

“It is in the midst of our life’s journey that we find God.” - Sister Patricia McCluskey

An attraction to Mystery has always been a part of Sister Patricia McCluskey’s life. “I have always been drawn to and had a relationship with Mystery – the mystery of God’s love, the mystery of nature, the unfolding mystery of life and love revealed through my family and friends and all those who have been a part of the many experiences of my life journey.”

Sister Pat joined the IHMs after high school graduation. Her first ministry was teaching high school in Detroit for two years, followed by three years in Puerto Rico, after which she went to Brazil as a member of the Detroit-Recife team for 12 years. During these years in Brazil, Sister Pat shared life with the poor, engaged in pastoral ministry and the formation of the Christian community, taught at the theological institute and assisted in the formation of religious and lay leaders committed to the poor. Her experiences significantly impacted her as she shared in the life of the poor and their struggle for liberation.

She recalls how the people of Brazil gifted her in so many ways as she experienced their hospitality, simplicity, friendship, their ability to celebrate, their faith in God and their trust that “tomorrow will be better.” They helped her answer the question with which she had grappled when faced with so much poverty. “I saw the suffering and wondered how people could suffer so much and yet not become bitter.” Sister Pat elucidates with an image. Behind the squatters’ area where she lived was a swamp people used for bodily needs. “These lovely flowers were growing out of the swamp – a powerful image, the seeds of resurrection amid the death and dying. It became the basis of hope.”

Sister Pat returned from Brazil when her father suffered a heart attack and her mother was in the initial stages of Alzheimer’s. She served as director of the Federation of Returned Overseas Missioners for almost 10 years. During that time, she also completed a master’s degree in pastoral ministry and a Doctor of Ministry in pastoral care and counseling. Later she earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology and ministered in various roles at an interfaith pastoral counseling center. She was serving as executive director when she was elected to the IHM Leadership Team in 2012. She notes that serving her IHM Sisters and Associates in this role has utilized all the skills acquired from her past experiences, opened new horizons, led to new growth and been a truly life-giving experience for which she is especially grateful.

Sister Pat says her greatest joy from being a part of the IHM community is captured in “a series of intertwined images, friendships, relationships and experiences which have created a journey of expanding horizons, growth, and transformation far beyond anything I could have imagined. My heart is filled with wonder and gratitude.”