

Marie Clark

This year, 2025, is especially meaningful as it marks both the World Jubilee year and my personal 80th Jubilee. Looking back on my 98 years of life and the special memories they hold, many milestones stand out. I want to thank God for my parents, family, friends, religious vocation, IHM education and years of support. A line from Psalm 126 speaks for me: *"Then were our mouths filled with laughter and our tongues with sounds of joy."*

I was born Sept. 26, 1926, the first child of Alphonse and Leona Reichert Clark. I was soon baptized into the Catholic Church and named Mary Elizabeth Clark, but I have been called Marie my entire life. A special blessing occurred in May 1933 when my mother and I made our First Communion together on the same day. My mother had just finished her classes to become a Roman Catholic and had converted from the Lutheran Church.

I was drawn to and greatly admired the sisters who taught me during my grade and high school years, especially the IHM Sisters. My third grade teacher, Sister Assumption and my sixth grade teacher, Sister Bernadette, as well as several high school teachers, profoundly influenced my decision to become an IHM Sister. On Aug. 15, 1944, my parents, my Irish grandmother and my two brothers, Dick and Joe, drove happily with me to the IHM Motherhouse in West Chester,

Pennsylvania. Even when we had to say goodbye that day, there were smiles and hugs but no tears. My grandfather, Sylvester Clark, stayed home. He was the only unhappy one.

Two poignant moments strongly influenced the rest of my life. From 1953 to 1959, I taught high school girls at Villa Maria in Santiago, Chile. I traveled with the Maryknoll Fathers on weekends to help Chile's poorest, homeless families. Then, in 1974, my mother had a severe stroke, and my father died in his sleep just four days later. Six years of a leave of absence to care for her followed and I returned to the convent in 1980 when my mother died.

Finally, in 1988, after years of personal and professional discernment, I transferred to the IHM Sisters of Monroe. I have found peace of mind, movement with the Vatican Council directions and LCWR involvement here.

As I look back on my 98 years of life, my heart overflows with love and gratitude to God. Abraham Heschel's words, "Just to be is a blessing and just to live is holy," speak for me today.

