



Spring 2024

NEWSLETTER OF THE SCRANTON IHM ASSOCIATES

Living the Charism
Viviendo la Carisma

The Birth of a Dream *by Becky DePrato*

On April 8, we remember the birthday of our foundress, Theresa Maxis. Theresa was born in Baltimore in 1810, to an unwed, mixed-race Haitian refugee who was a ward of the Duchemin family. Her father was a white British military officer.

Think of today's racial climate. While strides have been made in the last two centuries, we still are far from where we would like to be. We are certainly nowhere near where we should be. Think now of the racial climate of 1810 in Baltimore. Theresa, given the circumstance she was born into, was very unlikely to experience a future filled with anything other than servitude. However, as we look back 214 years later, we clearly see that her life and vision exceeded all expectations of the time.

Theresa's life was fruitful and inspirational, not only for those who journeyed with her but also for the generations that came after her. It was, however, far from easy. We are fortunate to have countless resources that tell us many details of her life, from beginning to end. It is in these writings, including her personal letters, that we truly

discover the obstacles that she conquered to leave us the legacy we have today. It is that legacy that inspires us to carry on her vision of spreading the love of God. Theresa overcame discrimination and endured exile that many of us could never even begin to understand, but one thing we all can share with her is a strong faith and love for our brothers and sisters.



On April 8, and every day, let's keep Theresa Maxis's faith and vision close to our hearts while we journey together and spread the love and peace that was so much a part of who she was and who we all strive to be as associates and sisters together.

Becky DePrato resides with her husband and two children in Peckville, Pa. An IHM Associate since 2021, she is a nurse's aide at Our Lady of Peace residence and a volunteer assistant in the archives office at the IHM Center.



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Twenty Years of IHM Sister–Associate Relationship

by Debbie Wheeler

In April 2004, the IHM Sister–Associate Relationship was an idea, “a dream for Scranton IHM,” as described by then-Congregation president Sister Mary Persico, IHM. Sister Jean Louise Bachetti was asked and said yes to the monumental task of creating an associate program.

This connection is best described as a gathering of men and women who share in the IHM charism and ideals of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, witnessing their faith within their Circles of Grace and living out the charism and core values with their families and friends and through their ministries and work. Today, there are 182 associates, including 18 aspiring associates, hailing from eight states and Peru. What follows is a journey through major milestones and events in IHM Associate history.

2005

Sr. Jean Louise Bachetti starts the first Circle of Grace in Scranton, soon followed by other areas in Pennsylvania with a historically strong IHM presence: Cresco, Gavin, Jean Shields, Kieran Williamsport, and Pittsburgh.



First IHM Associates to be commissioned in 2005. L-R: Gloria Gavin, Jean Shields, Kieran Williams

2006

New Circles of Grace begin in Delaware and Florida under the direction of Sisters Nancy Elder, Florence Ann Marino and Redempta Sweeney.

2007

Maryland adds the first of its Circles of Grace in Clinton, North Beach and La Plata, guided by Sister Ann Parker.

2008

Circles of Grace spread along the East Coast in North Carolina and New York, with Sisters Kieran Williams, Elizabeth Bullen and Robert Mary Murphy leading the way.



IHM Associates in Sicuani, Peru. L-R: Casilda Morocho and Matilde Rendon

2009

Sister Eileen Egan extends the IHM Associate footprint to the Southern Hemisphere in Sicuani, Peru, where IHM Sisters have ministered since 1965.

2012

The first Sister–Associate Conference, “Journey by Heart,” is held, with guest speaker, Redemptorist priest Terrence Moran. Over 70 associates traveled from near and far to join with more than 60 sisters at the IHM Center for community and fellowship.

2014

Ten years after the program begins, there are 108 commissioned IHM associates and 52 aspiring associates, capturing the hearts of the 32 IHM Sisters who engage the Circles of Grace.

Ms. Jane O’Neill becomes the Director of Associates, a position she held until her passing on April 19, 2022.

2014–2015

Scranton associates offer service at Friends of the Poor, Catholic Charities, local parishes and the IHM Educational Enrichment Institute.

