



Summer 2025 • Volume 24 • No. 2

On Mission

IHM Sisters

A publication of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Malvern, PA
Our Mission: to evangelize, to catechize, and to teach



A Labor of Love...

Preserving the Legacy of the IHM Sisters

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In memoriam

“Our work is to enlarge the tent and to let everyone know they are welcomed inside the Church.” This statement to a group of reporters by Pope Leo XIV, then Bishop Robert Prevost, beautifully articulates the Gospel message of Jesus Christ. In his role as bishop and in his short tenure as Pope, it is clear that his namesake, Pope Leo XIII, has profoundly influenced his own proclivity to Catholic Social Teaching.



As IHMs, we often reflect on our own responses to the teachings of the Church regarding how we “widen our tents” so that all people know of their inherent worth as a unique creation of a loving God. This concern for human dignity is echoed within these pages as you experience the IHM Congregation’s lifelong commitment to education, spiritual growth, and compassionate service.

The IHM Archives safeguards the rich legacy of the Congregation and preserves the stories of faithful service of IHM sisters who educated the poor, stood for justice, and nurtured spiritual life across generations. In preserving this history, the IHM Archives ensures that the courage, wisdom, and grace of the past continues to inspire the Church’s work in the present.

Some of the IHM present ministries highlighted in this issue of *On Mission* include the IHM Conference Center and the work of the Campus Ministry at Immaculata University. By fostering spiritual formation, intellectual growth and faithful engagement with the world, individuals and groups encounter the Gospel in a personal and transformative way. Together, these ministries nurture the next generation of faith-filled leaders and ensure that the Church remains vibrant, relevant, and rooted in love.

As a response to the Papal Encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, the newly created Peace Garden located on the grounds of the IHM Motherhouse offers a sacred space where care for creation and care for the soul come together. We are reminded that “everything is interconnected” and that our environment is not separate from our spiritual life, but integral to it.

The holistic care, community life, and the spiritual enrichment provided by the administration of Camilla Hall is a living example of the ministry of compassion providing care to our sisters who have given their lives in offering love and respect to all those they served. The residents of Camilla Hall truly exemplify the legacy of social awareness which is ours as IHMs.

May these pages of *On Mission* allow each of us to expand the tents of our hearts and offer hope to our ever-changing world.

Many blessings,

Sister Mary Ellen Tennity, IHM
General Superior

Take the Word of God with You *As You Go*

*We are all made
in the image
and likeness
of God.*



Sister Anne Marie Stegmaier
Program Director
IHM Spirituality Center

Many of us learned when we were young that we are made in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27; 5:2). Recently, I wondered about the depths of this statement. While affirming the belief that I and others are imprinted with the Divine, I began to ask myself, “What does that really mean in my life? Is this guiding how I live?”

For me, daily attendance at Mass and reception of the Eucharist are entwined in the process of growing in the likeness of God. Daily I receive the Body and Blood of Christ, hearing the words, “Do this in memory of me,” and with those words, I hear an invitation to give myself to others in memory of and in imitation of Christ. This is my opportunity to grow in the likeness of Christ and be strengthened to better follow God’s will as did Jesus.

Henri Nouwen expresses his understanding and living of this likeness saying, “You and I are called to become other Christs, to be living manifestations of God in this world. God dwells in us in such an intimate way that we indeed are becoming manifestations of God’s glory in this world.” Jesus says, “Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing” (John 14:12).

Image and likeness are two parts of one whole. Another author, Richard Rohr, in his book, *Immortal Diamond*, defines image “as our objective DNA that marked us as creatures of God from the very beginning, before we could do anything right or wrong.” We are all gifted with this divine indwelling; it is the Holy Spirit dwelling within us which is why we call ourselves Temples of the Holy Spirit. We did nothing to earn this gift; we always had the divine life. He defines likeness as “...our personal appropriation and gradual realization of this utterly free gift of the image of God.” Our entire life, the journey toward the final goal of heaven, is full of ups and downs, of growing into the likeness of God, sometimes falling short. It is all part of our journey to becoming the true self we are created to be. It is how we become partners with Christ who took on human flesh so that we could become partners in his divine mission.

As we enjoy the slower pace of summer days, I invite you to take time to dwell more fully on the awesome truth that you are made in the image and likeness of God! May your loving service to others, your personal prayer, and the graces given in the reception of the Sacraments of Eucharist and Reconciliation bring you to the heavenly dwelling of the God who created us to dwell in union with Him for all eternity.



Preserving and Sharing the IHM Legacy of Grace

To understand the history of the IHM Congregation, look no further than the Heritage Room located in the IHM Motherhouse in Malvern, Pennsylvania. This beautiful space is home to a collection of artifacts designed to highlight the Congregation's rich history and the pioneering spirit of its co-founders, Father Louis Florent Gillet and Mother Theresa Maxis. Through exhibits and displays, the charism, mission, and ministries of the Congregation are brought to life.

THE VISION

Originally known as the "Library Reading Room" and then transformed into the "South American Room," the Heritage Room was created to honor the historical contributions of the IHM sisters in both North and South America. The inspiration came from the IHM Administration's vision of creating "a space for remembering, owning, and celebrating the IHM Legacy."

