



CONNECTION

A publication for the family and friends of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary

Spring 2024

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Scranton, Pennsylvania

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Serving Some of the Poorest Regions in South America:

IHM SISTERS REACH OUT IN PERU

The Sisters informally call it, “the Ministry of the Doorbell.” In addition to their planned mission services, their work in the Southern Andes Mountains of Peru, at any given moment, is determined by the people who walk to their door and ring that bell – any time, day or night. The Sisters answer the call -- obtaining medicine for the sick and dying, helping homeless children find shelter, and providing whatever help is needed, many times for things and services we take for granted in this country.

Responding to the Pope’s call to minister to the world’s poor, the Sisters of IHM started their outreach in Peru in 1965 in Lima, the nation’s capital. Their mission included teaching at the Santismo Nombre de Jesus (Holy Name of Jesus) School, creating a Posta Medica (clinic) to meet the medical needs of the poor, setting up a Vespertina (night school) to teach those who worked during the day, and generally serving as pastoral ministers, social workers, and catechists in parishes and orphanages. Today, two IHM Sisters, both native Peruvians, serve in Lima. Sister Dora Vizcarra is a psychologist working at Hospital de la Solidaridad (Solidarity Hospital) for low-income people. She considers it a privilege to walk with people who share their lives with her. Sister Denise Montagne recently returned to Lima to be close to her family. She teaches English as a second language and ministers to families in the nearby mountain areas.

Those who manage the parish in the Andes, eleven thousand feet above sea level, in a small city named Sicuani include Sister Eileen Egan who began her service in Lima in 1982 but has been working in Sicuani since 1992; Sister M. Ancilla Maloney who began her service in Sicuani in 1992; and, Sister Norma Poma Arpi, a native of Sicuani who began her service there in 2017. In addition to the many support services “The Minister of the Doorbell” brings each day, the Sisters lead communion services, conduct funerals, train catechists to provide religious education, prepare parishioners for the sacraments, distribute food, and work with youth groups. When the priests were busy on the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, the Sisters were asked to bless the vans that bore the title Immaculata. Sister Eileen also offers weekly communion services for ***(Sisters Serving in Peru, continued)***



Pictured at left are IHM Associate Irene, left, and Sister Ancilla, right, distributing food packages to people high in the Andes Mountains.

DONATE HERE



Sisters Serving in Peru, continued

the local police, which has led to better relationships between the communities and law enforcement.

IHM Sisters in Peru work to find solutions. For example, because of a lack of secondary schools in the mountains, families would send the boys to live alone in Sicuani. However, the same opportunity was not an option for girls because of security concerns. The Sisters, always advocates for women, established a House of Studies to give girls a safe place to live and attend school. The Sisters of IHM also run an after-school program where children can get help with their schoolwork, enjoy art projects, and socialize. Another native of Peru, Sister Sister Giovanna Fuentes Bendivez, served in Sicuani this past fall/winter, helping abused children and young women and using her gift of music to play for Mass and lead the children in song on Saturday evenings.

The majority of the people the Sisters serve live in the two-mile-high area of the Andes Mountains – one of the poorest areas in South America. They are subsistence

farmers since there is no industry. Many areas have no roads and no electricity, and most people there are living in adobe homes with one or two rooms, dirt floors, and a fire pit for cooking. There are endless stories of need. Despite this, the people are hard-working, compassionate, generous, and warm-hearted. They are families, and, just like you, they want the best for their children.

It is only through the support of people like you that the Sisters can continue their critical mission to provide basic services to the poorest of the poor in Peru every time the doorbell rings! For more stories of IHM Sisters' work in Peru or to help support their mission, please go to <http://www.sistersofihm.org/what-we-do/ihm-justice-outreach-advocacy/peru/>



Pictured above, IHM Associates and those preparing to be IHM Associates and their families gathered at the IHM "House of Studies" to celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception.

Pictured top right, Sister Ancilla blessing vans with the title Immaculata.

Pictured middle right, one of the van drivers prepares his van to receive the blessing.

Pictured at right, the Sisters from Sicuani headed down to the Cathedral for Mass, celebrating both the Feast of the Immaculate Conception and renewing their vows. Pictured at right, from left to right, are Sisters Norma, Ancilla, Eileen, and Giovanna Fuentes Bendivez.





CONNECTION

Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Development Office IHM Center
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Suggestions and contributions are welcome.

Sister Kathryn Clauss, IHM
President

Sister Ann Monica Bubser, IHM
Director of Development

If you would prefer to receive *IHM Connection* and other communications from the IHM Sisters via email, please send an email to armbrustl@sistersofihm.org with your preferred email address.