Maryland associates conduct Founder’s Day presentations in their parish and elementary schools. North Beach associates manage the local food pantry.

Associates serve on various IHM committees.

Thirteen associates commit to serving sisters' needs at Our Lady of Peace in various capacities.

In Gainesville, Fla., teenagers learn about Theresa and the IHM Core Values in the Theresa Maxis Circle.

Several Circles of Grace plan and participate in various retreat days in their respective areas.

2015–2019

IHM Associates gather annually for dinner at the IHM Center on Founders Day for prayer and to renew their covenant relationship and intentionally live the IHM charism and core values.

2016

Sisters and associates gather in Scranton for a second conference, “Doorways to the Holy: Opening Together into the Heart of God,” facilitated by Sister Chris Koellhoffer and featuring panelists Gale Jaeger, Barbara Kane, Alejandra Marroquin, Ann Williams and Sister John Michele Southwick. Seventy associates from six states and over 50 sisters participated in this grace-filled opportunity.

2018

IHM associates join IHM sisters in bringing about God’s dream for this beautiful yet wounded world at Chapter 2018.

Sisters Florence Ann Marino and Lisa Perkowski in St. Petersburg, Fla., launch the first Circle of Grace to meet in a hybrid format (in-person and Zoom).

2020

The COVID-19 pandemic forces Circles of Grace to meet virtually and to live the charism in creative ways. During this time, many commissioning and recommissioning ceremonies were conducted online

2023

The first IHM Associate Assembly, “Inspired by the Spirit’s Gift of Charism: Flowing Through the Life of IHM Sisters and Associates,” welcomes 34 associates and 34 sisters. This grace-filled weekend was planned and facilitated by IHM Sisters Jean Louise Bachetti, Grace Surdovel, Nancy Elder and Christine Mihelich



IHM Associates and Sisters participate in the 2023 Associate Assembly. Pictured L-R front: Joan Burlew, Olga Ward (seated) Sister Redempta Sweeney. L-R back: Jo-Ann Baca, Mary Calderone, Cathy Davey, Kathie Sarnecky, and Sister Sandy Grieco. Not pictured: Diane Braendly and Joyce Marchesi of the Seton Circle.

and by associates Jo-Ann Baca, Sheryl Lynn Sochoka and Maureen McCarthy.

Sister Ruth Harkins becomes the third director of the IHM Associate Program.

2024

The first IHM Associate newsletter, *Living the Charism/Viviendo la Carisma*, to coincide with the 214th birthday of our foundress, Theresa Maxis.



Debbie Wheeler is an IHM Associate from North Beach, Md. She was commissioned in 2007.

Celebrating 20 Years of Sister–Associate Relationships

Charism, then, must constantly be rediscovered and constantly re-expressed. Charism is always ripe but always in bloom again, always finished for one age and people, yes, but always starting over again in another. Charism is like every living part—tendrils, seed, tree, branch, flower, and fruit of the spiritual life—that grows through time and then, through you and me, grows again. - from the essay “Let the Call Be Heard” by Joan Chittister, OSB (2017)

Happy birthday to our foundress, Theresa Maxis Duchemin! What better way to celebrate her birthday and legacy than by reflecting upon the countless blessings we have received through 20 years of Sister–Associate Relationships—and by publishing the inaugural edition of our IHM Associate newsletter, *Living the Charism/Viviendo la Carisma*. Your thoughtful feedback helped shape this first issue, in which Sheryl Lynn Sochoka interviewed our first commissioned associates, Jean Shields and Mrs. Kieran Williams, while Ann Montoro Williams asked our aspiring associates who will be commissioned on April 21, Katie Kearney, Ann Rink, and Alice Turner, to reflect on what it means to be called to nurture and express the charism in their daily lives. You can look forward to reading more features like these in future editions.

As I have visited with various Circles of Grace in Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland, North Carolina, and Florida in the last six months, I have experienced the beauty of the seeds that have been planted among our associates as holy ground. Over the last two decades, countless sisters have carefully planted and gently watered the seeds through their diverse and unique witness to God’s unconditional love for all, for which we are all deeply



grateful. I am awestruck by the beauty and splendor of the garden, now overflowing with diverse colors and flowers of all kinds. In this Easter season, let us celebrate the signs of new life that are in bloom and bearing fruit through the lives and presence of our associates in these states and in New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Peru, and beyond!

