

Paula (Paul Edward) Cathcart

I grew up in Detroit and attended St. Agnes School for 12 years, as did my four siblings. For most of those years, we lived next to the convent. I learned the value of faith, love, kindness and hospitality from my parents. I was influenced by the kindness, action for justice and sense of humor of the IHM Sisters who taught me. My parents' involvement in the parish and responsiveness to others' needs encouraged me to consider religious life.

Early in my senior year, I realized I wanted to be a teacher and make a positive impact on the world by teaching social studies. I delayed entering the IHM community until the best time for my family. With my dream in mind, I attended Marygrove College and Wayne State University. When my calling could no longer be denied, I entered the IHM congregation. This is where I felt God wanted me to be.

I ministered as a teacher, principal, and counselor, beginning in 1967, at St. Mary of Redford and Queen of Hope in Detroit. I finished in 1987 at St. Mary Academy, Monroe. The Queen of Hope ministry experience was a wonderful opportunity for the school and parish community to unite, discover and become a community of faith and justice rooted in Vatican II principles.

I continued to be an educator beyond the school setting. From 1994 to 2000, I served on the IHM Leadership Council, where I initiated and oversaw an integrated,

long-range master plan and process for the IHM Motherhouse and campus. This resulted in a communal decision on an "integrating idea" that viewed the entire campus as a center for transforming consciousness and identified sustainability as the overarching framework for decisions regarding the long-range plan. Implementation began with the sustainable renovation of the Motherhouse.

This time in my life was a great gift. It was a time of excitement and change, an opportunity to work with seven other committed and gifted women called to implement a new IHM governance structure that reflected both shared and team leadership. Here, I experienced a call to deepen my understanding of and commitment to the sacred Earth community.

This call was further expressed in 2005 when Gloria Rivera, IHM, and I initiated Great Lakes Bioneers Detroit, a member of the Bioneers Resilient Community Network. Bioneers is a conference, movement and way of life that invites ongoing transformation and the development of ecological consciousness. I quote the closing of the Earth Charter as a 21st-century call to live the liberating mission of Jesus. "Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace and the joyful celebration of life."

I am grateful to and for the IHM community for the opportunities, support and life together, especially for making commitments that call us to go beyond where we are and risk for the sake of the Gospel and the good of the whole.



60 years