

Eileen Semonin's early years hold good memories, secure in her family home in Akron, Ohio. She and her sister, Mary Catherine, and brothers, Chuck and Dick lost their parents and then their stepmother by the time Eileen was 14. The four moved into an apartment and Mary Catherine managed the household and worked outside of the home. Eileen and her brothers held part-time jobs. "I never felt a sense of anger; God was there and got me through it," she says. "I have a lot of peace and no regrets."



Leaving Monroe, she participated in a summer foreign study program followed by a year of renewal.

She moved to Apopka, Fla., for six years, ministering in a migrant clinic and four years as a public health nurse. She was then elected provincial of the Southwest Province. Eileen returned to the area and ministered in a variety of ways:

facilitating retirement workshops, working at Ghandy Health Clinic, tutoring in Luna Pier, volunteering at the HIV outreach program, as a contingency nurse at Family Medical Center in Temperance and ministering to the migrants in Monroe County.

At 18, Eileen was engaged to Jack, who was serving overseas. While he was away, she had a life-changing event at a Forty Hours Devotion, and she felt God calling her to religious life. Stunned, she decided to try it out and thought once it was out of her system, she would return home to Jack. After 75 years, it is still in her system.



In reflecting on the future, Eileen says, "I don't know what God has in mind for us – for me. God's work will continue to be done in ways that we can't imagine. We need to be open to hear that message and accept the new expression."

These early experiences have colored where she often finds herself – "sitting with" those who are dying in her family and in the community. Her nieces and nephews say, "Say your act of contrition. Aunt Eny (Eileen) is coming." She has been present at the deaths of her siblings and with many IHMs.

Her daily prayer is to surrender with grace to the changing needs of an aging body; to acknowledge that the mystery of death is indeed a part of life – which we at times find difficult, partly because of fear of the unknown and partly because we treasure the life God has given us: our beautiful Earth, loving companions and all the events that have shaped us.

Eileen taught for a few years and then was told she would study nursing. For the next 24 year she was the compassionate presence in our IHM Infirmary.

She loved nursing. The nursing schedule was rigorous – 24/7 – so she rarely was able to attend community prayer. Her place of reflection was the Infirmary-Two balcony.

