

IHM Sisters - Then and Now

November 2009



Sister Ann Isabelle Tefend, IHM, had three aunts who were IHM Sisters. She felt called to religious life, too.

To get to know the IHM community better, she enrolled at Marygrove College after high school. Although Sister Ann Isabelle was able to live near campus her first semester, she had a five-hour, round-trip commute the following semester. Instead of school, she worked as a secretary for seven years at Ford Motor Company.

She continued to hear the call to religious life, however. A novena, which ended on Christmas Eve 1949, helped clarify her calling.

"I remember leaving work Dec. 29 and stopping at church. I found a booklet there called *Shall I Become a Nun?*" Sister Ann Isabelle chuckles. "I talked to the IHM Superior in Monroe the next day and became an IHM Sister Jan. 29. I've never regretted it."

Sister Ann Isabelle earned a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College and a master's in business from Wayne State University. She taught elementary school for five years and then business education at high schools in southeast Michigan, including St. Mary Academy, Monroe. While at the Academy, she taught, and worked in the school's Business Office in charge of payroll and also taught accounting and office procedures at Monroe County Community College (MCCC).

In the late 1970s, Sister Ann Isabelle fulfilled her dream of becoming a missionary and spent two years in Ghana, working with teachers at 15 schools in outlying areas.

"It greatly enriched my spiritual life," she reflects, "and gave me an appreciation for a simple life. It was easy to feel God's presence among us."

When she returned to America, Sister Ann Isabelle was assigned to New York as secretary to the IHM Foreign Missions Provincial Team and taught grade school. Her sister became ill, so she returned to Michigan to help. She ministered at MCCC, then at Monroe Catholic Central and Our Lady Star of the Sea (Grosse Pointe Woods).



After Sister Ann Isabelle fell and broke her elbow, she decided to give up teaching and work in business. She served as finance director for Bishop Borgess High School (Redford) for five years before retiring in 1993.

In "retirement," Sister Ann Isabelle lived in Redford while ministering as a substitute teacher and school secretary; as a caregiver for an aging aunt; and as a tutor for students with developmental disabilities.



She moved back to Monroe in 1996 and put her business acumen to good use, volunteering in the IHM Development Office, entering data for more than 9,000 records as the department switched computer systems.

During the sustainable renovation of the IHM Motherhouse, Sister Ann Isabelle took on additional responsibilities.

"We lived at the Academy during renovation," she says. "I was responsible for the kitchen,

ordering food and supplies for 52 sisters." She also did the schedules for Eucharistic ministers and lectors for the Chapel.

Today, Sister Ann Isabelle stays active, visiting with and offering typing services to Motherhouse residents.

Contact a sister or share a memory

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