Interior construction for the repurposing of the Heritage Room

began in August of 2021 and was completed in January of 2022. It was a team effort consisting of outside agencies involved in the construction along with the IHM Administration, the Director of Operations, the Archive Department staff and volunteers, and the Maintenance and Housekeeping Departments. Several very generous donors were also part of this blessed project.

HISTORY UNFOLDED

According to Sister Helene Thomas Connolly, the IHM Congregational Archivist, "The Heritage Room serves as a vehicle for sharing our IHM Legacy of Grace with visitors of all ages and interests." Sister Helene has been working in the Archives since 2018, transitioning from former roles in teaching, formation, and religious education. She is grateful to guide visitors through the Heritage Room where they can journey through the Congregation's history, witnessing how it unfolded from past to present, always sustained by God's grace and providence.

There is much for visitors to see and experience in the Heritage Room including an extensive collection of artifacts such as

- items from the founders of the Congregation;
- memorabilia from former and present Motherhouses;
- records of former/current missions and ministries in North and South America;
- historical documents and photographs that illustrate the growth and outreach of the Congregation in North and South America;
- items highlighting the accomplishments of individual sisters in various ministries.

Congregational history is also displayed on television screens throughout the room and on iPads for an interactive digital experience for guests to enjoy.

The Heritage Room features specific areas of interest including: (1) The

IHM Generational Wall honoring the Congregation's co-founders and showing the growth of the Congregation through the years from the first convent in a log cabin in Monroe, Michigan to the current Motherhouse in Malvern, Pennsylvania; (2) The South American exhibit highlighting the Congregation's ministry in Chile and Peru; (3) The Villa Maria by the Sea display showcasing the history of the sisters' retreat ministry in Cape May and Stone Harbor, New Jersey; and (4) The Immaculata University exhibit containing memorabilia from the school tracing its evolution from college to university status.

THE ARCHIVES

The Heritage Room is an extension of the Congregation's Archives Department designed to preserve Congregational history. Cataloging and preserving Congregational

artifacts is a significant undertaking that relies on collaboration and teamwork. "As the saying goes, 'It takes a village,'" Sister Helene says with a smile. She prays for God's guidance as she begins her work each day in the Archives Department and is grateful for the ongoing support of General Superior, Sister Mary Ellen Tennity, and the entire IHM Administration who offer tremendous encouragement on an ongoing basis, particularly through Sister Donna Shallo, Congregational Secretary, who serves as a liaison between the General Administration and the Archives. Sister Helene receives help

in the Archives throughout the year from Sister Bernadette Kane as well as from sisters who volunteer during the summer months while on break from their mission assignments. In addition, a few faithful, long-time lay volunteers, who now live in Florida, come to the Motherhouse to help if they are in the area and sometimes help digitally from afar.

of the donated item, and the potential for research of the item," she adds. If an item is accepted, the accession process begins, which provides guidelines for formally accepting new items into the Archives. In addition, with the assistance of Maintenance and Housekeeping, Sister Helene maintains the upkeep of the IHM Heritage Room, provides tours to individuals and groups, and ensures the safekeeping of the precious artifacts on display.

Sister developed a love for the Archives from her time serving in Raleigh, North Carolina where she was living with Sister Maria Gratia Hutton. "Sister Gratia loved community history and often told us wonderful stories," she remembers. Whenever Sister Helene made her annual retreat at the IHM Motherhouse, she would always dedicate time to visiting the Archives, enjoying the artifacts that revealed story after story.



The Congregation is proud to have the Heritage Room serve as an educational and spiritual resource for adults, students, retreatants, and visitors to delve more deeply into the Congregation's mission to evangelize, to catechize, and to teach.

The responsibilities of Archive Ministry are many, but Sister Helene serves with a calm and peaceful presence. Her duties as Congregational Archivist include preserving the records of deceased sisters, responding to archival inquiries, processing artifacts and documents donated to the Congregation, preparing records for the bindery, and processing community records sent annually to the Archives Department. Sister must also discern the importance of donations that come into the Archives. New artifacts are "evaluated based on the relevance of the item to the Congregation's history, the importance

NOTABLE DISCOVERIES

Over the years, Sister Helene has uncovered some "hidden treasures." "For several years, I was aware of a small wooden table in the Archives, but I had not discovered any information about it," she shares. "One day, when bending down to pick up something off the floor near the table, I noticed an almost hidden gold plate on the side of the table which explained that the table was made from the wood of the first convent that Father Gillet [our founder] had built for the sisters to replace the log cabin. When the convent was eventually demolished, some of the wood was saved and three



The IHM Generational Wall showcases the growth of the Congregation from a small log cabin in Michigan to the present day Motherhouse in Pennsylvania; the wall also pays tribute to Mothers General elected by the Congregation throughout the years.

tables were made – one for each branch of the IHM Congregation! Our table is proudly displayed in the Heritage Room."

