



## **"My days in Vietnam" featuring IHM Associate Antonia Soave** **From the IHM Associate office**

IHM Associate Antonia Soave has a global perspective and a love for teaching and languages. Born in Italy, Antonia has served in China, Peru and Bolivia as both a Maryknoll and a Salesian missionary. But she says she hit the jackpot with her latest adventure: teaching English in Vietnam.

"My life in Vietnam felt so charmed that it is tempting to turn my back on the turmoil in the States," she said. "It is such a contrast to the beauty, sunshine and friendliness that I have experienced this past year. It was beyond anything I ever expected."

Antonia worked and lived on the campus of the Salesian Brothers. She did one-to-one conversational English lessons, small groups and reflection groups of five people each. "Their faith is inspirational. Vocations are strong, Mass attendance is impressive," she said. "These brothers truly exude the Don Bosco Salesian spirit!"

She was there for the 2024-2025 school year. Community life with the brothers and staff was wonderful. The days started at 5 a.m. with prayers and ended with the rosary in the evenings. Breakfast, lunch and dinner were shared as a community with about 40 people in the dining room. "It has been an honor and privilege to be part of their journey."



Teaching was not restricted to the campus, however. Adults and children were so friendly and eager to practice their English that even an outing into town became an encounter. "I'd be giving an informal English lesson walking around the lake at 8 o'clock at night," she said.

Antonia lives in Plymouth, Michigan, and became interested in the IHM Associate program when she met Sister Mary Ann Flanagan at Visitation North. When she attended Sister Mary Ann's funeral in Monroe, she was moved by the service and the beautiful a cappella singing. She also met Sister Mary McDevitt there and the seed took root.



"I wanted to be part of their mission." Her rite of associate commitment was in 2024.

Antonia added she'd like to return to Vietnam as a tourist to explore more of the country. She made wonderful friends, the work was rewarding and the flowers made the

landscape reminiscent of paradise.

*"There are no words to adequately describe how honored and gratifying it is for me to have served there."*

## Then & now

### Sister Judy Weirick

As I reflect on my 70 years as an IHM Sister, my heart is filled with gratitude to God, my parents, my two sisters and my IHM community. I was born in Akron, Ohio, and attended St. Mary's Catholic School for 12 years. During my junior and senior years, one of my IHM teachers

reminded me to listen to what God was asking of me. I had some phenomenal women who were not only great teachers but also enjoyed their work. The sisters' commitment to ministry and their warmth appealed to me. I grew up spending time with them after school, becoming very comfortable in their presence. This close connection drew me to the community. I thought it must be what God intended for me to do with my future.



[Continued ...](#)



### Sister Elaine Aldridge

I am Jim and Vivian's oldest child; I have a brother, John and my sisters, Kathy and Dorothy. My vocation was nurtured by my mother's deep love of our Blessed Mother and my dad's daring to always care for our

family. He was a self-taught man. My IHM journey began when I was a small child and my father worked on the IHM farms with my great-uncle Woodrow Fix. I lived on the grounds formerly known as Visitation and in a house next to the main farm on North Custer Road. I attended St. Joseph School, Monroe, and transferred to St. Charles, Newport, in the third grade. I graduated from St. Mary Academy. I have known IHMs my entire life; what a journey of blessing this has been for me.

[Continued ...](#)

## Worthy of note from the Alphonsus Liguori Library ...

*James* by Percival Everett and reviewed by library staff

Percival Everett's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel, *James*, is a beautifully written re-imaging of Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. *James* retains the broad storyline of Twain's narrative: a boy named Huck and an enslaved Black man called Jim are fleeing down the Mississippi River together, each in search of their own kind of freedom. But Huck is not Everett's main character; that role belongs to Jim. It is his voice and his perspective we hear.

No longer a secondary character and helpless sidekick to the great adventures of Huck, Jim is now a man with agency, intelligence and compassion. In violation of the law, he has learned to read and can write, yet he must play dumb to survive in the violent world of slavery. Overhearing that he is to be sold to a man in New Orleans, to be separated forever from his wife and daughter, he runs away until he can formulate a plan.