Change of Address?

Contact the Development Office at 570 346-5431 or armbrustl@sistersofihm.org.

www.sistersofihm.org



Please Recycle

IHM Connection is published by the Development Office of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, IHM Center, 2300 Adams Avenue, Scranton, PA 18509. The purpose of this newsletter is to communicate the works and needs of the IHM Congregation.

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK



Dear Friends and Supporters of the Sisters,

When you visit the Sisters of IHM website (www.sistersofihm.org), please take a minute to scroll down to the "Who We Are" section. In that section, you will see our tagline is "Reach out..." We all see taglines every day. They are designed to relay values, capture identity, and, tell others what you stand for. Reaching out to others is what we do as IHM sisters. It is what this issue of our news-letter – appropriately named *Connection* – is all about.

How can you join us in reaching out? There are many ways.

You certainly can help us in the Andes Mountains by giving and telling others about what is being done. Recently, Sisters of IHM President Sister Kathryn Clauss, IHM, and the Leadership Team met with Scranton Mayor Paige Cognetti and discussed issues in our area, including homelessness. Even if you can't build a house, you can join the Sisters in prayer for the homeless.

"Reach Out" is more than just our tagline. It is the action that each of our Sisters, whether they are 48 or 108, continue to do as they are able. It is our invitation for you to join us in helping others whether they are right here in Scranton or halfway around the world.

To those who might be thinking, "I can't give enough to make a difference," or "I don't have any talent or time to help," – I would ask you to remember what is commonly called the Starfish Story. In this story, there was a terrible storm, and hundreds of starfish were washed up on a beach. A little girl kept picking them up and putting them back in the water. When a bystander told her that she would never be able to save them all, she thought for a moment. She picked up another one, tossed it into the ocean, and said, "Well, I made a difference for that one!"

Whether you have been contributing to our ministry for years, or you joined us for the first time in prayer, the Sisters of IHM are grateful to you for your support and love. You are always in our prayers. If you would like to do more to "reach out," please give us a call. As Margaret Mead famously said, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Gratefully,

Sister Ann Monica Bubser, IHM
Director of Development



Through the Remain in our Love program, monthly special liturgies are held for ministry locations where IHM Sisters have served but are no longer present. These liturgies are offered at the IHM Center Our Lady of Lourdes Chapel at 8 a.m. on the dates below. We invite you to share any special intentions you may have for these masses with Sister Ann Monica Bubser, IHM, at bubsera@sistersofihm.org or 570 346-5431. Visit our website at <http://www.sistersofihm.org/what-you-can-do/donations-support/remain-in-our-love-liturgy-schedule-and-information> for a list of ministry locations for which

we will pray.

DATES

MINISTRY LOCATIONS IN THE FOLLOWING DIOCESES

February 28, 2024

Dioceses of Albany, Rochester, and Syracuse, New York

March 27, 2024

Diocese of Scranton, Pennsylvania

April 24, 2024

Dioceses of Altoona-Johnston, Allentown, and Pittsburgh Pennsylvania; Diocese of Cleveland, Ohio; and, Dioceses of Grand Rapids, and Detroit, Michigan

May 22, 2024

Diocese of Baltimore, Maryland; Diocese of Washington, D.C.; and Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana

June 25, 2024

Diocese of Wilmington, Delaware; Diocese of Lexington, Kentucky; Diocese of Wheeling-Charlestown, West Virginia; and Diocese of Arlington, Virginia



Rose Marie Amico (left) and Sister Eileen Egan (right) visiting Sister Joan Milot (center) in New Hampshire. Sister Joan, who has now transferred to contemplative life, also has been supportive of the Sisters' work in Sicuani.

WHY I GIVE: A DONOR'S STORY

Rose Marie Amico has been a frequent and generous donor to the IHM Sisters over the years, with a particular focus on work being done by the Sisters in Sicuani, Peru. Here is her story of why she gives:

“Sister Eileen Egan (an IHM Sister who has worked for many years in the Andes Mountains of Peru) and I first met when we both entered the convent at Marywood in September 1959. I was a member of the IHM Band of 1959 until I left at the end of our temporary vows in 1962. I met Sister Eileen again in Philadelphia in 1979 when we both attended a Mass led by Pope John Paul II. We have kept in touch ever since. Sister would tell me stories of how poor people were in Peru. At Christmas, the Sisters would serve all the children sweet bread and hot chocolate after mass, and I began to send her donations to share in her charities.

