

## *From the IHM Archives...*

### ***WE WALK ON THEIR SHOULDERS!*** ***Celebrating the IHM Legacy of Grace!***

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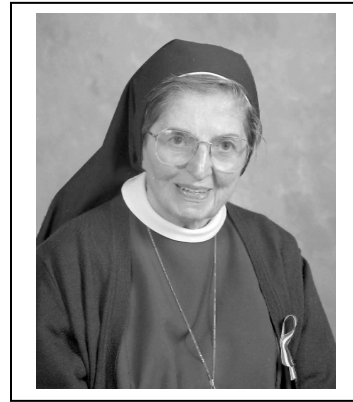
*“On a warm August afternoon in 1982, I attended the profession ceremony for five young Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary who were about to pronounce their final vows.*

*During the liturgical celebration, Rev. Msgr. Daniel A. Murray, S.T.D., S.T.L., then rector of St. Charles Borromeo Seminary, Overbrook, and homilist for the occasion, made a moving and thought-provoking statement. ‘You five sisters,’ he said, ‘are in the springtime of your religious lives. I see before me in this chapel also many who are in the summer, even the autumn, of their religious lives. Where are those in the winter? They are retired or sick now, residing in Camilla Hall across King Road. But you walk on their shoulders.’ Then, and as if to emphasize his message, he added slowly, ‘And don’t ever forget it.’*

*Those words planted the seed of this booklet. They also explain its title.”*

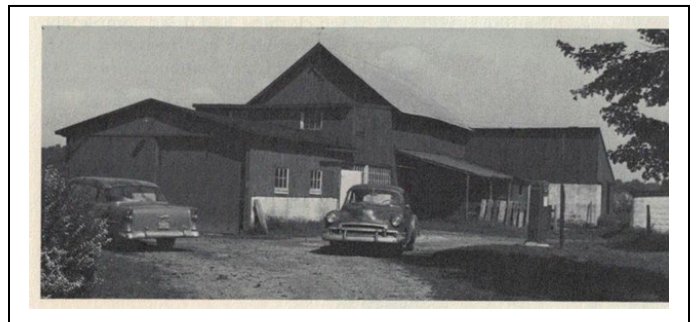
*-Excerpt taken from IHM Sister Maria Corona Crumback’s Introduction to her Book, We Walk on Their Shoulders, November 10, 1995.*

In this book Sister Corona lovingly recalls the thirteen Mothers General who had led our community up until her time. Within the book, this theme of ‘walking on their shoulders’ continually resounds, especially as she recalled that Mother M. de Chantal Hayes held senior sisters in high regard. “Their work in the classroom is done,” she would say, “but their prayers bring the greatest blessings on the community.”



Perhaps these words, **“We Walk on Their Shoulders”**, invite all IHM Sisters to pause long enough to remember and to celebrate those, both living and deceased, who have gone before us!

Although there are countless stories of putting these words into action from our community history memoirs, let us look specifically at one example: the Foundation of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Fatima Acres, Cornwells Heights (now Bensalem) in 1954. Extremely humble beginnings and simple parishioners were truly inspired and empowered by the IHM Sisters who were sent on Mission to this fledgling parish!



### **An account of the Foundation of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Fatima Acres, Bensalem...**

“At the end of my third grade, many of us at St. Charles Borromeo were told that we would be part of the new parish, Our Lady of Fatima. Soon we discovered that the new parish consisted of 40 acres of farmland, a farmhouse, a barn, a garage, and a gas tank. There was no church, no convent, no school, and the old farmhouse became the rectory. As kids we thought this was great! Meanwhile, our parents were surely thinking that there was work to be done!

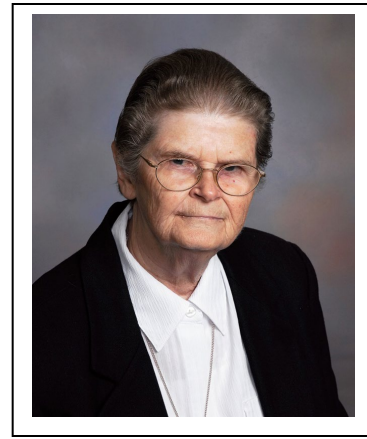
**September came and they were still building the school; however, school still began! The IHM Sisters had arrived!**

First and Second Grades were combined in a neighboring farmhouse with Sister Mary Charlene Whitaker. Sister Loretta Regina Achuff arrived halfway through the year to take over one of the grades. Third Grade was in a nearby family's garage with Miss Joan. Fourth grade was in half of the barn with Mrs. Schwartz. Fifth and sixth grades were together in the other half of the barn with Mother Mary Stephen Ford. Seventh and eighth grades remained at St. Charles School.



Our pastor, Father John Griffin, and our dads took turns driving the school bus, "Old Betsy." Some of our mothers were among the first-ever teacher aides. Our parents took turns driving the sisters to their nearby convents. Mother Mary Stephen lived at St. Charles Convent, Bensalem; Sister Charlene and Sister Loretta lived at Assumption Convent, Feasterville. Daily Mass was in the farmhouse rectory. First Saturday Mass was outside the rectory with cream doughnuts and chocolate milk for all after the Mass. Sunday Mass was at nearby Butch's Auction, right in the Auction Room. All the families arrived carrying kneeling pads, made by our parents.

The greatest blessing of all was that the IHM Community had sent sisters to begin this adventure with us! As students, we were too young to realize the sacrifices they were making; however, we readily recognized their selfless and very joyful presence. Through uncertain yet exciting times, the sisters led us by their example and acceptance.



**Now I know that it was their IHM Charism of love, creative hope, and fidelity that we were witnessing and absorbing.**

With several Religious vocations from among the students, as well as the many other vocations and careers that were embraced, it seems that God truly blessed the efforts and faithfulness of these pioneer sisters. Another blessing is that two of these original sisters are still living at Camilla Hall: Sister Mary Charlene and Sister Loretta Regina. In the name of my family, may I extend our deepest thanks to you, as well as to all of the IHMs who followed after you, for being part of our Fatima family! We truly walk on your shoulders!"

***Reflection from an IHM Sister who was one of the pioneer students.***

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*Information gathered from:*

*Sister Maria Corona Crumback, IHM. We Walk on Their Shoulders, November 10, 1995.*

*Contributions to this article from:*

*The staff of the IHM Archives-Villa Maria House of Studies, Immaculata, PA.*

*Information included is current as of Mar., 2022.*

