

## IHMs in Action: Pastoral Care

Henry Ford Village in Dearborn, Mich., is home to 1,200 people aged 62 or older. It's like a small town, with a convenience store, hair salon/barber shop, bank, restaurants and library.

There's also an interfaith chapel. While a priest is available for Sunday Mass, for nearly eight years the 400 Catholic residents of the independent living, assisted living and skilled care sections of the village have depended on Sister Mary Downey, IHM, to meet their day-to-day pastoral needs.

Twice a week in the chapel, Sister Mary conducts communion services. The services include a scriptural reading and homily followed by communion using hosts previously consecrated by a priest. Once a week, the service is held in the skilled care unit.



As part of her ministry, she takes the time to get to know the village residents, to learn about their families, their interests and their concerns. Sister Mary has helped residents plan their weddings. Several single residents have met at the village, fallen in love and gotten married. She works with families as they plan resident funerals and memorial services in the Chapel. She visits residents when they are hospitalized, regardless of their faith tradition.

"I work with a minister, who provides ongoing pastoral care to the Protestant residents," Sister Mary says. "Either of us is available to anyone who requests our help, regardless of what their religion is. Together, we present a variety of ecumenical services and activities to meet the spiritual needs of residents."

Those services include spiritual enrichment classes, seasonal small group reflections for Advent and Lent, as well as community-service projects, such as food and clothing drives for organizations in the Detroit area.

Sister Mary recruits and trains liturgical ministers and schedules priests for Mass, funerals and the sacraments of reconciliation and anointing of the sick.

She describes her pastoral role in simple terms.

"My first priority - always - is to be with the residents in whatever ways they need me to be to help them address areas important to their spiritual life."