Sister Patricia Dearbaugh grew up in Wyandotte, Mich., along with her older brother and younger sister. She attended public elementary school.

“I really loved school,” she recalls. “I even had a few arguments with my mother about staying home when I was ill.”

She boarded at the Academy of the Sacred Heart – taught by the Society of the Sacred Heart Sisters – for high school. It was here that God became real to her and the seed for her religious vocation was planted. She set a religious vocation aside because of her parent’s dismay; they were not Catholic.

Sister Patricia completed her bachelor’s and master’s degrees in elementary education and speech pathology at Michigan State University and taught for nearly 30 years in Grand Rapids, Mich. “I became Catholic in 1964,” she says. “Following my mother's death, I began a spiritual journey that led me to the IHM congregation. I entered the Novitiate in 1994.”

During her formation, she worked as a physical therapy assistant in the Motherhouse infirmary, studied theology at Assumption University in Windsor, Ont., and participated in the IHM theological education process. She also did a unit of clinical pastoral education at Beaumont Hospital.

She was gifted with a trip to the Holy Land with Bishop Ken Untener as her guide. “The trip was very prayerful and gave me new insights into praying with Scripture,” she notes.

She began her ministry as the rector of Cavanaugh Hall at the University Notre Dame in 1997, where she spent the next eight years.

While at Notre Dame, Sister Patricia continued her clinical pastoral education at St. Joseph Regional Medical Center in South Bend, Ind.

“The skills I learned helped me become more aware of myself as a minister and the ways my style of ministry affect other people,” she observes. Returning to Monroe, she worked in the IHM business office for six years before retiring after having some health issues.

Sister Patricia’s greatest joy has been knowing people in her life, particularly those she lived with when she first joined the community. “They stay close to you because they did so much for you then,” she reflects; she thrived with their support. She is grateful for opportunities to know God better by living with the community. She enjoys being with people on the same journey. Her Catholic faith started in high school and grew throughout her life. She now says she has a personal relationship with God as a friend and mentor. “I didn’t see God in that way as a child,” she says.

Sister Patricia credits the IHM Sisters for helping her develop a more loving relationship with God and changing her perspective of life and death.

“You have someone outside of all others to go to with your joys and sorrows and pain.”