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The Challenge of Transitioning the Mission: The Graying of the Sister, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and the Propagation of Mission

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Abstract: This paper asks the difficult question faced by so many Roman Catholic religious orders, how does a religious order transition its mission to its lay faculty and staff as it ages and its number decline. That question alone is a complicated one fraught with difficulties and challenges. The case of the Sister, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHMs) of Immaculata, PA is further complicated. The order has never fully articulated its charism because of its unwillingness to engage in its own history, which involves issues of race, class and ecclesiology that in reality show the challenges faced by female Catholic religious within the American Catholic Church in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. While the sisters serve in a variety of capacities and there are in fact three orders of IHMs in the United States, this paper examines their role specifically within one of the institutions that they founded, Immaculata University.

I. Introduction

Founded in 1858 the Sister, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary of Immaculata, PA (hereafter referred to as the IHMs) now number less than eight hundred forty with over a third of that number retired or semi-retired. Their average age is now in their seventies, and just over twenty sisters now serve at Immaculata University. This equates to slightly more than 5% of the full-time faculty along with more sisters working in administrative or staff capacities. There are also a handful of semi-retired sisters, who fulfill such varied duties as teaching part-time or in support positions. The youngest member of the IHM campus community is in her fifties and it is highly unlikely that the order will be able to support its present levels of manpower in the future. In fact the presence of IHMs on campus has slowly been declining in recent years and there are only a handful of postulants and novices being

prepared for full acceptance into the community. The reality is that within the next decade or so the number of IHMs on campus will in all probability be considerably lessened.

As the presence of the IHMs on campus has declined full-time tenure track faculty grew to represent over eighty percent of the overall faculty with many departments having no IHMs as faculty members.¹ Further complicating this matter has been the growth of the university. In 2005 after years of slow decline as an all-female Catholic college Immaculata became a co-educational institution, achieved university status and student enrollment in the traditional undergraduate day school grew by 300%.² Both the evening division and the graduate school grew significantly in terms of enrollment as well. Academically the university became known for certain things – directly competing with and often surpassing the entire Penn State University system annually in the number of licensed registered nurses; a small but influential music therapy program; and one of the most important archeological digs currently in the United States that has been the subject of extensive media coverage, multiple documentary films including films produced by the Smithsonian Institution, Public Broadcasting System and well known television programs such as *Mysteries at the Museum* and *the Dead Files*. For some unknown reason university administration has largely ignored this last initiative and repeatedly failed to use free media in major markets to advertise the university. The reason for this may be the challenges the archeological dig presents to

¹ In the 2012-2013 academic year nine of seventeen academic departments had no IHM presence on the faculty, and of the remaining eight departments that did have an IHM presence that presence was sometimes problematic. For example, the Department of Mathematics lists two IHMs as faculty, but one is the academic vice president and does not typically teach anymore and the second IHM works mainly in the department's tutoring center. The Biology Department has an IHM on staff who only teaches part-time having assumed a part-time administrative position with the university. The Psychology Department has an IHM presence but it has recently become entirely on the graduate level with the recent retirement of the IHM who was a member of the undergraduate psychology faculty.

² In 1969 then Immaculata College created a co-educational evening division and then a graduate division in 1977, but the traditional daytime undergraduate college did not become co-educational until 2005.

understandings of ethnicity in the history of the United States that indirectly challenges an order of mainly Irish Catholic nuns to face their own understandings of ethnicity and race in relation to both the history of the order and their not fully articulated charism. More on this later. The university also gained some attention with the release of the movie *The Mighty Macs* based upon the experiences of Coach Cathy Rush and the Mighty Macs basketball teams as the first female winners of the NCAA title. Much of this would forebode a successful university, and in some ways it does. Yet at the same time the university lacks direction. It lacks a clear understanding of its charism and mission that has become increasingly clear as the number of IHMs available to support and transition the mission to the lay faculty are declining. What exactly that mission and charism consists of is not entirely clear as the IHMs have never clearly articulated it themselves. That begs the question why and that is where the tale is told.

