

Suzanne (Marie Peter) Sattler

Looking back on 60 years as an IHM, I see these years as an opportunity to live what Pope Francis termed a “journey of faith.” In his understanding, truth emerges through experience, relationships and context rather than through knowing the answers in advance. Born and raised in Toledo, Ohio, as the youngest of four children, I attended Catholic schools from kindergarten through high school and then graduated from Marygrove College in Detroit. My attraction to the congregation during college resonated with the words of John’s Gospel, “Come and See.”

Joining the congregation shortly after graduation in 1965, the year the Second Vatican Council ended, I experienced the fresh air radiating from the Council throughout the Catholic Church, especially in the Archdiocese of Detroit and across the IHM congregation. IHMs energetically joined in the *Aggiornamento* called for by St. John XXIII when he announced the Council and my years of religious life formation were rooted in the theology promulgated by the Council.

In 1968, I moved to Detroit to teach at Immaculata High School and have continued to live in Detroit. Two social factors significantly impacted my teaching experience: many white people left Detroit after the 1967 rebellion and African American student enrollment significantly increased. These students facilitated

my understanding of their experience of the sin of racism and the societal structures that maintain it. My understanding of racist structures nurtured my long-held desire to study law, a request readily affirmed by our IHM leadership. Post-graduation, I practiced legal aid and soon focused primarily on health and aging public policy advocacy. My profession as an attorney prompted invitations to serve on nonprofit boards of directors, and these experiences provided additional opportunities for lifelong learning.

In addition to over two decades on the Marygrove College Board of

Trustees, my board service included organizations serving diverse populations, namely the mentally ill, the homeless, formerly incarcerated women, girls at risk of sexual exploitation, struggling

pregnant women and at-risk youth. Currently, I serve on the board of Detroit Cristo Rey High School, located in my southwest Detroit neighborhood and co-sponsored by our congregation. These board experiences schooled me about life’s rough edges, especially the impact of the circumstances of one’s birth. Trips to El Salvador initiated during their 1980s civil war showed me the Gospel alive amid brutal circumstances. These journeys invigorated my faith life and continue to transform it.

As I neared retirement, I accepted an invitation to apply my writing skills and experience to co-author a biography of a friend and spiritual leader, resulting in *No Guilty Bystander: The Extraordinary Life of Bishop Thomas Gumbleton* (Orbis Books, 2023). Doing the research for this biography gave me the opportunity to reflect on how God spoke to Tom through historical events and the requests of many in need. While my journey continues, I recognize that once I accepted the invitation to “Come and See.” I have experienced these 60 years as the “hundredfold” described in Mark’s Gospel. I write this in gratitude.



60 years