Sister Helene recalls other experiences that have deepened her appreciation for the Archives. In preparation for Veterans Day, she discovered that there were IHM sisters who served in the military before they entered the convent. A letter from the Secretary of the Navy, recognizing a sister's service in the U.S. Military during World

War II, as well as her celebration of her Golden Jubilee in religious life, is on display in the Heritage Room. On another occasion, when researching a brown cross, Sister Helene discovered that it was Father Gillet's own mission cross! She learned that he requested that it be passed on to the IHM Congregation at the time of his death.

LEGACY OF GRACE

"My greatest joy in serving in my current ministry is deepening my love and gratitude for our deceased

sisters as well as for all the sisters still living," says Sister Helene. "I want to do justice to the work of our former IHM Archivists on whose shoulders we stand and serve in deep gratitude for the blessed groundwork they have laid and passed onto us."

It is the Congregation's hope that the IHM Archives and Heritage Room continue to be those special places where the graces of the IHM Charism of Love, Creative Hope, and Fidelity are evident to all.



**"All down the years, O Lord, with love unfailing,
Guiding, protecting, Thou hast been our stay;
How shall we thank Thee for the grace Thou sendest,
Blessing us anew from day to day?
True, in our hearts, our song shall ever be
Praise, love, thanksgiving, our God to Thee!
Praise, love, thanksgiving, our God to Thee!"**

The IHM Centennial Hymn from 1845-1945



Table made from wood of the first convent

TO SCHEDULE A TOUR
OF THE IHM HERITAGE ROOM CONTACT:

Sister Helene Thomas Connolly
IHM Archivist
610-647-2160, Ext. 1922
s.helene.connolly@ihmimm.org



Come experience our Congregational history!



Sister Marie la Reine Spain's military flag



Father Gillet's mission cross



Peru exhibit

IHM Spotlights

*Sister Marie Gipprich, Director
IHM Conference Center
Bryn Mawr, PA*



*“I am living a dream I
had for a long time –
to speak with people
in order to share
the Good News that
I have received.”*

Nestled on the lush grounds of St. Aloysius Academy for Boys in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania is the Wooten Mansion. Once the residence of the well-known Philadelphia family, the Drexel’s, the mansion is now the home of the IHM Conference Center. Established in 1997, the IHM Conference Center opened its doors to offer “service, hospitality, and opportunities for spiritual and educational enrichment for everyone.” Today, Sister Marie Gipprich, Director of the IHM Conference Center, and her staff work tirelessly to keep the retreat center running smoothly, ensuring a welcoming and prayerful space for all who visit.

FULFILLING A DESIRE

For the past 10 years, Sister Marie has been a faithful presence at the IHM Conference Center fulfilling her desire to serve in retreat ministry. “For many years, I wanted to serve at the Center, but I was working in parishes at the time,” she recalls. “When the opportunity presented itself, I was only too happy to join the staff.”

With a generous heart and a gift for hospitality, Sister Marie embraces the idea of “never knowing what the day will bring.” Some days she is leading/guiding retreats, gathering information for the Center’s communication materials,

or maintaining retreat attendee lists. On other days, you may find her participating in housekeeping duties, decorating the Center, or keeping in contact with outside groups using the facility for their retreat needs.

She is grateful for the three sisters who serve beside her – Sister Beth Woodward, Sister Rita Marotta, and Sister Rose Adams – along with a



*Before welcoming a group to the center,
Sister Marie and Sister Beth gather with the
volunteers to pray the IHM Charism prayer.*

dedicated group of approximately 22 volunteers. “All of us work like a well-oiled machine!” she says proudly.

TIME APART

The Conference Center offers attendees “time apart” from the daily demands of life to focus on their spiritual journey. “Our hope is that retreatants will come away refreshed by what they’ve heard and experienced, and that it will whet their appetites for more as they begin or continue their spiritual journey with the goal of a deeper relationship with Christ,” Sister says.

The Center hosts a variety of one-day retreats appealing to all ages, denominations, and genders. Retreat topics include scripture study, spirituality, prayer, community, and the sacraments – just to name a few. Throughout the year, retreat topics often coincide with the liturgical seasons of the Church such as Advent and Lent. Most retreats include a meal, Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and time for personal reflection and sharing. Sister shares that “no one leaves without being inspired or motivated to go deeper.”

As a retreat director, Sister knows the importance of “time apart” and makes her own spirituality a priority. “You can’t give what you don’t have,” she says. So, prayer, meditation, spiritual reading, and being mindful of God in the present moment have shaped her own spiritual journey.

COMMUNITY

Over the years, the Conference Center has developed a loyal following of attendees who seek the solace of the Center and a connection with others on the same spiritual path. What keeps attendees coming back year after year? Community. “We share stories, pray for one another, and just enjoy each other’s company,” shares Sister Marie. “Attendees come with the same purpose – to learn, grow, and be challenged. I believe that the welcome they feel plus the topics we offer are



Sister Marie meets with Sister Clare D'Auria, OSF (pictured left) as she prepares to lead a retreat at the Conference Center.

what keeps them coming back.” When asked what advice she would give to first-time retreat attendees, Sister echoes the words of Jesus to “come and see.” “We try to make all attendees as comfortable as possible. We make sure that the retreatants meet one another, especially new participants. Those who are ‘regulars’ always make new participants feel welcome and at home.” That same community spirit extends to the Center’s staff and volunteers whom Sister regards as family. Together, they work as a team to ensure a wonderful retreat experience for all. Sister proudly says, “I’ve been told that when someone comes to the Center, it’s like ‘coming home’.”