II. IHM Charism

The Sister, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHMs) are a pontifical religious institute of females who take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and are intended to live uncloistered and pursue active ministry. They profess a charism of love, creative hope and fidelity, and view the patrons of the order to be Mary Immaculate, Saint Alphonsus Liguori and Saint Teresa of Avila. Neither the principles of the IHMs charism nor how those principles relate to the patrons of the order is clear. The IHMs were themselves born more out of practical necessity than spiritual impulse as teachers were needed to serve Catholic children. If one were to ask an IHM today to define the order's charism some members will clearly assert that one exists, but rarely does what they assert the charism to be match what

their fellow IHMs assert it to be.³ Some claim it is a charism that is largely Marian; others that it is Marian and Alphonsian. The author has yet to encounter an IHM who can clearly articulate the relationship between Saint Teresa of Avila and the principles of IHM charism. A relationship may in fact exist. The point here is that no member of the order seems capable of articulating exactly what are the central principles of an IHM charism, nor can they seem to agree with one another when asked what the charism is. It is also of importance to note that some members of the community become defensive and have actively tried to cease or redirect any discussion of charism.

Presently approximately 840 IHM sisters staff Catholic schools and parishes in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Connecticut, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, New Hampshire, Florida and Peru. The order began in 1845 when Father Louis Floret Gillet, C.Ss.R. sought out women to start a new order in the Diocese of Detroit based upon the spirit and charism of Saint Alphonsus Liguori. Fr. Gillet, however, would be transferred out of the Diocese of Detroit a few years later and would lose contact with the sisters for decades. He would in fact only discover that the order had survived when he was quite elderly and had left the Redemptorists to become a Cistercian monk. The IHMs would continue to grow in the Diocese of Detroit with a motherhouse in Monroe, Michigan. In 1858 in response to an invitation from Saint John Neumann, then Bishop of Philadelphia and a Redemptorist, the sisters agreed to staff a school in his diocese. They desired this in large part because their rule was still incomplete, they desired to reconnect with the Redemptorists, and it was

³ The author has repeatedly spoken with members of the IHM community over the past eight years about the matter of the order's charism and has actively researched and read the published works related to the order's history and charism limited as they are. Multiple IHMs have admitted to the author publicly and privately that there is no clearly articulated understanding of IHM charism, and members of the order in 2013 acknowledged to the author that the order is now trying to articulate a charism. This is in all probability too little, too late.

increasingly becoming clear that Bishop Lefevere of Detroit was exercising greater control over the order. Lefevere in fact was angered that his authority had been usurped throughout the order's attempt to reconnect with the Redemptorists and the assignment of IHMs outside of his diocese. The IHMs had failed to ask for his permission to expand to the Diocese of Philadelphia. His response was to literally banish the sisters going to the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, an in effect create a second order of IHMs which are those now associated with Immaculata.⁴ He went so far as to forbid the IHMs in Monroe, Michigan from having contact with the IHMs in Pennsylvania. A further division would come in 1868 as the Archdiocese of Philadelphia was itself reapportioned and from it two new dioceses – Scranton and Allentown – were created. In the process another order of IHMs was created with a motherhouse in Scranton, Pennsylvania. The IHMs were a diocesan order, so with the reapportionment of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia there came into existence three separate orders of IHMs – Monroe, Michigan; Immaculata, Pennsylvania and Scranton, Pennsylvania. It would not be until the twentieth century that each order would receive papal permission to be an independent religious order of female Catholic religious, and as a result all three orders of IHMs spent much of their histories controlled by bishops and cardinals with a priest serving as the de facto head of the order largely until the era of Vatican II. This clearly played a significant role in stunting the growth of a shared and articulated charism of the IHMs as many bishops and cardinals were less concerned with the order's charism as they were with having a supply of sisters from an order that believed its primary mission was education.

⁴ The first IHM motherhouse in Pennsylvania was in Reading and then later relocated to West Chester. In the early twentieth century the motherhouse was again relocated to its current location at Immaculata, PA a few miles outside of West Chester.

