

Madonna (Martha Ann) Oswald

I grew up in Detroit with my older sister and younger brother. Because my father's career was flourishing, our family moved often and I attended five or six elementary schools before sixth grade at St. Mary of Redford. Constantly adjusting to new places, teachers and classmates was difficult, yet it fostered in me a lasting curiosity and openness to new ideas.

It was at St. Mary of Redford that I first encountered the IHM Sisters. They were gifted teachers and inspiring role models. I especially credit my 10th grade teacher, Sister Hermene Hughes, whose vision of the world stirred something within me. Her commitment to engagement and social justice awakened my own desire to be part of that work. Faith was central in our home, and Christian values shaped our family life. When I shared my desire to enter the IHM congregation after graduation, my parents naturally had questions. Once they recognized my certainty, they offered their full support. I entered the congregation in 1945, during the centennial celebration of its founding.

My first teaching assignment was at Christ the King School in Detroit, where I taught 60 third graders. Over the years, I taught at several elementary schools — St. Raymond, St. Matthew and St. Charles in Detroit; Sacred Heart in Dearborn; and St. Mary in Marshall. I later taught at the high school level at Star

of the Sea in Grosse Pointe, Grosse Pointe North and Immaculate Heart of Mary in Westchester, Illinois.

In 1970, after more than two decades in education across all grade levels, including adult education, I returned to Monroe to serve for five years as executive assistant to Sister Marie Gatza, then vice president of the congregation. This role offered a new and enriching experience of community life.

I then spent five years teaching at Mercy High School in Farmington Hills while also participating in an IBM education initiative that trained science teachers to integrate emerging technology into their classrooms. In 1985, I was elected associate provincial of the Northwest Province Team. After completing that term, I served in the Development Department at Marygrove and later joined the pastoral care team at the Motherhouse in retirement.

I have come to see turning points not as single moments, but as the interweaving of many experiences along the path of growth. My greatest joy has been the relationships formed along the way. In those I have served and lived with, I have seen the face of God. I remain deeply grateful to the community that has allowed me to grow as an individual while sharing in the deeper reality of who we are together.