St. Paul reminds us that some plant the seeds while others water the seeds, but that it is God who blesses the growth: “So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. Now one who plants and one who waters are joined; but each will receive one’s own reward according to one’s own labor. For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building (1 Cor. 3:7-11, NABRE).”

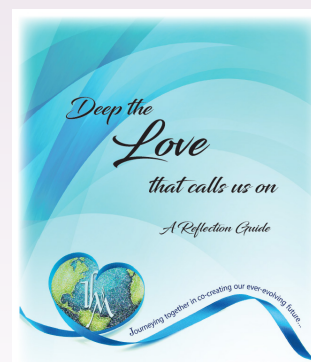
Happy 214th Birthday, Theresa! Your spirit continues in the hearts and lives of our IHM sisters and associates, “journeying together in co-creating our ever-evolving future as we intentionally engage in actions that reflect God’s unconditional love for all creation and the transformation of the world.”

Associates and Sisters,

The Visioning the Future Committee encourages you as you journey through Easter to continue your reflection on our IHM journal, *Deep the Love That Calls Us On*.

- Praying individually...
- Reviewing your journal entries...
- Gathering with others...

Let us rejoice in the resurrection and imagine anew God's vision and dream for us.



For a New Beginning
by John O'Donohue

In out-of-the-way places of the heart,
Where your thoughts never think to wander,
This beginning has been quietly forming,
Waiting until you were ready to emerge.

For a long time it has watched your desire,
Feeling the emptiness growing inside you,
Noticing how you willed yourself on,
Still unable to leave what you had outgrown.

It watched you play with the seduction of safety
And the gray promises that sameness whispered,
Heard the waves of turmoil rise and relent,
Wondered would you always live like this.

Then the delight, when your courage kindled,
And out you stepped onto new ground,
Your eyes young again with energy and dream,
A path of plenitude opening before you.

Though your destination is not yet clear
You can trust the promise of this opening;
Unfurl yourself into the grace of beginning
That is at one with your life's desire.

Awaken your spirit to adventure;
Hold nothing back, learn to find ease in risk;
Soon you will be home in a new rhythm,
For your soul senses the world that awaits you.

From *To Bless the Space Between Us* © 2008,
Convergent Books

Retreat
IHM Center
June 23-28



Nancy Hawkins, IHM
Celtic Spirituality:
An Invitation to the
Thin Places

Be a Charism Carrier and Sharer!

Do you know someone who might be interested in exploring what it means to be an IHM Associate? Contact Sr. Ruth Harkins for information on the application process and joining a Circle of Grace in person or virtually.



Bronze sculpture of Theresa Maxis
IHM Center Chapel foyer
by Sister Cor Immaculatum Heffernan, IHM

Q&A: First Commissioned Associates Look Back on Two Decades of Living the Charism

Interviews by Sheryl Lynn Sochoka

Jean Shields

How were you invited to form this program?

I read about the program's formation in the [IHM] newsletter and contacted Sister Jean Louise Bachetti.

What was that experience like?

It was simply through conversation that the program took shape, with Jean Louise sharing articles and the Associate Journal.

How has your Associate relationship grown and changed over the years?

Over the years, what has changed is what I can physically be a part of; what hasn't changed is the bond with the IHM charism and particularly the core values.

What resonates with you most about being an IHM Associate?

Along with the IHM charism and core values, the Congregation's commitment to justice issues, outreach and advocacy.

What wisdom can you offer to aspiring associates or to those who may be learning about this program for the first time?

I think anyone who reads about the program and feels an attraction to it should check it out.



Jean Shields

Kieran Williams

How were you invited to form this program?