III. Immaculata University

Immaculata University was founded in 1920 and was originally called Villa Maria College. The original property was purchased in 1906 and ground was broken in 1908. Like so many Catholic colleges and institutions Immaculata's first building was built piecemeal, and continued to be added to after the college opened in 1920. The name of the college was changed to Immaculata in 1920 to accommodate the federal government's requirement that post offices only have a place title of one name. The original campus consisted of 198 acres and today covers 375 acres, when the nearby motherhouse and the IHM retirement community Camilla Hall, which are both contiguous to campus, are included the IHMs have a property of over 400 acres in Chester County, Pennsylvania. The college existed as an all-female institution from its founding until 1969 when he began to admit men to its evening division. Then in 1977 it added its first graduate program, and in 1994 its first doctoral program. In 2002 Immaculata College was granted university status, and then in 2005 the university went entirely coeducational with males now representing about 35% of the total student population. Immaculata also has retained its commitment to a small student to faculty ratio of 9:1 and 99% of all classes have fewer than 30 students in them. From its inception until recently Immaculata conceived of itself as a liberal arts institution and prided itself on the education it provided women, but within the past few years it has divided its academic programs between traditional liberal arts programs and professional programs that were determined on a departmental basis.⁵ This division also radically altered the common core for Immaculata students in terms of both the total number of credits and the sort of

⁵ This ability to determine where a department would be located led to some rather odd outcomes. For example, the Biology Department placed itself within the professional division while the Chemistry Department intentionally stayed within the liberal arts division of the university.

courses required. At end there is also no clear indication of how these changes are integrated into an understanding and practice of IHM charism, nor is there any clear sense of what is meant by an IHM university. There instead seems to have been a rush towards professionalized degrees with little thought about the institutions Catholic identity or the role of the liberal arts within the institution.

IV. The Difficult Question of Mother Theresa Maxis Duchemin: Woman, Race and the Church Hierarchy

The IHMs now speak of two founders who shared equally in the creation of the order – Rev. Louis Florent Gillet, C.Ss.R. and Mother Theresa Maxis Duchemin, IHM. However, the role of each of these two founders is complicated, and both Gillet and Maxis only stayed with the order for a brief period of time. Neither left because of dissatisfaction with the order, rather Rev. Gillet was transferred by his superiors first to South America as a missionary and then to France where he then became a Cistercian, while Mother Theresa Maxis was effectively forced out of the order by the bishop of Detroit and lived in exile with the Grey Nuns of Ottawa for 18 years until she was able to return to the IHMs at Immaculata for less than a decade before she died. As a result other equally controversial figures Rev. Edward Joos and Mother Mary Joseph Walker took on the roles of leading the order. Yet, it is Maxis who in the historical record is undisputedly central in emphasizing the Alphonsian spirituality amongst the IHMs. All of this leads to difficult questions that have no easy answers in the available historical record in terms of what is most important in the history of the order. It is a religious order with a deeply convoluted and contradictory sense of itself at times, and while the IHMs in Monroe, Michigan have made some attempt to discern a clear charism and

mission the same could not be said for the IHMs of Immaculata (or Scranton for that matter.)⁶ Much of the failure to articulate a charism turns on one complex historical reality.

Mother M. Theresa Maxis Duchemin, IHM was a woman of color, a daughter of an unmarried San Domingan (Haitian) mother, who after she left the Oblate Sisters of Providence spent the rest of her life passing as white.⁷ Under canon law special dispensation was required for admittance to a religious order for illegitimate children. It is unclear if Maxis ever received said dispensation. Racial identity also clearly complicated Theresa Maxis's life and the lives of the other IHMs especially when she became superior. What is not entirely clear from the historical record, but one must suspect that it clearly played a role was the question of whether bishops and priests used Maxis's multiracial identity against her? Did her fellow nuns? These are significant questions because Maxis, had she stayed with her Redemptorist leanings and been able long-term to serve as mother general, might have acted as a counterforce to Rev. Joos and Mother Mary Joseph Walker who clearly had Jansenist strains that they conveyed to the sisters. Mother Mary Joseph Walker openly believed that priests had a special ability to discern God's intentions and even communicate directly with God, and as a result she could be extremely deferential. It is also important to note that Bishop Peter Paul Lefevere of Detroit and Rev. Joos was of a similar predisposition.

⁶ Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary Monroe Michigan. (1997). *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press. See especially S. Marita-Constance Supan, IHM. (1997) "Dangerous Memory: Mother M. Theresa Maxis Duchemin and the Michigan Congregation of the Sisters, IHM". In Sisters, Servants of the Immaculata Heart of Mary Monroe, Michigan. *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*. (pp. 31 – 67). Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

⁷ Maxis's own mother would become an Oblate Sister of Providence with the name S. Anthony Duchemin, OSP.

