

Susan (Joseph Ellen) Mahalik

I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and grew up appreciating the significance of living in the cradle of democracy in



America. I was educated by the Philadelphia IHM Sisters in grade and high school and felt the joy in their congregation. During high school, I also encountered women religious from other teaching congregations. These relationships broadened my understanding of religious life. When I graduated—a few years after Vatican II had begun reshaping the Church—I chose to enter the congregation. The IHMs I knew were energetic, grounded and fully engaged with the young women they taught. Their spirit drew me in. I wanted to be part of something that mattered.



I participated in a diocesan new-teacher program and worked as a lay teacher. Then, I taught at a new school staffed by the Philadelphia IHMs and was mentored in the teaching profession. We staffed many schools in the diocese of Philadelphia and most of my time there was spent teaching first and second grade in the inner city. I loved teaching those precious children. They taught me how to understand the difficulty of coping with racism in our culture.



My early years in the congregation were filled with teaching across several parish schools, first in the suburbs and then in the inner city. My ministry included preparing students for the reception of the

sacraments and encouraging parental participation in Church life and their children's education.

Much of my parish ministry unfolded in the hopeful years after Vatican II. Alongside other IHM Sisters, I worked to bring the Council's dream to life in parish settings. Liturgical renewal, music ministry and active lay participation were central to our efforts. We were living the Spirit's call to renewal.

I came to the Monroe IHM congregation after reflecting on my time with the Philadelphia IHMs. I traded loss for a new life and found great joy in my life with the Monroe Sisters. I was always inspired by their prayerful energy and focus as they continued their journey following Christ. Since joining the Monroe IHMs, I've taught school, worked as a pastoral associate and now am a clinical therapist. Pope Francis seems to have opened a new window of hope for the people of the Church. I hope to continue ministry for the people of God in the congregation's name. I love congregational gatherings and feel nurtured by my wonderful IHM Sisters.

I don't know where the time has gone, but it has been filled with many transforming experiences for me and those who have been part of my life's journey. Now, we see the world and the church changing again. So, I ask, "What next does God have in store for me (and us)?" I understand that we can always count on God to lead the way.