I first met with Sr. Katherine Sugrue and Sr. Joan Coyne for a monthly prayer group meeting with 22 women at the IHM Center. During this time, we had a beautiful gathering with the Oblate Sisters of Providence in Baltimore, Md., who came for a weekend to the IHM Center. We traveled to St. Joseph's Parish and Cemetery in Susquehanna for Mass and a firsthand experience of IHM history. Next, we traveled to Our Lady of Sorrows Convent in Vestal, N.Y., for a reception with Sr. Robert Mary Murphy, my daughter, Sr. Kieran, Sr. Madeline Swabowski, Sr. Mary Ann Remus and IHM friends who hosted a delicious meal for us.

In 2004, the IHM Leadership Team appointed Sr. Jean Louise Bachetti to develop a new IHM Associate Program. Sr. Jean Louise invited people from Sr. Joan Coyne's IHM prayer group to help accompany her as she developed this program. Jean Shields, Mary Hanley, Gloria Gavin and I accepted the invitation to what she called a "trust walk," to help create the Prayer Journal and the IHM Associate Program.

What was that experience like?

This experience and journey in my life has been beautiful, inspiring and encouraging. For me, each time we gathered, I learned so much about IHM history, charism, and core values. The ambience, prayer, and conversations were so enriching, and I looked forward to these gatherings.

How has your Associate relationship grown and changed over the years?

As an Associate, I started by taking the sisters shopping for whatever they needed. This was so much fun. I loved bringing communion to the sisters in their rooms and in the chapel. When I was no longer able to serve in this way, I began calling the sisters and enjoying the one-on-one visits by phone. To this day, I love going to Mass at Our Lady of Peace, participating in the Circle of Grace and attending IHM gatherings as I am able.



Kieran Williams and Sister Jean Louise Bachetti

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What resonates with you most about being an IHM Associate?

What resonates most for me about being an IHM Associate is living the charism as an IHM Associate and deepening relationships and friendships with both the IHM Sisters and IHM Associates.

What wisdom can you offer to aspiring associates or to those who may be learning about this program for the first time?

I would highly recommend the IHM Associate Program to all, especially in light of all the personal and spiritual growth I have experienced and the blessings and graces I have received.



Sheryl Lynn Sochoka is an IHM Associate (commissioned in 2013) and a 1992 Marywood graduate, as well as a Marywood employee for 30-plus years. She has a deep interest in Marywood and IHM history, along with her ongoing work regarding their emerging future.

Circle of Grace Resources

Is your Circle of Grace looking for something new to use for prayer and reflection? Check out these resources currently being used by Circles of Grace. Additional resources are available at www.sistersofihm.org.

Books

- *Deep the Love That Calls Us On: A Reflection Guide by the IHM Congregation* (available from the Sisters of IHM)
- *Finding Peace in the Storm: Reflections on St. Alphonsus Liguori's Uniformity with God's Will* by Dan Burke (Sophia Institute Press, 2023)
- *Longing for the Endless Immensity: Reflection and Prayer for Living a Life That Matters* by Chris Koellhoffer, IHM (available on Amazon.com and BN.com, 2014)
- *On the Care for our Common Home: Group Reading Guide to Laudato Si'* by Bill Huebsch (Twenty-Third Publications, 2015)
- *The Study Guide to the Encyclical Letter of Pope Francis: Fratelli Tutti, On Fraternity and Social Friendship* by Marcus Mescher (Paulist Press, 2021)

Online

- **America Magazine** (articles and excerpts)
www.americamagazine.org
- **The Center for Action and Contemplation**
www.cac.org
- **Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home** by Pope Francis
<https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals.index.html>
- **Mining the Now: Uncovering the Sacred in the Dailiness of Life**
www.chriskoellhofferihm.org
- **Monthly IHM Associate Zoom Presentations**
<https://video.ibm.com/channel/ihm-tv>

New Virtual Circles of Grace

are forming for aspiring and current associates

Do you want to get re-connected?

Please send an email to Sister Ruth at
harkir@sistersofihm.org

if you are interested in forming a new Circle of Grace or reconnecting virtually.

Newest Associates Reflect on Their Journeys and Hopes for the Future

Interviews conducted by Ann Montoro Williams

Aspiring associates Katie Kearney, Ann Rink and Alice Turner will be commissioned on April 21, 2024, at 11:00 a.m. at Our Lady of Peace Residence Chapel. Watch live on IHM-TV at <https://video.ibm.com/channel/ihm-tv>

What drew you to the IHM Associate Program?