Sister told me of the two young children she had adopted -- Rufina and Victor -- and I began to send her a monthly check to help support them. With Sister's help, Victor continued his education and graduated from Marywood. He lives in the U.S. with his wife and two children. Rufina had a very difficult childhood but she went on to marry and have six children.

Years ago, Sister told me that Rufina would burn their wooden furniture, including the beds, for firewood to cook a family meal. Sister wanted to purchase metal beds for the children. I asked a friend of mine to share the cost with me, and we sent her the money. Sister also purchased a small propane gas stove for Rufina and we see that she always has fuel for the stove. So, my monthly checks are used to help Rufina and support the many things that Sister does to help people in terrible situations.

I feel like she is doing a wonderful job and, in a small way, I am helping her. I am happy to share in her good works. Sister is a joyful, spiritual person who sees the good in everybody and seems to find a solution for everything. She sees a problem, and she knows how to fix it! And you don't think of her as being in her 80s. I have a personal connection with her, and I understand and fully appreciate everything she's doing. She is amazing. There's no question about it.”

If you have a story you would like to share about why you choose to give to the IHM Sisters, please contact Sister Ann Monica at bubsera@sistersofihm.org.

BILL MORAN TELLS HOW IHM SISTER ANCILLA SHAPED LIVES

Sister Ann Monica Bubser recently received a letter from donor and friend Bill Moran describing how an IHM Sister made a difference in shaping the lives of those close to him. Here is what he had to say:

“Happy New Year to you and all the Sisters in the IHM Community! I have written to you previously and passed along a donation that is intended to assist Sister Ancilla Maloney, IHM, ultimately when it makes its way to her in Peru. Sister Ancilla had a HUGELY POSITIVE effect on two of my sons, Matthew and Kevin, and furthered their interest in community support when she taught at Holy Cross High School in Delran, New Jersey. Matt is a certified prosthetist and helps both children and adults in their recovery to become productive citizens. Kevin Patrick is the Director of Operations at Joseph's House of Camden and helps homeless guests by feeding them meals daily and providing sleeping quarters overnight. Both are graduates of the University of Scranton. Matt met his wife there. I just wanted to illustrate Sister Ancilla's impact on their lives.”



Many thanks to Mr. Moran for his support. If you would like to share the story of how one of the Sisters of IHM impacted your life or the lives of individuals you know, please call Sister Ann Monica Bubser at 570-346-5431 or bubsera@sistersofihm.org.

Legacy of Friendship

IRENE GALLAGHER STRAUSS

“She was one of the kindest Christians we have ever known.” “She brought joy everywhere she went.” Friends’ descriptions of Irene Gallagher Strauss, who passed away late last summer, begin to tell the story of a person who cared deeply about bringing people to God, education, and community. That is why it is not surprising that, upon Irene’s death, her niece, Linda Salette, called indicating that she had left a sizable gift to the IHM Sisters.

Irene entered the IHM Community and ministered from 1943-1972 (formerly Sister Paracleta), serving as an educator and continuing her education, earning several Masters degrees. She served as the principal of St. Raphael’s Elementary School in St. Petersburg, Florida, where Sister Suzie Armbruster, now a member of the Leadership Team, was a student. In 1992, she married her husband Robert Strauss, and they enjoyed over 21 years of retirement. Her work made her aware of the many needs the Sisters assist with – here and around the world. As her niece indicated, “Irene was so happy to be able to leave this gift to her IHM Sisters in her estate. We are blessed to have known Irene and to receive her gift as a Legacy of Friendship.



Legacy giving, often referred to as planned giving, is a simple, yet powerful way to perpetuate the missions of the IHM Congregation for future generations. It is a form of charitable giving (philanthropy) that involves contributing one’s assets through Wills and Estate Plans. A planned gift is a future gift to the IHM Congregation to enhance its mission and work.

For more information on how to leave a legacy gift to the IHM Sisters, visit www.sistersofihm.org, click on “Donate,” then click on “Other Ways to Give Smarter.” For any questions, contact: Sister Ann Monica, IHM at (570) 346-5431 or bubsera@sistersofihm.org. The legal title and address is: Congregation of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, IHM Center, 2300 Adams Avenue, Scranton, PA 18509.



EXPERIENCING SYNODALITY AT WORK

By IHM Sister Kathryn Kurdziel

Many IHM Sisters of the Diocese of Scranton have contributed to dialogue groups as part of the Synod on Synodality called by Pope Francis. Sisters participated on different levels, from individual and religious life groups to parish gatherings. Many Sisters were chosen as delegates to Diocesan-wide discussions and some became representatives to the continental level. Catholics from all parts of the world voiced thoughts, ideas, concerns, and suggestions about the Church. The delegates sat together, prayed in the Spirit, and discerned -- their minds and hearts opened to new ways of being a Church. They humbly and courageously came to respect and appreciate each other as true believers formed in the image of God and Jesus the Redeemer.