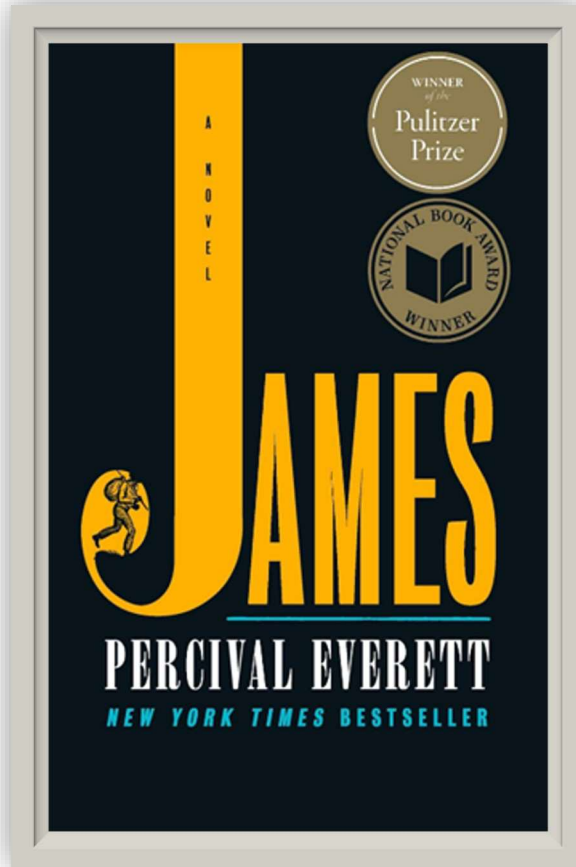
In Everett's story, the play of language is a significant thread. In interviews after the novel's publication, he spoke to the importance of language and how both great power and an avenue to any freedom that we're going to have reside in the ownership of language. In *James*, he explores this ownership of language – the claiming of it and using it for one's life's purpose. Early into their journey down the river, Jim finds

ink and paper inside a house destroyed by a flood. Hiding them until alone for a time, Jim then shaves a stick to make a point, dips it in ink, and begins to write. "I am called Jim. I have yet to choose a name.... I will not let myself, my mind, drown in fear and outrage. I will be outraged as a matter of course. But my interest is in how these marks that I am scratching on this page can mean anything at all. If they can have meaning, then life can have meaning, then I can have meaning."

Everett also recast the slave dialect first introduced in Twain's novel. It is now a put-on, a survival mechanism, a correct-incorrect grammar that Jim, his wife, and other enslaved people use in concealing their real knowledge and ability to speak "proper English." As Jim teaches his children this code-switching, he tells

them: "White folks expect us to sound a certain way, and it can only help if we don't disappoint them." The playing with dialect gives *James* some of its tensest moments, as well as some of its most ironic and humorous ones.

In his creativity with the written word, Everett gifts readers with a provocation and a challenge to see new possibilities, to imagine alternative realities, to open windows toward agency and a shared future.



## Prison Creative Arts Project at the IHM Gallery

Striving for a free spirit within the confines of incarceration could be the theme of the next exhibit in the IHM Motherhouse Gallery: The Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP). This new exhibit features two-dimensional works in painting, graphite, pen and collage, as well as three-dimensional works made from a variety of materials. Up to 50 pieces will be included. Each work is created by incarcerated artists and made available to the public through the efforts of the University of Michigan community for artistic collaboration.

Every fall, teams of UM students, faculty and curators visit 25 Michigan Department of Corrections facilities to choose art created by incarcerated men and women. The pieces are judged for originality, uniqueness, commitment to the vision and personal expression.

Those pieces then form the nucleus of an annual exhibit held each winter in Ann Arbor. From that show's hundreds of art pieces, a smaller number are chosen to become a traveling exhibit during the rest of the year. This will be the second year the PCAP's traveling exhibit will be hosted in the IHM Gallery.

Emily Chase, exhibition and curatorial manager for PCAP, meets face-to-face with almost every artist whose artwork is displayed. (Last year, more than 550 artists were represented!) She said, "Throughout my career, I have been consistently drawn to working with people who are often forgotten or ostracized by society. This calling has taken me to a variety of roles." She has worked with students expelled from traditional schools, adults experiencing homelessness, and an art studio for people with disabilities.

"A few years ago, this path led me to PCAP. In my time here, I have been continually struck by two things: First, that incarcerated individuals are often seen as the least deserving of humanity, when in fact, it is our humanity that holds the

greatest potential to heal. Second, that even within the confines of prison, people are drawn to visual artmaking -- perhaps because it offers one of the few spaces in which they can exercise agency and self-expression." She added that perhaps the most surprising take-away from her work is the humor she encounters amid the reminders of the grim day-to-day existence inside the prisons. Chatting and laughing together with an inmate led out in chains from solitary confinement is an indescribable experience.



