

# Genevieve (William Joseph) Petrak

I grew up with my older brother and parents on a small berry farm in Minnetonka Township, Minnesota. I spent my summers picking strawberries and raspberries. I felt at home in nature and felt a sense of God's presence.

My father died suddenly when I was 12 years old. My mother continued to run the farm alone, as her brother was in the United States Navy. After high school, I worked in the purchasing office of the local farm implement company for six years before entering the IHM community. IHM Sisters had come to staff the school in the newly established parish of Immaculate Heart of Mary. I became acquainted with the sisters when I volunteered to type the parish bulletin on Saturdays. Witnessing a spirit of joyfulness and a sense of community among the sisters, my own desire for more meaning in my life and my mother's support were major factors that led me to join the IHM community.

After four years at St. Raymond and one year at Blessed Sacrament, both in Detroit, I was delighted to be missioned by Mother Anna Marie Grix to my home parish at Immaculate Heart of Mary, mostly for the sake of my mother. After seven years, I felt the desire and call to be part of the team ministry at the newly established Mary, Mother of the Church in Burnsville, Minnesota. There, I served in various ministries for 12 years, the last few as a liturgist.

A desire and call for ministry in Africa, which I had dreams of as a child, were awakened in my last years in Burnsville. After completing my master's degree in pastoral studies at St. Thomas University, St. Paul, Minnesota and sub-Saharan studies at the University of Notre Dame and Maryknoll, I was missioned to Mutoko, Zimbabwe. During my 13 years in Zimbabwe, I worked as a teacher in Mutoko and Embakwe and lastly in the townships of Mubvuku and Tafara in collaboration with the Redemptorists in formation and parish ministry.

I was the first to come and the last to leave Zimbabwe. All my time there was a pure gift. It stretched and challenged me as no other experience ... I have come to appreciate, on a much deeper level, the beauty of being human through the eyes of another culture.

After leaving Zimbabwe, I was part of the IHM administration team and then served as a pastoral care minister. After retiring, I moved into the Motherhouse and continued to be involved in liturgy for several years. Today, I am fully retired and enjoying the camaraderie of my sister's fellowship. We dine together, share memories and live the rest of our amazing lives together as grateful women of God.



70 years