

*“We need to be risk-takers.”*

Sister Gloria Rivera was born in Mexico. Women religious served people, but they were segregated from society. While attending college in the United States, she became drawn to serving others and the Church. Her goal was to return to her homeland and teach and serve children and people experiencing poverty.

She began her religious life with the Sisters of Mercy from Iowa. “It was an attractive lifestyle,” Sister Gloria says about her decision to become a sister. “And the truth is, the reasons we come are not the reasons we stay.” She met three IHMs at a conference in Mexico and two years later, she moved to Detroit to become further acquainted with the community.

The IHM Sisters’ long history of commitment to justice compelled her to transfer to the IHM community. After she transferred, she became involved with every sustainability effort available. The issues of justice and environment have always been important to her; she saw where the two were becoming the same issue and the IHM community provided her with the opportunity to take action.

She ministered at Groundwork for a Just World, providing education and action on women’s issues, peace, environment and education. This was followed by a position at Proyecto Ayuda – Project Help, which provided older adults with minimum-wage jobs in nonprofit organizations. From there, she became the executive director of Freedom House, which provides comprehensive services for asylum-seekers. Then, she ministered at the Michigan Coalition for Human Rights, planning educational events and providing opportunities to highlight human rights issues.

Since 2005, Sister Gloria has been involved with Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit (GLBD), a network site for the national Bioneers conference. (Bioneers is a national organization combining the environment and social justice movements into one movement. Its annual national conference highlights current issues within the movements.) From 2005-2009, GLBD’s task was to serve as a network for the national conference for those in the Detroit area, but now, it also provides services year-round.

“As long as I am learning and growing amid a community, then there are places to explore,” Sister Gloria says. “Places where we find new ways of doing things or things that need to be done. As long as that’s present in my work, I am fine.”

Her greatest joy since transferring to the community has been “when we committed to leave a legacy of sustainability. It fits with what I felt I was being called to do. As a member of a religious community, I have had a lot of opportunities to be enriched and, therefore, a responsibility to share what I have been given with others.

"We live in a time of great promise and great peril. Dedicated to the liberating mission of Jesus, we need to be fearless. This is the lifestyle that allows for the search for God in community and the search for justice."