PEOPLE FOCUSED

When reflecting on her ministries, including her time in education and in pastoral ministry, Sister Marie says it’s all about the people. “When I look back at any of my ministries, it’s the people who come to mind, not what I did there.” Growing up, Sister recalls the people in her life who influenced her the most. “My Aunt Marie taught me a lot about the spiritual life as I was growing up and my mom was certainly influential in my vocation,” she says. After entering the Congregation, the people she lived and worked with inspired her especially Sister Marie Claire Matzinger who lived her life

epitomizing the saying to “Preach always and if necessary, use words.” She adds that Sister Marie Claire’s “simple, sincere, and gentle ways influenced my life, and they still do.” Her sponsor, Sister Mary Jo McDonald, continues to be a steady presence of goodness and contentment in her life. “I always said (and still do!) that I want to be like her when I grow up!” Outside the Congregation, the lay staff of her former ministries and some faithful friends have left an imprint on her mind and heart.

MOVING FOWARD

Since serving at the IHM Conference Center for over a decade, Sister views it as a steady and supportive place for “truth seekers.” Her vision is to continue to make each retreat meaningful and current and to open the door to a variety of speakers from other communities and ministries. In the end, she says what motivates her the most are the people. “I am living a dream I had for a long time – to speak with people in order to share the Good News that I have received,” she says joyfully. “I just want to tell everyone about it!”

Sister Christina Marie Roberts
Director of Campus Ministry
Immaculata University
Malvern, PA

“My goal is first and foremost to help students know they are loved and that they have a place to call home in Campus Ministry.”



A place to call home – this is Sister Christina Marie Roberts’ vision for Campus Ministry at Immaculata University. Embarking on her first year as Director of Campus Ministry, Sister Christina is dedicated to creating a welcoming, supportive, and loving environment where students can deepen their faith and feel a true sense of belonging.

VOCATIONAL CALLING

“The students I interact with each day bring me the greatest joy!” says Sister Christina with a smile. It was her own experience with Campus Ministry at Penn State University that led her to pursue her vocational calling. “It was through my experience in the Newman Club at Penn State that I first met others who were discerning, and for the first time I began to give my vocation more serious thought,” she says.

After graduating from college, Sister Christina began teaching at a school in the Gettysburg area. However, she recalls, “As much as I enjoyed teaching, I felt that something was missing in my life.” She remembered that one of the priests in her parish often spoke of being taught by the IHM sisters. This sparked her desire to learn more about the IHM

Congregation which ultimately led to her entering religious life in September 2012. After professing first vows in the Congregation, Sister Christina taught in New Jersey, Philadelphia, and Bishop Shanahan High School in Downingtown. While teaching at



Sister Christina is joined by student retreat leaders from Immaculata. Throughout the year, she holds several overnight retreats to help students grow in relationship with God, self, and others.

Bishop Shanahan, she also worked with students on retreats and service projects which she describes as one of the favorite parts of her ministry there. “I really enjoyed seeing how creative the students could be in sharing their faith with others. I loved seeing them light up when they brought their ideas to life, giving them confidence and joy.”

COMMUNITY

Sister’s background in education, her love of working with young people, and her master’s degree in theology, have prepared her well for her current position in Campus Ministry at Immaculata. At the heart of Sister

Christina’s present ministry is her desire to build a welcoming and inclusive faith community on the Immaculata campus. Her days are busy as she plans a variety of activities and events to help students grow spiritually, serve others, and develop meaningful relationships with their peers.

A “typical” week in Campus Ministry includes

- **Service at Camilla Hall/Retreat Leader Meetings (Mondays)** – Each week, students engage with and support the sisters residing at Camilla Hall. Retreat leaders meet to discuss new Campus Ministry retreat opportunities.
- **Movie Nights (Tuesdays)** – Movie Nights are a favorite because they provide time for fellowship and a break from schoolwork.
- **Community Nights (Wednesdays)** – Midweek, students are brought together for a meal, activity, and a guest speaker.



Students and sisters gather for the annual S'mores with the Sisters event held at the beginning of the fall semester. The event, run by Campus Ministry and Student Life, welcomes students back to campus and gives students and sisters the opportunity to connect with one another.

- **Bible Study and Holy Hour (Thursdays)** – On Thursdays, students have time for reflection, prayer, and spiritual enrichment through bible study and Holy Hour led by the Immaculata University Chaplain.
- **Retreats, Service Opportunities, and Social Events (Fridays and Weekends)** – Social activities such as bowling or hiking often kick off the weekend's festivities. Opportunities for students to serve locally in the community are organized by Amanda Bielat, Assistant Director of Campus Ministry. Weekend retreats are also offered throughout the year for students to get away and recharge spiritually.

Students are also welcome daily at the Campus Ministry Suite, a home away from the classroom. Here, they can study, enjoy coffee, tea or snacks, play video games, or simply relax and connect.