Eric Boldizar, African Madonna  
StillImage, 2023

Still, the project's website states that the art pieces are a "testament to the resilience of artists and the life-giving power of art under the most difficult of circumstances."

The [Prison Creative Arts Project exhibit](#) will be in the Gallery from Sept. 8 through Oct. 17. Join us for an opening reception Sept. 8 at 5:30 p.m.

*PCAP's annual exhibition is open to the public and is slated for March 17 through March 31, 2026, at the Duderstadt Gallery at UM's North Campus in Ann Arbor. More information will be available soon on social media and in promotional materials.*

## Faith behind the walls: IHM Sisters in prison ministry

*These three stories offer just a glimpse into the deep and varied ways IHM Sisters are present in prison ministry. From exchanging letters of hope with someone serving life without parole, to helping returning citizens rebuild their lives, to decades of chaplaincy within the jail system, these sisters embody the IHM mission of faith, justice and compassion. While we highlight the experiences of Sisters Anne Wisda, Alice Baker and Peggy Devaney here, we acknowledge the many other IHMs who, over our 180 years, have walked alongside those impacted by incarceration—offering presence, prayer and the promise of new life.*

At the age of 23, he lost his freedom forever -- the “death” sentence of “Life Without Parole.” In his late 60s, he wrote to the IHM community to request a “Sister” to become his pen pal. I accepted. In his first letter in 2023, he expressed gratitude, sketched some flowers using pen, pencil, and crayons and decided he would write to his pen pal once a month. I responded with stories, events, prayers, affirmation and encouraged him to continue sketching pictures and creating puzzles. My aim is to be a caring, supportive companion on his life’s journey. Pope Francis: “Life without parole is a hidden death penalty.” --Anne (Michael Ann) Wisda, IHM

*Sister Anne continues to communicate with her pen pal. His work was included in the 2024 Exhibition of Artists in Michigan Prisons held in Ann Arbor.*



*Sister Alice Baker has been working with Friends of Returning Citizens (FORC ) since its beginning in 2020. The IHM Ministry Grant Committee has provided financial support for the organization.*

Friends of Returning Citizens -- FORC -- has as its motto “Onward and Upward.” It has been a challenge and a joy to be a part of this growing organization in the city of Detroit. Founded in December, 2020, under the leadership of Father Norm Thomas, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish, Detroit, along with Craig Whilby and Jamil Allen, two men incarcerated as juveniles for over 30 years, and volunteers from the Detroit Catholic Pastoral Alliance’s Community Action Committee, its status is now a non-profit, 501c3, with a Board of Directors. Some services offered are individual and group counseling, opportunities for researching housing and jobs on the Internet,

and receiving gently used clothing for women and men, free bus passes and more. Currently, the organization is moving to a nearby location because of flooding. Information on ways to volunteer or support the ministry is available by calling 313-926-6770 or by clicking [here](#). Yes, “Onward and Upward!” --Alice (Raphaella) Baker, IHM

## Walking with the incarcerated

It has been 45 years since the first female Oakland County Jail and Outreach Chaplain was hired by the Archdiocese of Detroit. That chaplain was me, Peggy Devaney, IHM. Supporting the ministry was the IHM community, the Committee for Justice at St. Vincent de Paul Parish, Team for Justice in Detroit, Bishop Schoenherr, and Cardinal Dearden. At the time there was a heightened awareness of arrests related to non-violent peace protests in various parts of Oakland County and individuals were housed in the Oakland County Jail. Religious leaders and friends were not cleared or allowed jail access to visit jailed protesters.



We did leaflets in the neighborhood to let everyone know what we were doing. On Good Friday, families came into Pontiac from various churches in Oakland County to pray at 14 different assigned stations which were houses where murders had taken place. A blessing with holy water and purple ribbons reclaimed the land and we prayed for that family and neighborhood.

Forty-five years later, we know the family trees of many people we meet in jail outreach. We serve victims, offenders and families. We attempt to live out

the perspective of Crime and Criminal Justice of Responsibility, Rehabilitation and Restoration. (Catholic Jail and Prison Chaplains organized to pressure Bishops across the country and locally to develop this document in 2000.)