In October of 2023, for the first time, non-bishops – including laymen and women – had a vote among the 364 voting members of the Synod. Now, dialogue groups worldwide will contribute to a second round of prayer and discernment. In October 2024, the document formulated after the Synod meetings will be presented to the delegates of the Universal Church for a second round of discernment. After the discussions, the Bishops of the Synod vote, paragraph by paragraph, to approve it. The Pope will use that document to inform his decisions following the synod.

When the Sisters from different communities and geographies gather, excitement engendered by prayerful conversation grows, unifying and enriching the Church as a whole. The Sisters foresee that this will be the most inclusive way the Church will operate in the future and are grateful that they have had a part in crafting the process of synodality.

IHM Associate News:

TOGETHER WE GO FORWARD INTO THE HEART OF GOD!

By IHM Sister Ruth Harkins

Let this be the time! Let us go forward together into the heart of God! Now is the time for us to embrace our call and discover in new and vibrant ways what it means to hold our charism of “God’s unconditional love for all” in trust for the church.

In October 2018, Pope Francis proclaimed that the purpose of gathering the youth in Rome for a synod was “to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands.”

Therefore, our own IHM Associates gathered recently at the IHM Center to weave together new relationships, learn from one another, build trust, dream, and plant hope for “something new.” The Associate Relationship invites us to collaborate with the Spirit of God and to awaken in others their unique call and charism as a gift for the common good. The associate relationship empowers both men and women to share our congregation’s spirit for the good of our church and the world. Let this be the time when TOGETHER we are invited to give new life, wider space, new depth, and stretch to the charism of our IHM religious community.

Several Circles of Grace continue together in prayer to reflect on their original covenants, renew their commitment, and weave together their relationships with one another as IHM associates.

Pictured at right, this regional gathering of Associates in Bear, Delaware, is one of the ways in which our Associates have become “carriers of the IHM Charism” as they witness God’s unconditional love for all in their unique and holy places. From left to right are: Olga Ward, Joyce Marchesi, Sister Ruth Harkins, Diane Braendly, Joan Burlew, Kathie Sarnecky, Cathy Davey, and Mary Calderone. Absent from the photo – photographer JoAnn Baca.

What is an IHM Associate and how can I become one?

IHM Associates are women and men who are seeking a deeper relationship with God and are working to live the vision and values of the IHM Sisters.

They are not members of the congregation and do not take vows, but they join with the Sisters in proclaiming the Good News of God’s unconditional love for all.

For information on how to become an IHM Associate, please contact Sister Ruth A. Harkins, at 570-330-8612 or email harkir@sistersofihm.org.



A gift of any amount to the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) will help to bring positive change to the lives of countless people in need. To give today, please go to <http://www.sistersofihm.org> and click on “donate” to access our secure online giving form.

Celebrating Faith in Action:

MARK YOUR CALENDAR FOR THE AUGUST 3RD IHM CELEBRATION

John Quincy Adams once said, “If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more, and become more, you are a leader.” With that in mind, please mark your calendar for August 3rd at 6 pm to celebrate the leadership of the Sisters of IHM and honor several community members who live the IHM joyful spirit of helping others. At this year’s virtual Celebration, we will honor:



Lois K. Draina, Ph.D., is the recently retired Dean of the College of Education and Human Development at Marywood University in Scranton. Prior to that positions, she served as the Superintendent of Schools in the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia. With over 20 years of Catholic School administration experience, she has done extensive work on the establishment and development of Catholic school boards, curriculum administrative functioning, and mentoring. In addition, she has been a wonderful friend to the Sisters of IHM, working tirelessly for the University, the Friends of the Poor, NativityMiguel School, and countless other causes to help others in the region. She truly embodies the IHM spirit.



Honorary Chairperson John T. Cognetti, SIOR, CCI, is the president and broker of record at Hinerfeld Realty. In addition to his many professional accomplishments, he has worked with the Greater Scranton, Wilkes-Barre, Pocono Mountains and Pittston chambers of commerce, was a founding member of the economic development organization Penns Northeast, and has served in leadership roles with the Lackawanna Historical Society, the Architectural Heritage Association of NEPA (which he helped found) and Meals on Wheels. Taught in schools by IHM Sisters, he has remained strong in his commitment to reaching out and serving others. The Sisters of IHM Foundation raises up John as a wonderful example of how to live your IHM Spirit.