Katie: After I completed the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola, I had a deep feeling that I wanted to cement my relationship with the IHM Sisters further. Working at Our Lady of Peace, I'm around the sisters every day, and I wanted to be an official part of their charism and mission. It was not a decision that I took lightly, and I'm grateful that I didn't ignore the pull to be closer with the Congregation.

Ann: It was my lifetime relationship with the IHM community. The IHM Sisters educated me from first grade through high school and college. I worked at St. Joseph's Center for 43 years and was privileged to work with four presidents/CEOs who truly lived the IHM charism. These women, Sisters Marian Denise, Vincentia, Terry and Maryalice, were all incredible examples of how to embody the IHM core values in both their professional and personal lives. They all led by example the tenets of servant leadership, and always focused on the "why" and "for whom" we were providing services, not just on the mechanics of "how" to provide services. The relationship with these sisters and other IHM sisters drew me to the associate program.

Alice: There were always IHM sisters in my parish, but it wasn't until I was a teenager and began working

at St. Joseph's Center that I formed a close relationship with the IHM congregation. When I became the director of nursing at Our Lady of Peace last year, everyone was so welcoming: the sisters who live at OLP and the larger congregation. At that point, I knew I wanted a relationship with the Congregation on a deeper level. It was at that time that I knew I was called to be an associate.

During the formation process, what resonated with you the most?

Katie: Pat Sheehan, our facilitator, has a different song for every meeting that ties into what we are talking about, and I've really enjoyed those songs as a way to deepen what our circle has shared during that meeting. I've also felt drawn to Theresa Maxis and have enjoyed reading and learning more about her, both in the circle and on my own time.



L-R: Alice Turner, Ann Rink, Pat Sheehan, and Katie Kearney

Ann: The chapter on Heart of Relationship, specifically the Eucharist, impacted me the most of all during our Circle of Grace discussions. Viewing the Eucharist as a way of life was a new concept for me. I had always thought of the Eucharist as the Mass, or specifically, the consecration. It has been exciting and moving to me to interpret Eucharist as something you do! To realize that we are the Eucharist every time we laugh or cry with others, you do Eucharist. Every time you do an act of kindness, you do Eucharist. Every time we

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experience community with others, we do Eucharist. These discussions on Eucharist guided me to a deeper understanding of the core value of Rootedness in God and the message of St. Alphonsus and his deep commitment to Jesus through the Eucharist.

Alice: I have always been a very religious person but not the most spiritual person. The formation process has helped me look at prayer more spiritually. I really enjoy my Circle of Grace. It is great to hear the perspective of the women in my group and to learn from them.

What types of activities does your Circle do (or want to do)?

Katie: We have our monthly meetings and try to participate in the Zoom meetings Sr. Ruth plans for the associates. Eventually, I want to take a road trip to visit Sr. Theresa Maxis's grave.

Ann: We have not really had any in-depth discussions about this as a group, as we just completed our retreat in preparation for writing our covenants. We had a brief discussion of next steps and the possibility of having an assigned reading and then meeting to discuss. I would think that interacting with other more experienced Circles of Grace would be meaningful and helpful to us to design our own path forward.

Alice: We haven't discussed future activities. We have been focused on making sure we are ready for commissioning. We intend to continue to meet regularly as a Circle and support each other on the journey.

Once commissioned, how will you continue to share your gifts as an associate?

Katie: Our circle hasn't had time to focus on what we will do after we are commissioned since we are still working on getting to that point.

Ann: Currently, I'm a eucharistic minister at OLP every Wednesday, and I serve on the IHM Foundation Board of Directors. I believe my participation in both of these activities demonstrates my desire to live out the IHM charism. I am especially interested in environmental issues and would like to participate in any IHM-sponsored events or committees that would further the respect and care for our natural world and our interconnectedness! I also believe that aspiring to live the IHM core values in my everyday life will model for my grandchildren, who attend parochial schools but have not experienced IHM sisters, the

importance and significance of living out the charism.