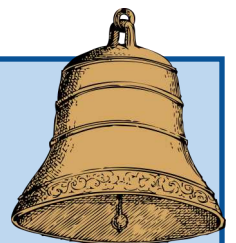
I remember an IHM jailed at the peace protest. Deputies in the women's division came to me because they were worried about Sister Shelia Gainey, IHM. (Shelia was like a beloved grandmother in her 10-woman cell.) Shelia was purchasing cigarettes and various other items. Deputies feared she was being pressured by the other women to buy items from the commissary. Shelia told me she "loves the girls" in the cell. They help her with various hair styles and suggestions. She purchased items to say "Thank You!" to her friends in the cell.

As a pastoral care chaplaincy, we are in the neighborhood serving people in need. Many parishes, groups, and individuals share in the outreach needs in various ways. We serve the poor in the midst of unimaginable suffering and injustices. Walking with the poor is grounded in the Spirit and empowered by prayer and supported by the IHM Community. We offer and receive hope day by day.

A few ministers in the heat of the drug war between Detroit and Pontiac focused on the place of most murders in Pontiac. We prayed at the worst sites of murder every Friday in Lent.

*Sister Peggy retired from jail chaplaincy recently, but continues her connection to [JOM](#) with support for the organization and volunteers. The JOM Outreach office is located in the Riker Building in Pontiac.*

The IHM congregation has stood firmly against the death penalty, guided by the Gospel and Catholic social teaching. In 2004, we deepened this commitment by initiating the monthly *For Whom the Bell Tolls* prayer, held before the Motherhouse liturgy. During this prayer, a bell rings once for each person executed that month, honoring the victims, their families, and all impacted by state-sanctioned violence. [Continued ...](#)





## Full STEAM ahead: new era of learning at Marian

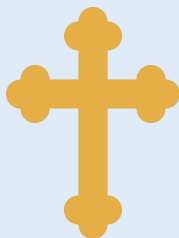
Marian High School stands at the threshold of an exciting new chapter—one fueled by innovation, creativity, and dedication to students' learning outcomes. Under the leadership of President Heather Greig Sofran '96 and Principal Stacey Cushman, faculty and staff have been working behind the scenes to prepare for this transformational moment. Now, thanks to their leadership, Marian has broken ground on a **[bold renovation of its science and visual arts wings](#)**—spaces designed to meet the needs of today's students and ignite inspiration for decades to come. "Our science labs date back to 1959. We've made them work, but they weren't built with the Class of 2025 in mind," Sofran shared. "It's time for a change."

The fully reimagined **[STEM wing](#)** will feature five state-of-the-art science labs equipped with modern gas, air and electrical systems for increased instructional flexibility. Students will conduct hands-on experiments using real-time data tools that support advanced study in biology, chemistry, and physics. Labs will include the equipment, space, and resources to conduct experiments previously more difficult to accomplish in current spaces.

Just as exciting is the transformation of the **[visual arts wing](#)**. A long-anticipated expansion of the popular pottery program will double student capacity, adding five new pottery wheels and a significantly larger studio. Fine Arts teacher Abbie Bailey, with experience at Wayne State and Detroit's Pewabic Pottery, is helping design the new space to mirror professional art environments.



[Continued ...](#)



Regina Irene Fanning, IHM  
July 12, 1931 – July 9, 2025

[Read more about the lives and ministries of our Sisters and Associates](#)

## *From the archives ... a look back*

### **A “precious ministry”: Holy Family Cottage**

The Archives often gets questions about Park Place and Holy Family Cottage, nearby houses which the Sisters turned into homes for orphans.

Park Place was a large brick house next to the Hall of the Divine Child. We don't have a lot of information about its first couple of decades.

Enter Sister Mary Stephen (Margaret Mary) King. She had joined the IHM community in 1914 and was soon teaching in Michigan schools. But a gallbladder infection in late 1926 caused hemorrhages in her eyes and she lost significant sight. Teaching in a classroom became untenable. Sister Mary Stephen tells us her story through her autobiography. “I was assigned to a group of motherless or fatherless girls at Park Place – only one nun to be a mother to them, as well as to help them with my remembered school skills. When on April 25, 1927, I went to Park Place there was room for 45 girls, from age 2½ to 19.” Thus began a 17-year ministry as directress, 1927 to 1944.

