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# On IHM Sisters Mission

A publication of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, Malvern, PA

*Our Mission: to evangelize, to catechize, and to teach*



A Spirit of IHM, A Welcome for All

Spirituality Center

*Rooted in the IHM Charism,  
OPEN TO ALL...  
The IHM Spirituality Center*



*Sister Anne Marie Stegmaier, Director*

**N**estled on the peaceful grounds of Villa Maria House of Studies is the IHM Spirituality Center, a place of quiet refuge and renewal where one can experience the presence of God. Rooted in the IHM charism of love, creative hope, and fidelity, the Center embodies the mission of the Congregation offering an atmosphere of peace and hospitality for all who enter.

For Sister Anne Marie Stegmaier who has been serving as Director of the IHM Spirituality Center since July 2023, this ministry was both a surprise and a long-awaited blessing. “Thirty years ago, when the Spirituality Center was first

opening, I hoped to be assigned here,” she reflects. “At that time, I had just received a master’s degree in pastoral counseling and thought this would be a perfect fit.” But that wasn’t part of God’s plan then. In 1972, Sister began her IHM career teaching middle school students for 25 years and then serving another two decades in pastoral ministry meeting the needs of parishes within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia. Only then did God lead her to the Spirituality Center where all those other experiences came to fruition. Today, Sister Anne Marie calls the IHM Motherhouse “home” – a place where she not only resides, but where

she joyfully serves in the Spirituality Center, living out her call to meet people where they are and to help them find spiritual fulfillment.

### MISSION FOCUSED

In describing the mission of the IHM Spirituality Center, Sister Anne Marie highlights the IHM Congregation's Charism Prayer as its guiding foundation:

*God of boundless love, we pray for a passionate spirit to live the virtues of love, creative hope, and fidelity. Give us the grace to proclaim the Gospel message in the spirit of Jesus, the Redeemer. Inspire us to radiate joyful service with compassion for God's people. Amen.*

The IHM Charism Prayer comes to life in every aspect of the Spirituality Center – from the sisters who serve with compassion and joy, to the spiritual programs that nurture growth, to the welcoming atmosphere that invites all who enter to encounter God more deeply.

“During a visitor's stay at the Center, some need us to listen; others ask us to pray with or for them,” says Sister Anne Marie. “No matter the reason for their visit, our hope is that they always feel welcomed here,” she adds.

### TEAM EFFORT

As director, Sister Anne Marie oversees every aspect of the Center's operation, from facilitating retreats to coordinating reservations for outside groups who use the space. Throughout the year, Sister works diligently to promote the Center and advertise its offerings, manage the Center's finances, coordinate maintenance and improvement efforts, answer emails and phone calls, plan summer retreats for the sisters in the Congregation, and most important, offer a welcoming space for those who desire to grow closer to God.

“It's not about me,” Sister Anne Marie says simply. “It's about how God is trying to reach each person who walks through our doors. I only hope to be a conduit God uses to reach these individuals.”

Sister is grateful for the fellow sisters who serve with her – Sisters Julia Ann Walsh, Carolyn Ann Bennett, and Pamela Bressi – who assist with housekeeping, meal serving, and hospitality. Additional sisters also help with hospitality and housekeeping during the summer months. “Our staff and volunteers are very important to us,” says Sister Anne Marie. “We also receive support from Immaculata University and Villa Maria Academy High School students who assist with light housekeeping duties at the Center during the school year,” she adds.



*The Spirituality Center staff - Back row, left to right: S. Anne Marie Stegmaier, S. Pamela Bressi; Front row, left to right: S. Carolyn Ann Bennett and S. Julia Ann Walsh.*

### OFFERINGS

Retreats are offered to the public at the IHM Spirituality Center during the months of September through May. Evening, half day, full day, and weekend retreats are available along with occasional week-long offerings. Retreats on a variety of spiritual topics are planned throughout the year, including weekly prayer groups and

monthly mornings of quiet prayer. At the end of May through the beginning of August, the Center is reserved for the religious sisters to make their annual retreat, including not only IHM sisters but those from other congregations as well. Sisters who are spiritual directors also come to the Center to offer spiritual direction during the summer retreats and may offer day or weekend programs for both sisters and laity during the year.

When discerning what retreat topics to offer, Sister Anne Marie relies on the prayerful guidance of the retreat presenters. She also listens to input from others and draws from her own spiritual life. Among the most popular retreat topics are prayer, the Eucharist, the saints, and the charisms (gifts) we receive at Baptism. “In general, people are looking for ways to grow in their faith and spiritual life,” she explains.

“All are welcome to use the Spirituality Center for their personal and group needs,” Sister adds. Individuals come for their own private retreats; groups reserve the Spirituality Center for weekend or weeklong retreats. With single-room accommodations for 38 to 40 overnight guests, the Center is well-suited for extended stays. Small community groups often reserve the space for leadership meetings or Board of Directors gatherings. Larger groups take advantage of the state-of-the-art presentation room which seats 125 comfortably in theater-style seating and is fully equipped with the latest technology.

