

Mary Agnes (John Michael) Ryan

My life has been anything but predictable. I could never have imagined my parents, brother, and sister's incredible gift in my life or the lasting impact of my relatives, students, colleagues, clients, classmates, community and even strangers who would become wonderful friends. Suffice it to say, I have been deeply blessed.

Entering the IHM community on Sept. 6, 1954, was not part of any plan I had envisioned. When I was 10 and in fifth grade, I dreamed of founding my own missionary community. But that dream had evolved when I reached my senior year of high school. After a long and prayerful discernment process, I no longer felt called to either found a community or become a missionary. What remained, though, was a deep desire for meaning in my life. My parents' generosity and compassion profoundly influenced me, and so did the relationships I had with the IHM Sisters—one of whom was my beloved aunt.

My life as an IHM has far exceeded my expectations. I have lived in communities where I experienced transformative relationships and profound personal growth. I've had the privilege of teaching both grade school and high school students, and I've twice been called to serve in community leadership—first as co-provincial of the Southwest Province and later on the Leadership Council. One chapter took me to Rome for nine months, where I lived

and learned alongside international sisters. Those 10 years were filled with creativity, energy, and a deepening of our shared mission.

Alongside community ministry, I pursued academic and professional formation. I earned a master's degree in marriage and family counseling at the University of Detroit while ministering part-time with the Archdiocese of Detroit's Family Life Bureau. That experience led to a decade of service at Catholic Social Services in Wayne County, followed by three years with the Center for Humanistic Studies and Northland Clinic. Eventually, I completed a doctorate in clinical psychology from the Union Institute in Cincinnati while working part-time as a psychotherapist.

Many IHMs, including me, felt called to live more fully the mission of Theresa Maxis and Louis Gillet and to embrace the renewal inspired by Vatican II. To have lived through and contributed to those times was anything but predictable, but we did!

Another unexpected chapter was beginning to practice as a doctoral-level psychotherapist in midlife—working with individuals, groups and families, often in underserved communities. Yet the work we did together was sacred. I believe our shared journeys helped each person move closer to becoming their fullest self. Together, we exceeded expectations. And the journey isn't done.



70 years