She goes on: “It was a precious ministry, and a demanding one – a 24 hr. job. There was much to learn in it, and either you sank, or survived gloriously. That fall, we bought the Baier home on West Elm (408 W. Elm, later the IHM nursing staff house). In that beautiful location, we had better and more human relations. The man next door died, just at a time when there was dire poverty in the community. In his will, he left \$500 for coal for our winter in the house. Mother Ruth had asked me to have the children

pray for these and other temporal wants, and the blessed answers from the God Who loves orphans, were at times astonishing.”

She added that local citizens took an interest in the girls and were kind. School age girls always attended the Academy and did well in life. “About 10 became IHMs and persevered,” she wrote.

Her sight improved somewhat after 1944; she moved on to teaching and pastoral work. Sister Judine King was her biological sister.

Sister Margaret Mary died on Dec. 19, 1983, at the age of 87. She concluded her autobiography looking back with awe and forward with eager anticipation. “It has been simply glorious to be an IHM. I cannot yet comprehend how it was possible to have been chosen.”



***\*This article originally appeared in the summer 2022 issue of the IHM***

***Archives newsletter, Today and Yesterday. All issues of the newsletter can be accessed [here](#).***

## From the Development office

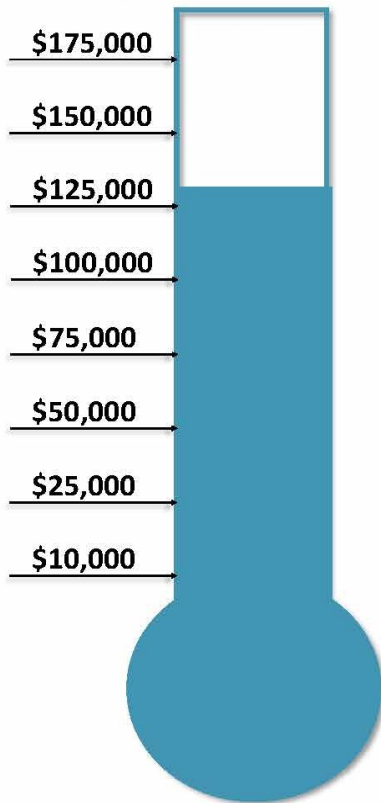


## Theresa Maxis Award

The Theresa Maxis Award ceremony takes place Thursday, Oct. 16, 2025, at Marygrove Conservancy. This year we have the pleasure of honoring Paddy Lynch. You can read more about Paddy [here](#).

The evening begins with Mass at 5 p.m. in the Sacred Heart Chapel, followed by cocktails at 6 p.m. and dinner at 7 p.m. in the Theresa Maxis Alumnae Hall located in the Madame Cadillac Building. Get your tickets soon, seating is limited. Call the Development office at 734-240-9860 or email [development@ihmsisters.org](mailto:development@ihmsisters.org) to reserve a seat.

## 190,000 Goal



**As of Aug. 22, we  
have raised \$126,845.  
Proceeds benefit our  
retired sisters.**

## Marygrove minute

Happy September to all Alumni and friends! We are looking forward to another amazing day on campus for the September 13 All-Alumni Reunion with several special speakers and up close and personal tours of your choice of the Elementary or Secondary School at Marygrove. If you read this before September 5, you can still register online by going to [Marygrove College Alumni Association - Marygrove Conservancy](#).

This past year, our alumni Board has donated \$2,500 to the Chapel Renovation fund, and you can also do the same on our website.

Your Alumni Association was represented at the glorious Marygrove Conservancy Summerfest



held on campus on August 9, along with scores of other neighborhood partners and tenants. We gave away engraved pencils and Lifesavers mints, as our motto is "Education is a



*Board members Frances Simmons '85, President Rahjinah Johnson '2005 and Liz Poliuto Loria '70 at the Marygrove Conservancy Summerfest.*

lifesaver"! With games, inflatables, pony rides, food, the Detroit Youth Choir and much more, it was a fantastic success for the Conservancy and the Detroit community.

As always, you can reach out to update your contact information or ask a question at [alumni@maeygroveconservancy.org](mailto:alumni@maeygroveconservancy.org) or [lorializ@gmail.com](mailto:lorializ@gmail.com). Follow us on [Facebook!](#)

*Check us out on our website or on Facebook or Instagram!*

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