Alice: I would like to become more involved in the associate program. I also would like to get to know other associates outside of my circle and brainstorm, as a larger group, what we can accomplish. Finally, I will share my gifts as an associate while volunteering in my parish and through my work at Our Lady of Peace.

In what ways would you like to see the program continue to grow and evolve?

Katie: The associate program is a way to keep the IHM charism alive far into the future, and the only way to do that is to keep seeking out new members. I think that will be a job for all of us. I hope in the future to feel more connected to other associates, not just the ones I already know or who are in my Circle of Grace.

Ann: I would like to see the associate program make a concerted effort to engage young people. They are key to furthering the continuance of the IHM core values and charism. Several IHM-sponsored ministries employ women and men who believe in the mission of their respective agencies, as well as the IHM values. I think Circles of Grace should be started at a sponsored agency and be held during work hours, especially for those in their 30s and 40s who don't have much free time after work hours because of commitments with their children. I was retired before I was approached to participate in the associate program, and I'm aging along with the Congregation. We need to approach those young folks who will have years ahead of them to share God's dream for the world.

Alice: I feel that the more associates there are, the better we can carry the IHM charism into the future. I would like to partner with other circles to see what they are doing. I think the more we work together as associates and with the sisters, the stronger the program becomes.



Ann Montoro Williams is the Stewardship Manager for Friends of the Poor. She was commissioned as an IHM Associate in 2012.



Two associates, Rufino Cano and Ana Becerril, were commissioned as lay ministers for the Diocese of Scranton on March 3 at St. Peter's Cathedral. Pictured L-R: Pat Sheehan, Rufino Cano, Sister Ruth Harkins, Bishop Bambara, Ana Becerril and Sister Donna Korba.

Upcoming Events

Additional details, such as registration information and links for in-person and Zoom events, will be sent by email. Watch events on IHM-TV at <https://video.ibm.com/channel/ihm-tv>

Monday, April 15

Associate Zoom Presentation: The Eucharist. Presenter: Rufino Caño. 7:00–8:00 p.m. Live on Zoom, recording available on IHM-TV

Sunday, April 21

New Associate Commissioning 11 a.m. Our Lady of Peace Chapel, streaming on IHM-TV

Monday, May 20

Associate Zoom Presentation: Mary. Presenter: Sr. Cor Immaculatum Heffernan. 7:00-8:00 p.m. Live on Zoom, recording available on IHM-TV

Friday, July 26-Sunday, July 28

IHM Assembly and IHM Jubilee. IHM Center. Sessions available on Zoom and IHM-TV

Friday-Sunday, July 26-28

St. Joseph's Center Festival. Marywood University Campus

Saturday, October 5

Retreat with Sister Nancy Hawkins. 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Saturday, October 5

Regional Meeting. 1:30-4:00 p.m. IHM Center. Sessions available on Zoom and IHM-TV



In January, we asked associates for suggestions for our new newsletter. This word cloud reflects the diversity and similarity of responses. Thank you for your thoughtful feedback!

IHM Associates in St. Petersburg, FL

were recommissioned on March 20, 2024, at Queen of Apostles Convent. Pictured L-R, seated: Joan Morey, Beverly Capanna, Jane Shafer, Rose Coryn, Sr. Florence Ann Marino; standing: Mary Lynn Delfino, Sr. Ruth Harkins, Sr. Lisa Perkowski, Sheri Scheutzow. On Zoom, not pictured: Amy Kinnard



IHM Associates in Cresco, PA

sponsored a Lenten Retreat at Most Holy Trinity Parish in Cresco, PA as parishioners prepare for Holy Week and the celebration of Easter. Monsignor John Bergamo facilitated the guided retreat. Pictured L to R: Eileen O'Donnell; Arlene Calemno; Marguerite Morrow; Daniela Rivera; Lissette Ballesteros-Furstenau.

IHM Associates in Gainesville, FL

held prayer and discussion with Sister Nancy Elder in Gainesville, FL. Pictured L-R: Marilyn Ozeck, Sondra Moorhead, Gina Gombola, Regina Mallini, Pat Rohs, Sr Nancy Elder, Erin Tighe, Shanell Weems, Stephanie Bokowy, Kathleen Olson, and Jill Ingebritson.

