

Candyce (Lauren) Rekart

Sixty years as an IHM — what a journey! A journey wrapped in grace that has stretched heart, mind, body and spirit since my early days as a young woman from Kirkwood, Missouri, feeling that unmistakable tug from God. (I did try to resist — briefly!) Audaciously, I expressed my desire to go on overseas missions almost as soon as I walked through the door at 610 West Elm Avenue. So, naturally, I was sent ... to Chicago! Off to finish my B.A. at Loyola University — quite the adventure at the time, with new Formation Houses, the energy of Vatican II, and the realities of the Vietnam War shaping my growing awareness of the world and the needs of God's people.

Is it any surprise, then, that after graduating, returning to Michigan, and teaching for two years at St. Tim's in Trenton, then at Holy Trinity in Detroit, I was sent to Puerto Rico (PR)? I loved it! Juanita Bernard Robles met me and became a wise mentor and friend for the next 42 years. There I found my voice. Not my native language, I learned more Spanish from the children in the housing project, who dared to correct me, than I learned from any books.

My awareness of people's needs grew. The words, "Liberating Mission of Jesus," were not yet on my lips, but their spirit was embedded in my soul. As I saw needs, I was challenged to get the education I needed to respond to them. I received an M.A. in Special Ed from

NYU. Ten years of teaching special-needs youngsters in public schools in PR were a joy for me. Eyes wide-open to needs again led me to Carlos Albizu University in San Juan for an M.A. in Clinical Psychology and to work in a Community Mental Health Clinic in the field of sexual abuse for 20 years.

In addition to being active in these ministries, I was part of IHM's initial formation in Puerto Rico. Diversity and inclusion became a reality when IHM initiated and made them an integral part of the Intercongregational Formation Program. Five women who were part of this initial endeavor are now IHMs in Mexico, Puerto Rico and in IHM Leadership. Formation work has been like a beam of light in my life, yet to shine again later.

As family members became frailer, I felt it was time to return to the USA. What now? My answer came in doubles: my "yes" to IHM Formation, Audra Turnbull, Jane Aseltyne, and to Paula's House (PH). The women in recovery in residence at PH and their children nurture and challenge me to be who I am meant to be at this time in my life. Does my education help prepare me? Absolutely! But more so, it is my journey as an IHM, with others, which "takes us into the very depths of who we are as humans." And for all of it, I can only say: ¡Gracias!

