

Elizabeth (Isaac Jogues) Pardo

Once again, I celebrate a milestone jubilee — 70 years since my reception into the IHM congregation. For 54 of those years, I have lived and ministered in the Archdiocese of Chicago, a great blessing. My roots are in Detroit, but I have become a Chicagoan, and that has shaped how I live my call to religious life as an IHM.

In 1971, encouraged by Sister Ann Aselytne, I accepted an invitation to teach third grade at St. Felicitas on Chicago's South Side. After 11 years in Detroit-area schools, this move marked my entry into ministry with the African American community. From there, my ministry expanded to serving children and adults with physical and learning challenges in both Catholic and public schools. That experience led to a principalship in a Catholic school in the heart of the Mexican community and eventually to part-time work writing grants at an all-girls' high school.

Each of these communities called me to recognize and look more deeply into the giftedness and needs of the people of God. They helped me to be a learner alongside them, working together for the good of all. Through these experiences, I came to understand that there are many ways of being called by God.

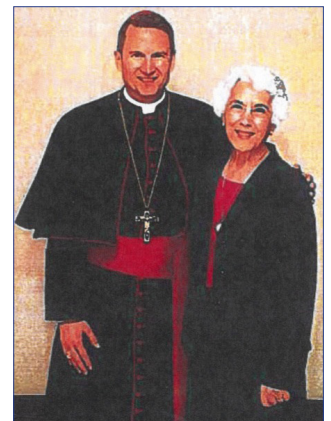
Leaving Detroit was not easy. My close-knit family and lifelong friends remained there, as did the familiarity of IHM community life.

Yet in Chicago, I discovered rich opportunities for spiritual and ministerial growth through relationships with other religious congregations. The Religious of the Cenacle provided me with spiritual direction and inspired me to train in direction and retreat ministry. Under their guidance, I earned a degree in Christian Spirituality with certifications in spiritual direction and retreat work. This relationship continues to bless me.

I also ministered alongside the Sisters of Mercy, serving individuals with mild to profound developmental disabilities. Years later, at Mother McAuley Liberal Arts High School, I wrote grants to provide scholarships for young women from low-income families. Mercy values permeate the atmosphere at McAuley. Our young women are immersed in knowledge, experiences and models, allowing them to grasp the essence of mercy and to live it out in their daily lives. They are prepared to recognize themselves as prophetic witnesses in a society that is polarized politically, resists welcoming the stranger, and denies the basic needs of our suffering Earth.

Today, my volunteer work focuses on the ongoing immigration crisis, threats to our democracy and the needs of those living with dementia.

The call to religious life is bottomless. Each day brings new opportunities to serve alongside the people of God. I am deeply grateful for and humbled by God's call to live in the spirit of our IHM founders, who longed to be everywhere there was need.



70 years