

IHM Sisters Centennial 1923-2023

The following is an excerpt from Carol Jones' book: *Doers of the Word, 125 History of Saint James Catholic Church*, page 11. Limited copies are available for sale in the Rectory Office.

In August 1923, Mother Josepha Clarke and Sisters Mary Pierre McLaughlin, Mary Selesia McFadden, Mary Grace Madeline Mullarkey, Mary Cecil King, Rose Mary McDevitt, and Mary Anna Regina McGarrity arrived and renamed the convent Villa Maria [House of Mary]...The most beautiful part of the old convent was the Chapel, where daily Mass for the parish was celebrated into the late 1950s.

The IHM Sisters began teaching at Saint James School on September 17, 1923, with 92 students; Villa Maria High School began with 8 students. The Sisters opened a 2-year business program and brought a 1,000-book library, 15 typewriters, adding machines, and a duplicator for a business school. They offered a scientific laboratory and facilities for teaching music. The high school not only fulfilled state and local requirements but quickly earned an important affiliation with Catholic University in 1925. Father Van praised the IHMs as “the most efficient and best Sisters in this country.”

In addition to these endeavors, the Sisters began “their extensive work in Virginia.” Many Northern Virginia parishes and missions (including Front Royal) were catechized initially by the same IHM Sisters that served St. James Parish. Mother Mary Claudia, who served as mother-general of the IHM Order from 1968-1978, first came to St. James in 1935. During an interview with Father Gerald Fogarty, S.J., author of *Commonwealth Catholicism*, she spoke of traveling in those early years to Leesburg on Sundays to teach catechism to the children there. The IHMs at St. James gave catechetical instruction to most of the Catholic children of Northern Virginia in the first half of the 20th century (excerpt from *Doers of the Word*, p. 11 by Carol Jones).

Thanks to the providence of God as well as the foresight and persistence of Father Van, the Saint James Community and most of Northern Virginia were blessed to be taught and catechized by this exceptional group of Sisters!



1941-1951 Sister Mary Callista was a first grade teacher and dorm mother to students in the boarding school.



The Sisters of St. James School, 1942
Front center (l-r): Sisters Calista and Theresia
Middle row (l-r): Sisters Robertine, Mary Hugh, Dorothy, Bon Secours, Mother Clotildis (Principal) and Sr. Bernard Marie.
Back row (l-r): Sisters Mary Adelaide, Mary Christopher, Maria Carmen, Miriam Cephas and Maria Martin

SAVE THE DATE: SEPTEMBER 17, 2023

See our website under the *News* menu, stjamescatholic.org/faith/parish-religious-education-program-prep/saint-james-ihm-centennial-celebration, for further details on the centennial celebration.