

IHM^s IN ACTION



Sister Amata Miller, IHM, has spent most of her adult life in ministries explaining how the disparate fields of economics and social justice are actually entwined.

Sister Amata is currently an economics professor at St. Catherine University ("St. Kate's") in St. Paul, Minn., and director of the school's Myser Initiative on Catholic Identity. (The Myser Initiative works to more widely infuse an understanding of, respect for and appreciation of the Catholic traditions of intellectual inquiry and social teaching among faculty and staff so they can be infused throughout the curriculum.) She also teaches economics in the Master's of Social Justice Program at Marygrove College in Detroit; is a trustee on the boards of Partnership for Global Justice and St. Edward's University in Austin, Texas; sits on four different investment committees; and is an internationally recognized authority on economic justice issues, socially responsible investing and Catholic social teaching, sharing her knowledge with religious

communities, academia and social justice organizations.

"I learned about social justice from my parents very early on," Sister Amata says. "I was taught by IHM Sisters all through school, and they were also instrumental in helping me shape my views."

After joining the IHM community, Sister Amata was in one of the first "sister formation" groups, sisters who completed their baccalaureate education before beginning teaching.

"Sister formation provided the opportunity to truly focus on our education in order to become more effective teachers," she recalls. "Our curriculum was organized around the social teaching of the Church."

Sister Amata taught grade school before being sent to St. Louis University to study for a master's in economics.

"I was very happy teaching," she recalls, "and I had never thought about teaching economics, so it took some time to recognize God's plan when Mother Anna Marie sent me to study the subject."

Sister Amata's education and early economic work came at a time of major changes within the Catholic Church. Vatican II saw a dramatic growth in the realization of what it meant as a church to be one with its people's joys and fears.

Because the IHM congregation had emphasized social justice in various ways for many years, implementing the changes of Vatican II was second nature. Sister Amata was encouraged to accept nationwide speaking engagements integrating social and economic justice while pursuing her education. She earned a doctorate in economics from the University of California at Berkeley.

Even when she was elected finance officer for the IHM congregation in 1976, Sister Amata's lectures and workshops continued. She was active in expressing the IHM commitment to justice through socially responsible investing and began fostering the IHM community's fundraising and savings for the sisters' retirement needs.

"We had to learn how to raise and invest money for retirement," she says. "And we had to balance that with responsibility for the greater good."

She didn't hesitate to speak out at shareholder meetings of Detroit Edison (one of the companies in which the sisters had invested) when the safety of workers at the Fermi II nuclear reactor site was in jeopardy.

"We were called 'communists,'" Sister Amata chuckles, "but really, what could be more capitalist than speaking out at a shareholder meeting?"

After 12 years as the IHM finance officer, Sister Amata served as education coordinator and economic analyst for NETWORK: A National Catholic Justice Lobby in Washington, D.C., from 1988-1994. She returned to Michigan, and ministered as the chief financial officer of Marygrove until 2000, when she went to St. Kate as a visiting professor for three years. She had been teaching at St. Edward's University for two years when she was invited back to St. Kate's to direct the newly created Myser Initiative.

"I struggled with the decision because I loved St. Ed's, but I realized the new program needed someone already on the inside in order to be effective," Sister Amata says.

"I love what I do," she notes. "Teaching, lecturing, being active on boards are all part of my re-creation. I believe there is still a need to explain the integration of economics and justice."