

IHM Sisters - Then and Now

September 2009



Sister Frances (Frances Regina) Ryan, IHM, was familiar with the IHM congregation from an early age. Both her aunt, Ann Patrick Baker, and her sister, Mary Agnes (John Michael), were IHMs. Sister Fran entered the community after high school.

She graduated from Marygrove College, where she trained as a primary school teacher. Her first assignment was at the monolithic Holy Redeemer in Detroit teaching first grade.

"After four years, I was transferred to St. Patrick School in Carleton, Mich.," Sister Fran recalls. "I had gotten so used to the hundreds of students and the number of IHMs at Holy Redeemer that I spent six months at St. Patrick's wondering when everyone else was going to arrive!"

All told, Sister Fran taught in the primary grades for 16 years, including six years at St. Hugo of the Hills, Bloomfield Hills, Mich. She spent a year in the Chaplains Religious Enrichment Program (CREDO) at Gonzaga University, Spokane, Wash., before becoming the section head of religious education at St. Blase Parish in Sterling Heights, Mich.

"After about three years at St. Blase, I became the director of religious education at St. Martin DePorres Parish in Warren, Mich.," she says. "I really enjoyed it because I was working with people of all ages."

Sister Fran was instrumental in bringing the Stephen Ministry - a program of lay pastoral counseling and care-giving to St. Martin Parish.

"The Stephen Ministry originated in the Lutheran church," she notes. "St. Martin DePorres was the first parish in the Archdiocese of Detroit to offer it."



In 1989, following eight years at St. Martin, Sister Fran became the director of the IHM Associates program.

"It was a challenging and rewarding ministry," she says, "and one that allowed me to use the pastoral skills I had acquired and nurtured over the years." Approximately 50 people became IHM Associates during her tenure.



From 1997 to 2000, Sister Fran served as a parish minister at St. Louise Parish in Warren, Mich., and retired in 2001. Following open-heart surgery in 2007, she moved to the IHM Motherhouse.

"This time in my life has allowed me to find God in simple things," Sister Fran says. "Having an ice cream cone with my sister or spending time on the banks of the River Raisin, prayer and spiritual direction - God is in it all."

Living at the Motherhouse has allowed Sister Fran the time to pursue her love of reading - she recently finished *Left to Tell* by Immaculée Ilibagiza.

"I also spend time with sisters in our Health Care unit as well as those in Memory Care, helping where I can," she says. "It's a humbling experience - there's not a 'one-size-fits-all' approach to being with the sisters, and I learn something different from each person.

"Truly, being in religious life has provided me with such an opportunity for growth. It has been my greatest reward."