This will be the 11th year the IHM Foundation will be hosting this event, which has raised thousands of dollars to support the Sisters of IHM Retirement Fund. All levels of sponsorship will be available. Consider also a gift in honor of Lois Draina our honoree or John Cognetti, our chairperson. According to IHM Foundation Board Chair Robert Brown, “Your donations help support our Sisters. Your kindness makes a difference in their lives and also in the lives of those who are touched by the work of the Congregation.”

We invite you to join us for our 2024 virtual event which will be broadcast on the IHM Facebook page and YouTube. If you would like more information, please call Sister Ann Monica at 570-346-5431 or e-mail bubsera@sistersofihm.org.

JOIN TOGETHER, PRAY TOGETHER

Prayer has power, and praying together multiplies that power! The Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation (JPIC) Committee of the Sisters of IHM invites you to join them for a Justice challenge – participating monthly in a half-hour, contemplative, focused prayer. This silent, half-hour prayer session takes place on the third Monday of each month from 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm.

According to IHM Sister Donna Korba, Director of JPIC, “Through these sessions, we are sending forth our focused, prayerful, and intentional love for the transformation of the world. There is a theme for each session. For example, in April, we will focus on our environment. Other recent themes included peace in the Ukraine, migrant children, and peace in the Middle East.”

The next session will be on held on February 22nd from 6:30 pm to 7:00 pm. For the Zoom link, please contact Sister Donna Korba at 570-346-5411 or e-mail korbada@sistersofihm.org.



Pictured above, Sisters of IHM join in prayer.

VOCATIONS: HELPING OTHERS ANSWER THE CALL



Sister Kieran Williams

When you meet the new Vocations Director Sister Kieran for the first time, what you notice is the incredible energy she has. She has been in her role since mid-summer and recently completed a flurry of activities — celebrating National Vocation Week, talking about the Sisters of IHM at Leave-A-Mark, attending the Ignatian Family Teach-In in Washington, and planning summer missions. She has many more ideas for what she would love to do. However, she will also tell you that “God is the director. I’m an instrument!”

People find their vocations in many ways. For Sister Kieran, her family played a large role in where she is now. As she states, “My first experience of community happened at home with the most wonderful parents. We witnessed daily their deep faith and love for one another. They sacrificed so my brothers and sisters and I could attend Catholic School, play instruments, participate in sports, and the list goes on. My family shared in the lived experiences of community, prayer, outreach, and service with the poor, as well as the joys and sorrows, difficult challenges, and wonderful opportunities for forgiveness and acceptance.” Her experiences also included many visits with her mom’s aunt, Sister Kieran Helring, IHM, her cousin Monsignor John O’Brien, and her father’s sister, Sister De Sales Williams, IHM. All shared their love and joy for their vocations. She calls it both a blessing and privilege to share in this Vocation ministry at this time. She continues, “I truly believe that God is calling women and men to serve the needs of the Church and people today. It’s truly exciting to experience the Gospel alive and well through the collaboration -- among congregations, among generations, and among cultures.”



Sister's parents



Sister's family

There are many ways to serve, and just a few are outlined in this publication. One way is to help is by spreading the word about the Sisters and what they are doing. Another option is to get involved. According to Sister Kieran, “There are summer opportunities to work with the Sisters on several missions. You can serve as part of a collaborative group going to McAllen, Texas to help people at the US-Mexico border. Another opportunity is a week of service with youth and young adults from Holy Trinity in Williamston, North Carolina. They will be working directly with the Sisters of IHM — living in the community, experiencing prayer, and serving the needs of people in the community.” For further information on how to support vocations or for the programs being offered, please contact Sister at 570-346-5414 or williamsk@sistersofihm.org.

Working Together to Help Our Region:

SISTERS AND ASSOCIATES MEET WITH SCRANTON MAYOR

Scranton Mayor Paige Cognetti recently met with Sisters of IHM President Sister Kathryn Claus, the Leadership Team members of the IHM congregation, IHM Associates, and friends to discuss key issues for our area ranging from climate concerns and initiatives to how to stem growing incidents of violence. Toward the end of the meeting, the group discussed homelessness in the region, and the Mayor asked the Sisters to please pray for the homeless and for solutions to the problems surrounding homelessness.



Pictured at the meeting at right are, from left: Sisters Donna Korba, Grace Surdovel, and Susan Ambruster; Mayor Paige Cognetti; IHM President Sister Kathryn Claus; Associate Pat Sheehan; Jan Novatka; Sister Jean Coughlin; Mayor Cognetti's Executive Assistant Kaitlyn Scott; and Sister Judith O'Brien.