NAVIGATING CHALLENGES

Campus Ministry provides a faith-filled community where students find support amidst the pressures of daily life. "Some of the biggest challenges young people face today are their own fears and anxieties about who they are," Sister shares. Her compassionate presence and her ability to meet

students "where they are" helps them navigate their challenges through a lens of faith. Whether interacting with students one-on-one, sharing in groups through Bible studies or retreats, or through prayerful reflection including Adoration, Holy Hours, or liturgies, Sister Christina's mission is for each student to feel valued and supported. "The personal connection is so important," she adds. "Inviting students to Campus Ministry events and helping students feel that they are welcomed, known, and understood even in the midst of their struggles is the greatest gift I believe that I can give them." Sister is grateful for the student leaders in Campus Ministry who are also present to help other students feel included and supported.

EXPLORATION

For those students who are questioning their faith or just beginning to explore their walk with God, Sister Christina is there to guide them. "I try my best to listen to their situations and experiences and meet them where they are. Everyone is seeking love, acceptance and peace in their own way. By making myself available to students who just need to talk, I believe I can connect with them and help guide them to feeling at home in Campus Ministry, regardless of where they might be on their faith journey."

REWARDS

Under Sister Christina's guidance, Campus Ministry at Immaculata University has become a home for many students seeking purpose and belonging. Despite the challenges, the rewards are many. She has seen firsthand how Campus Ministry can change a student's life. She recalls a student who, through his involvement in Campus Ministry, deepened his faith and ultimately converted to Catholicism. She adds that "not only has this student grown tremendously in his faith but he has grown into a leader who seeks out other students to help them know that they are welcome, accepted, and loved." His transformation is a testament to the impact of Sister Christina's ministry.

THE FUTURE

As Sister Christina leads the way, the future of Campus Ministry shines brightly. "Our IU students are so special," she says. They truly inspire me by the way they seek the Lord in their life and try their best to share their faith and love of God with each other." Sister's mission is clear – "My goal is first and foremost to help students know they are loved and that they have a place to call home in Campus Ministry."

Powerhouse Presence

CAMILLA HALL

They "Never Stop Walking"

Sisters Christina Joseph, Ann Raymond, and Anne Francine, the three superiors in Camilla Hall, seem to pattern their day on a book about Saint Alphonsus, titled *Never Stop Walking*.^{*} While their well-worn shoes attest to uncountable footsteps, their true mission is to *step gently and often into the heart of each sister resident*.

THREE VS. ONE

There was always a superior in Camilla, because Camilla is the Health Care Center for the sisters but it is also **their convent home**. With a new initiative in 2020, three sisters were appointed to the role of superior which is described to “create, with the help of her community, an atmosphere of love and trust... listening to the sisters... showing concern for [their] physical and emotional health.” Until 2020, one superior for 200 sisters was challenging, but because there were many sister nurses, patients interacted with sisters and felt a sense of communal living. That reality slowly

changed as the staff transitioned to dedicated lay people. To keep a sense of “IHM at-homeness” with fewer sisters visible, three were tasked with the sacred ministry of listening and caring.

BEING KNOWN

Making each sister feel known and respected is the groundwork of their ministry. Caring for one section of about 60 sisters, daily “check-ins” are not only possible but planned! These personal encounters help ensure sharing matters of the heart can happen. Sister Anne Francine notes, “We can focus on the emotional and spiritual needs of the sisters in a time of change and vulnerability for them.”



Julie Kozak, Administrator (right), meets with Superiors (from left to right), Sisters Christina Joseph, Ann Raymond, and Anne Francine to discuss caring for the sisters' needs at Camilla Hall.

ONE COMMUNITY

Although each superior has one “section” of sisters to care for, there are NOT three communities. Sister Christina clearly states, “The foundational initiative was to never operate separately but always with the understanding that every sister is part of One Camilla Community.” A carefully implemented plan of connectedness concretizes the “oneness.” The three touch base often but meet formally every day with Administrator, Julie Kozak, assuring they all have the “full picture.” Sister Ann Raymond appreciates that there is ONE community because if a sister moves to another section, “She experiences the same community schedule and her adjustment is easier,” says Sister Ann.



Sister Anne Francine speaks with the kitchen staff as they discuss new technologies in preparing meals for the resident sisters.



Dr. Bonnie Lee Ashby meets with Sister Ann Raymond and the nursing staff to share patient good news.

WHERE ELSE DOES THEIR WALKING LEAD?

Besides daily visits, what else keeps these three “stepping”? Sister Christina says wryly, “As an educator, I planned my work but here I just ask “What is God holding for me/us today? The answer contains the following tasks and more:

- preparing a room for new residents (temporary or permanent) may be mundane tasks like making a bed, but always being a warm, welcoming presence to allay any concerns;
- allowing sisters to be as independent as possible yet fully cared for;
- as POA for each sister, being an advocate with medical personnel, perhaps accompanying her to a doctor, or to the hospital any time in the 24 hours;
- keeping family members updated on a sister’s status;
- being a comforting presence when medical interventions are no longer effective;
- remaining at the death bed with others, surrounding sister with prayer and comfort;
- finally, facilitating the funeral arrangements with sister’s family while remaining attentive to the other sisters who mourn the loss.