“By joyfully serving God through those we encounter in our ministry, placing our confidence in God's loving Providence, and being faithful to our vocation and our mission in the Church, we hope to model for all who come through our door that living a spiritual life in right relationship with God and others is possible,” Sister Anne Marie says proudly.

## IHM TRADITION

What makes the IHM Spirituality Center unique is that it is deeply rooted in the IHM tradition. "Because we are part of Villa Maria House of Studies (the IHM Motherhouse), we are intentional about sharing with everyone the beauty and heritage of the IHM Congregation. We enjoy showing visitors Sacred Heart Chapel where we invite them to pray, especially during daily Eucharistic Adoration. We also offer them the opportunity to tour the IHM Heritage Room to learn more about the rich history of the IHM Congregation," explains Sister Anne Marie.

The Eucharist is central to every spiritual offering. "We provide the presence of the Blessed Sacrament in both the Spirituality Center Chapel and Sacred Heart Chapel," Sister shares. "When planning retreats, we encourage participation in Mass, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, and the Stations of the Cross (both indoors and outdoors), and we have rosaries available for those who wish to participate in this devotion."

Located within the IHM Motherhouse, the Spirituality Center shares its sacred environment with the sisters who live and minister there, as well as with visitors who come to the Center. "Because we are part of the Motherhouse, which is home to over 50 sisters, there is a natural quiet that permeates everything," Sister Anne Marie explains. The chapel, the presence of the Blessed Sacrament, and the peaceful grounds for walking or praying create a spirit of reverence and peace. "We try to respect everyone's need for quiet and silence so they can hear God's voice in their lives," she adds.

In addition to the Center's serene environment, guests consistently praise the Spirituality Center for

its comfortable rooms, cleanliness, and delicious meals accommodating special dietary needs.

## REWARDS

Though the work of running the IHM Spirituality Center can be challenging at times, it is accompanied by many blessings. "I have experienced

*Did you know that you can designate your donation to the IHM Congregation in support of the IHM Spirituality Center? Scan the QR Code to donate or visit the IHM website at [www.ihmimmaculata.org](http://www.ihmimmaculata.org), click on the "Donate" button at the top of the page and select the Spirituality Center under the "Apply My Gift To" category.*



God's redeeming love not only in my private prayer life but through connections with our retreatants," shares Sister Anne Marie. Sometimes the impact of these encounters is profound. For example, Sister recalls the healing transformations she witnesses, especially during the Rachel's Vineyard retreats for post-abortion healing. "We see such deep change and grace," she says. "People come burdened and leave renewed." She also remembers one participant who shared that during an all-night

adoration vigil, he decided to propose to his girlfriend when he returned home. "He did – and she said yes," Sister smiles. "I even attended their wedding."

## LOOKING AHEAD

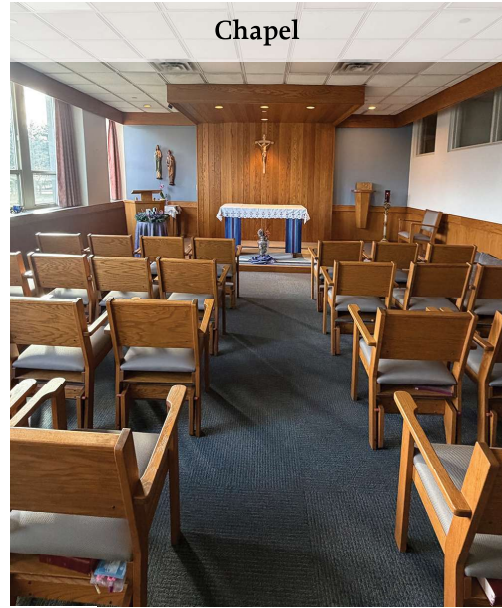
As the Center continues to grow, Sister and her team are finding new ways to reach people who are seeking spiritual fulfillment. With more retreat houses closing in recent years, the IHM Spirituality Center has become a spiritual home for many groups seeking a welcoming environment for prayer and reflection. Through a growing database, Sister stays in touch with retreat participants to keep them informed about upcoming programs. The Center also hosted its first weekend retreat which was open to the public and met with great success.

At the heart of every program and encounter is the same mission: helping others experience God's redeeming love. Sister Ann Marie hopes that people leave the Center as "better disciples" – healed, drawn closer to God, and more prayerful and peaceful. "Every individual is unique," she adds. "At the Center, we aim to provide the space and time each needs to find the enrichment each person is seeking."

*To learn more about the IHM Spirituality Center, visit the IHM website at [www.ihmimmaculata.org](http://www.ihmimmaculata.org), click on the "Prayer/Retreat Opportunities" menu, and scroll down to the Spirituality Center listing, or contact Sister Anne Marie Stegmaier at [ihmspcenter@gmail.com](mailto:ihmspcenter@gmail.com) or at (610) 647-4136.*



Dining Facilities



Chapel



Guest Room



Peaceful Grounds



Gathering Room



Presentation Room