she reflects on her time in the community, Sister Laura marvels at God's ways. "It is humbling how God uses us beyond what we can ask or imagine. My greatest joy is to be with my sisters and the people God calls me to be with on our journey here."