Sister Anne Francine summarized the scope of all these and other tasks saying, “We treat each sister with the respect and the care we would give our

parents, acting as a companion in each phase of their journey.”

PREPARING FOR THIS ROLE

God *writes straight with crooked lines* and his preparation of each one for this role was proof. After graduating from Mount St. Joseph HS, Sister Christina was a primary teacher and principal and was asked to be on Camilla’s Board of Advisors. She then served as Director of Pastoral Care at Saint Martha Center for three and half years which she feels was “God preparing me to serve our Sisters.” With awe she says, “God’s grace has taken me beyond where I could have thought to go.”

Hailing from “Delco” Sister Anne Francine attended Cardinal O’Hara High School and spent her IHM ministry years as an educator. Although she had served as a local superior, it was a new experience learning the logistics of Camilla life. Her love for the sisters quickly eased her heart and with support from others and the Spirit, the new skills became routine, and, she adds with a full heart, “The sisters at Camilla inspire me with their prayerful surrender to the Lord.”

One might think that Sister Ann Raymond, a proud alum of the last graduating class of

Saint John, Manayunk, having been a nurse in Camilla for 26 years, had a straight path to this new role. But after those years, she went to Peru and Chile as teacher and pastoral minister. Returning to the US, she ministered in Norristown hospitals, where she found her passion caring for the dying. She grew to know the younger generation in Temple University’s Neumann Center and was honored to tend to the fragile and vulnerable in a Kensington outreach center.

But in 2020, God “walked” her serving heart back to Camilla Hall.

APPRECIATION VOICED

Frequent words of thanks express the sisters’ gratitude to these superiors. One sister, appreciating their tired feet said, “Go hide and put your feet up!” On a more reflective note, a sister shared, “We are so lucky to have this time and people to help us prepare for our next step.”

Julie Kozak, administrator, says. “The Superiors are wonderful advocates for the Sisters, making my job easier every day. Their kindness, empathy and can-do attitude form Camilla into a loving convent home.”

**Never Stop Walking: The Life and Spirit of Saint Alphonsus* by Sister Nancy Fearon, IHM (1977)



Sister Christina Joseph works with the Housekeeping and Maintenance Departments to assess the needs of a sister’s room before arrival.

ROOTED in Faith . . .

The IHM "Peace Garden"

Nestled in the courtyard of Villa Maria House of Studies is the "Peace Garden" where fresh, organic vegetables are planted and harvested to feed the sisters residing at the IHM Motherhouse. Established in 2024, the garden was inspired by the vision of Sister Mary Ellen Tennity, General Superior, who imagined a "farm-to-table" approach for providing nourishing meals for the sisters. But the Peace Garden is more than a source of fresh food; it is a space for quiet reflection and a living response to Pope Francis' call (in his encyclical, *Laudato Si'*) to care for the earth and all of creation.

THE VISION

Craig Tinley, Dining Services Manager in the House of Studies, has been deeply involved with the Peace Garden since its inception in 2024. "When Sister Mary Ellen shared with me her vision of providing fresh, organic

vegetables to feed the sisters residing at Villa Maria House of Studies, I jumped at the opportunity," says Craig. "I had previously worked with a company in Corporate Dining that promoted a philosophy of sustainability so the idea of creating a garden of this kind brought me back to my roots."

Building on the small garden established by his predecessor in 2023, which included just a few herbs, vegetables, and flowers, Craig worked diligently to bring Sister Mary Ellen's vision for a thriving garden to life. During the winter months of 2024, Craig planted a variety of seedlings indoors in the House of Studies dining room which, surrounded by windows, offered ample sunlight and warmth, creating the perfect environment for the seedlings to thrive. The beginnings of the garden also became a source of joy for the sisters who, as they gathered for their daily meals, could witness the garden's steady growth unfolding before them.

While the seedlings continued to grow indoors, construction began outdoors on seven raised garden beds placed in the courtyard on the Motherhouse grounds. Raised beds were selected because "they are good for drainage, offer better control of the soil, and are aesthetically appealing," Craig adds. The beds were



The "Peace Garden" started indoors in the dining room at Villa Maria House of Studies.

constructed with wood from the Eastern Hemlock tree – the official tree of Pennsylvania – and were sourced locally from an Amish Sawmill in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania.

The courtyard was chosen as the site for the Peace Garden because it is fully enclosed, offering natural protection from wildlife, and is a place where there is excellent sun exposure during the summer months. In addition, sisters can see the garden as they walk along the "arcade" – a long hallway in the Motherhouse lined with windows on both sides.

The garden was lovingly named the "Peace Garden" by Sister Regina Angeline Oberdick who assists Craig and the Dining Services staff with preparing daily meals for the sisters. As a gesture of gratitude and hope, Sister Angeline gifted Craig an American flag. Together, they chose the Peace Garden



In the spring of 2024, the Peace Garden was officially moved outdoors to the courtyard on the grounds of the IHM Motherhouse.

“As stewards of God’s creation, we are called to make the earth a beautiful garden for the human family.”

