

## IHM Sisters - Then and Now

July 2010



Sister Jean (Eymarda) Laubacher, IHM, grew up in Canton, Ohio, third in a family of eight children, one of whom died at birth.

As the Depression began, Sister Jean's parents were concerned that her father might lose his job as a bookkeeper so they bought an 82-acre farm to make sure they'd always have enough to eat.

"He never lost his job," Sister Jean recalls, "so after a couple of years, we moved back to the city and the farm was rented out on shares. That enabled us to have all the food we needed, which Dad brought home every week. All organic, I'm sure!"

"In my senior year (at St. John High School in Canton) I feared God was calling me to religious life," she says. But in spite of her fear, she entered the IHM community after high school. Reservation about her vocation remained until one night, as a novice, Sister Jean was on her way upstairs after evening prayer.

"I felt such a strong peace and a certainty that *this* was the vocation God meant for me," she says. "I haven't had any doubts about my vocation since then."

For 19 years, Sister Jean taught grades one through six at several schools before becoming principal of St. Joseph School in Trenton, Mich. After seven years, she returned to the classroom to teach fifth grade at Holy Name School in Birmingham, Mich.

"If I had to do it again, I think I would be less strict," Sister Jean muses. "It was such a delight to come to school and see the children's joyfulness. I would look at each of my students and ask myself if I had touched their lives in some way that day, even if it was just a small compliment."

She may have been strict, but at least one of Sister Jean's students saw through it and wrote, "We know that we can always turn around and you will open up you're [sic] heart and care for us. We love you!"

Sister Jean began a lifelong love with the state of Florida when she moved to Hollywood, near Fort Lauderdale. She served as a teacher and as an assistant administrator at Nativity School for 19 years until she semi-retired in 1996. She became a pastoral volunteer at St. Catherine Parish in Sebring, Fla., training lectors and working with those studying to become Catholic. She also volunteered to teach an adult student to read.



In 1997, Sister Jean moved back to the IHM Motherhouse. "I felt I could spend my remaining good years helping out in some way at our Motherhouse," she notes.

She has remained an active volunteer, serving as a driver, a Eucharistic minister and as a companion to IHM Sisters who are hospitalized.

"My life has been a happy one," Sister Jean says. "I've had many joys – one of my greatest was having my sister Mary (Sister Coronata, IHM) to love and support me throughout my religious life. I've appreciated having our first cousin, Carola Keffler, IHM, in our community.

"Now in my retirement, I am more able to realize and experience an awareness of God's presence in me, in seeing Him in my sisters to whom I minister each day."