



New Life NOTES

Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary
Scranton, Pennsylvania

Summer 2003

Open Door in Forest Hills

by Sr. Ann Barbara DeSiano, IHM

In September of 2002, the sisters at Our Lady of Mercy were invited to accept into our community our novice, Sr. Catherine María Sitjá y Balbastro, “Katie,” and to share life and ministry with her. Initially this formative experience was to last until Christmas. In many ways Katie stepped into a world unknown to her, where she would live with

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six sisters involved in the ministries of education, spirituality and parish life at Our Lady of Mercy, Our Lady Queen of Martyrs, and Bishop Molloy Retreat Center. Quite a mix, but not unlike the ministry mix found in many of our local homes these days.

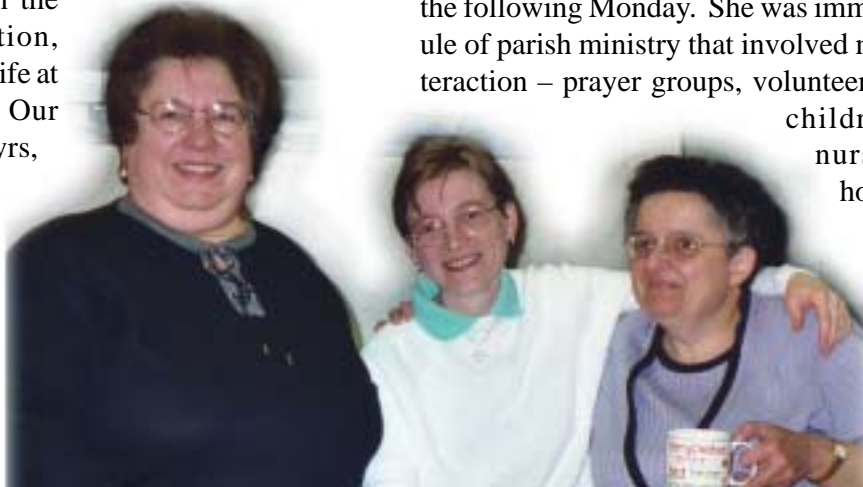
In receiving Katie, we also expe-

rienced the unknown - in having a novice among us, someone significantly younger than has been the case for many years, a person from a different cultural background, formed in a process differing significantly from our own, and someone with gifts and expectations completely unknown to us. It felt in some ways like some exotic arranged marriage, and yet both Katie and we have seen grace abound!

As communities are called on to open their doors to those experiencing formation, it is important to reflect on the ingredients that make this work. Some of these include openness, presence, community interaction, prayer and worship experiences, and apostolic service opportunities.

In our case, we did not have a long period of prep time to decide the “how “of our life together. Katie arrived on a Thursday and began ministry on the following Monday. She was immersed in a schedule of parish ministry that involved many kinds of interaction – prayer groups, volunteer work with both

children and adults, nursing home and homebound visitation, computer training, RCIA and lots of meetings on a rich assortment of committees. In



(L-R) Srs. Ann Barbara DeSiano, Catherine María Sitjá y Balbastro, and Francis Rose Lapitino

our home, Katie was getting to know us, sharing prayer, meals and a variety of routines that make up our daily life.

Both our presence to her and hers to us involved certain qualities. It was welcoming and compassionate, expressing genuine care and trust. Our community made itself accessible to her, offering help and direction when needed, eased her into new situations and experiences and shared diverse views in ways respectful of her person. We invited her to share her talents, culture and gifts with us and succeeded in treating her with a sense of equity. The tastes of Latin food and sound of Spanish rhythms were welcomed with curiosity and delight.

Through her many interactions with such diverse populations, Katie was exposed to the daily dying and rising that is at the heart of our commitment as IHMs. Not unlike the RCIA candidates themselves, Katie found herself “sponsored” in an informal but powerful way by the sisters around her. The prayer and worship opportunities included the vibrant liturgical life of the parish, varied forms of community prayer, opportunities for devotional expression, contact with a spiritual director and the communal celebrations of major feasts. Prayer was also a strong component of all the social celebrations that are part of our life . . . both feast days and holidays.

Katie’s stay was extended to the end of May and the extra time together gave us a chance to “normalize” and enrich our experience of community life together. In opening our door to Katie, we hope she has deepened her commitment to the life and ministry that is uniquely IHM and found her life with us to be an authentic expression of the faith we share. For our part, the opened door gave us the privilege of nurturing, for a short time, Katie’s growth and development as a young sister on her journey to vows. It’s been a chance to glimpse our future and to again say “yes” to our own journey and commitment.

Vocation Awareness Programs

Sister Ruth Harkins is available to present vocation programs for children or adults in school and parish settings. Any Sister interested in scheduling a vocation program may contact Sr. Ruth: 570-346-5413 or e-mail: harkir@sistersofihm.org

IHM Vocation Storybook



A small committee has been created to assist in the production of an IHM Vocation Storybook. We hope it will be approximately 20 pages and will include a personal vocation story, the story of our founder, who we are today and an activity section. This will target grades 4 – 6 to raise awareness and promote vocations for the congregation. We hope to acquire funding from grants to produce 5000 copies published in English and Spanish and available in early 2004. Further details will follow.

Videos Available

“**All Are Welcome,**” a 22-minute video features several IHM sisters. The sisters share their vocation stories and describe their attraction to and desire to live religious life. A prayer service and discussion guide accompany the video.

“**Keeping the Dream Alive,**” a 12-minute video describes the history, mission and charism of the IHM congregation. Sisters talk about the qualities of life and service that exemplify the IHM spirit.

Save the Date

October 17 - 19, 2003

“Come and See”

Weekend for Young Women ages 16-22

Our Lady of Grace, Manhasset, NY

November 14 - 16, 2003

“Come and See”

Weekend for Young Women ages 16 -22

IHM Spiritual Renewal Center, Cresco, PA

March 19 - 21, 2004

“Come and See”

Weekend for Young Women ages 16-22

IHM Spiritual Renewal Center, Cresco, PA