- Pope Francis, from written remarks at the University of Santo Tomas, Manila, Philippines, 2015

as the perfect place to display it – a symbol and daily reminder “to pray for peace in our country and throughout the world.”

VARIETIES

The Peace Garden provides a variety of fresh vegetables to feed the House of Studies community including beans, carrots, beets, celery, corn, cucumber, eggplant, onions, peppers, radishes, winter squash, tomatoes and cabbage. Strawberries were also grown along with herbs such as basil, chives, dill, and parsley. Last year, over 200 pounds of produce and over five pounds of herbs were harvested!

“Each time I brought the bounty indoors, the Dining Services team would start brainstorming and working together to create something yummy for the sisters to eat,” shares Craig. Using the bounty from the garden, the dining staff prepared a variety of foods for everyone to enjoy such as zucchini bread, ratatouille, and moussaka with eggplant.

LEARNING CURVE

The Dining Services team works diligently to tend to the garden throughout the spring and summer months. However, as with any garden, there are some challenges. “Harmful insects appear out of nowhere!” says Craig. “Late June and July of last year the garden was attacked by the Japanese Beetle and Squash Bugs. I learned firsthand all about the wonders of nature.”

As any gardener knows, maintaining a garden is time consuming. “My staff and I maintain the garden, but we are always looking for volunteers,”

teases Craig. The main duties include weeding, keeping insects at bay, and watering the plants. Thankfully, three rain barrels were put in place as a conservation effort to water the garden. Craig shares that aside from all the work, the Peace Garden lives up to its name. “The garden is an escape from the kitchen, a place for me to meditate in the peace and quiet. It’s nourishment for the mind.”

CHANGES

This year’s blueprint for the Peace Garden will be a bit different than Craig’s original creation in 2024. The 2025 garden will be adapted based on a template from the Farmer’s Almanac Garden Planner. This will help the Dining Services staff create a successful garden through personalized planting plans and layouts tailored to the

specific climate of the region. They will also be able to tap into expert knowledge from Farmer’s Almanac experts to ensure optimal plant health and yield. Some new plants will also appear in the garden this season including potatoes, peas, parsnips, mint, cilantro, and thyme – just to name a few.

RESPONSE

The response from the sisters, both those who encounter the garden each day and those who visit the Motherhouse, has been one of deep gratitude. “The Peace Garden is loved and brings satisfaction to all,” Craig shares.

May God continue to bless the Peace Garden, and may it be a source of nourishment – in body and in spirit.



The sisters enjoyed a wonderful harvest from the garden in 2024!



Companions in Prayer and Ministry

Finding Community and Deepening Faith

Sometimes the greatest blessings come from gathering with those who share a desire to grow closer to God. That's the spirit behind the IHM Companions in Prayer and Ministry, a group of lay men and women who partner with the IHM Congregation to grow in the IHM Charism of Love, Creative Hope, and Fidelity to nurture their faith, develop friendships, and serve others.

Companions in Prayer and Ministry began in 1988 when a group of IHM sisters asked the question: *How can we share the richness of our spiritual lives with those who walk alongside us in ministry?* They learned that many lay people longed to learn more about the spirit and traditions of the IHM Congregation. So, in March of 1990, the Congregation hosted its first Day of Reflection for lay participants. This led to smaller Companion groups meeting more frequently with sisters who shared the IHM spirituality with them.

Since then, the Companions have grown to include 19 groups across the U.S. each led by an IHM sister who unites the group in faith through prayer and service. Some Companions have come to know the IHM sisters through years of shared ministry, while others are new to the spirituality of the IHMs and join out of a desire to deepen their faith lives.

Aside from a yearly retreat, Companion members meet monthly in their local groups to focus on a specific virtue, share scripture, participate in spiritual reading, attend Eucharistic Adoration, and socialize with one another.

Below meet Companions Violet Cali and Jenny Tautic, as they share how being a part of IHM Companions has shaped their spiritual journey and enriched their lives.



"I've been a Companions member for 31 years," says **Violet Cali**, who belongs to the Our Lady of Peace Companions group in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Violet spent most of her life (both as a student and later as a teacher) surrounded by IHM sisters. As a Companion, she is embraced by the IHM spirituality of hospitality and joy. "I feel I am part

of a wonderful group of women who love the Lord and who show his love by their actions," shares Violet. Being a part of Companions has helped her to "learn compassion, smile in the face of adversity, and show the face of Jesus to others." She adds, "The sisters have accompanied me in my attempt to love and serve the Lord through prayer and ministry. Even though we walk separate paths in our vocations, spiritually we are all companions."

Jenny Tautic joined the IHM Companions group at St. Matthew in Forestville, Connecticut six years ago through the invitation of a friend. "I thought the people in the group were nice and that there was something for me to learn to increase my faith and my understanding of the Church," she says. Since joining Companions, Jenny has found that the heart of IHM spirituality – faith, a deep prayer life, care for those in need, love, kindness, and inclusiveness – deeply resonate with her. "I have already grown so much over my six years as a member," she shares. "The members in our group have inspired me to attend Holy Hours, Stations of the Cross, Eucharistic adoration, and other church events. They have inspired me to read books and watch shows I wouldn't have known about. Through our discussions and readings, I find that I learn something new at every meeting."



For more information on joining an IHM Companions in Prayer and Ministry group near you, contact Sister Francis Helen, at 610-647-2160, Ext. 1925 or ihmcompanions@gmail.com.

Congratulations 2025 Jubilarians!

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS

† Sister Maria Paula Delaney (RIP)	Sister Marita de Lourdes Barber
Sister Marie Charlene Hughes	Sister Dolores Kathleen Gain

SEVENTY YEARS

Sister Helen Marie Gates	Sister Christine Mary Remington
Sister George Mary Brolly	Sister Maryanne Niehaus
Sister Miriam Barbara Berkowitz	Sister Anne Marie Lavan
† Sister Loretta Michael Pinner (RIP)	Sister Suzanne M. Scattergood
Sister Maureen Christi Van Winkle	Sister Helen Dolores Gilroy

DIAMOND JUBILARIANS

Sister Denise M. Mollica	Sister M. Jean Daniel Moyer
Sister Marie Horstmann	Sister M. Margaret John Stichter
Sister M. Rose Yeager	Sister Ann M. McAlpin
Sister M. William Therese Byrne	Sister Marie Amedeo DeLuca
Sister M. Elizabeth Ann Goltman	Sister M. Michael Damien Moore
Sister Mary E. Smith	Sister Grace Mary Gorman
Sister M. Elizabeth Woodward	Sister M. Anne Christine Kalbron
Sister M. Rita James Murphy	

GOLDEN JUBILARIANS

Sister M. Anne Philip Buehler	Sister Catherine M. Ward
Sister Regina Rosarii McLallen	Sister M. Elizabeth Frances Bailey
Sister M. Stephen Anne Roderiguez	Sister M. John Magdalen Eibell
Sister Lorraine M. McGrew	Sister Rita Marie Lenihan

SILVER JUBILARIANS

Sister M. Elizabeth Polanco	Sister Mary Josephine Ely
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Sippin' for the Sisters **Success!**

The annual *Sippin' for the Sisters* Tea Fundraiser held on March 9 to benefit Camilla Hall was a success! What a blessed day! Our guests enjoyed tea, yummy sandwiches, delicious desserts, great music, fellowship, and some fabulous prizes. All proceeds raised were used to make improvements to the elevators in Camilla Hall. We are grateful to those who attended, to the donors who supported this event, and to the businesses who donated goods and/or services. We look forward to seeing you next year!



Prayer Around the Cross

On April 2, during the Lenten season, the IHM Congregation invited Christians of all denominations to attend a Taizé style of prayer called Prayer Around the Cross. The service was held in Sacred Heart Chapel at Villa Maria House of Studies. It was a wonderful evening of prayer and reflection with our Christian brothers and sisters as we gathered around the cross of Jesus Christ who is our hope and promise of new life. If you were not able to attend in person, we hope you can join us next year.

IHM Literacy Center Receives Award

The IHM Center for Literacy received the 2025 Faith-Justice Institute Community Partner Award from Saint Joseph University. St. Joseph University students participate in service-learning, a form of experience-based education where they engage in service as



part of their academic course work. The IHM Center for Literacy received the award for being an outstanding service-learning community partner, fostering the educational and personal development of the Saint Joseph University Service-Learning students. Congratulations to Melanie Menkevich, IHM Literacy Center Director, and the IHM sisters and lay staff who serve God and His people through this most important ministry.

Dwelling now in light, yet ever near



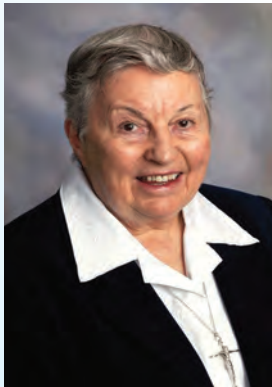
S. Loretta Regina Achuff
5.20.25



S. M. Patricia Ann Cabrey
(*S. M. Charles Joseph*)
5.20.25



S. M. Ellen T. Convey
(*S. M. Theresa James*)
5.8.25



S. Marian Christi Fehrenbach
4.20.25



S. Loretta Michael Pinner
4.9.25



S. Marie O'Malley
(*S. Shaun Marie*)
2.27.25



S. M. Cecelia Molloy
(*S. M. Rose Cecilia*)
2.25.25



S. Maria Paula Delaney
2.12.25



S. M. Claire Holzenthaler
(*S. Mary Vincent*)
2.1.25

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Mission Statement

Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Immaculata, Pennsylvania, proclaim the Gospel message in the spirit of Jesus the Redeemer. Strengthened by a life of vowed consecration, nurtured by prayer and the Eucharist, and sustained by community living, we radiate joyful service and promote Gospel values, offering compassion to all God's people through our mission to evangelize, to catechize, and to teach.

IHM Sisters – On Mission Magazine

Development & Content Specialist
Suzanne Misciagna

Editors

Sister Carolyn M. Dimick
Sister Jeannine M. Norton

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Rain or Shine
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and festivities!

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Saturday, October 4, 2025
10 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.



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