In order to understand these matters more clearly we must return to the early history of the IHMs. Rev. Gillet was only present for the first few years before being reassigned by his superiors and Bishop Lefevere replaced him with Rev. Joos. Joos revised the IHM Rule and placed the order's customs in a clear, written form. What he in fact did was to silence many of the IHMs earliest voices and would play an active role in reading Mother M. Theresa Maxis out of IHM history. The full memory of Maxis would not be recovered until 1945 when S. M. Rosalita Kelly authored *No Greater Service* a biography of Maxis. Maxis's memory had become so dangerous that she was split off from the general awareness of the order by first suppressing any references to her in anything written about the order, and then strategically reinventing the early history of the order. This was done to such a point that most of the order's histories are not reflective of what really happened within the order until the twentieth century, and even then the matter is not written about openly until 1997. The histories are largely hagiographic or at best turn into laundry lists of what missions the IHMs served in and other generalities that offer little insight into what can be very dynamic lives of female religious.

Marie Almaide Maxis Duchemin, later Mother Theresa Maxis, IHM, first played a role in founding the Oblate Sisters of Providence, an African-American order of Catholic female religious and during that time was known as S. Marie Therese. Her mother followed her into the community and would die serving as a sister nurse during one of the cholera epidemics to strike nineteenth century Baltimore. At the age of thirty-three Maxis was elected superior of the Oblates. By this time the Oblates themselves were changing. Initially the woman who joined the Oblates had been French speaking woman of mixed race, often immigrants, but the composition of the order began to change to native African-Americans and the children the

Oblates served were often poor African-American children. There is an unanswered question of whether Maxis herself had issues with serving in a community that was changing ethnically. The historical record seems to indicate that this may have played a role, and at minimum there was the frank realization that she could pass while many of her fellow Oblates could not.

Another factor was that the Sulpicians had been assisting the Oblates in their formation, but the Sulpicians had been founded to only train priests. There again seems to be a racial question and some pressure was placed upon the Sulpicians to stop assisting the Oblates due to their being an African-American order. The Oblates in turn sought out the Redemptorists. They had already been going to a Redemptorist parish in Baltimore for Mass and the sacraments. Further adding fuel to the proverbial fire was the fact that anti-Catholic sentiments were quite strong at this time, and an order of African-American sisters was especially problematic. The archbishop of Baltimore forbid the Oblates from accepting new entrants and urged the professed sisters to disband. He seems to have seen an order of African-American sisters as more of a problem than a benefit, and clearly implies that African-Americans should not feel called to religious life. All of these factors suggested to Theresa Maxis that she was in an untenable situation and might in fact be part of a dying order.

Maxis willingly took the opportunity to move to the Michigan frontier thereby giving her access to white society in ways not possible in Baltimore with the Oblates. It should be noted that Ann Shaaf also left the Oblates with Maxis. Maxis was willing to take her because she could pass for white, but was unwilling to take some other Oblates due to the

apparentness of their being African-American. This is clearly documented in Maxis's correspondence.

Along with Ann Schaaf and two other woman Maxis formed the Sister, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary and soon became superior. She almost immediately ran into trouble with the bishop, who was already displeased by the Redemptorists and the challenges of dealing with a diocese that was largely German Catholic. Lefevere was a Francophile and Jansenist, but of the worst sort. He believed that perdition would soon be at hand, which is largely the source of his Jansenism, and as a result he believed very strongly that there should be much deference to church authority. He seems to have believed that without deference to the church hierarchy Catholic piety would not be possible, and redemption too would be out of reach for those under his care.

Rev. Gillet was faced with his own related challenges as he tried to serve Michigan's French speaking population in a mainly German area with many of his fellow Redemptorists being Germans or German speakers. Ironically the Redemptorists ceased their mission to French speaking Catholic due to Bishop Lefevere's failure to fiscally support the Redemptorist mission. His bigger concern seems to have been the goal of separating the IHMs from the Redemptorists, and this required the removal of Rev. Gillet.

Maxis clearly begins to get a sense that she has left one set of problems for another, and that if the sisters are to survive they need to complete their Rule. She also realizes this will be a more fruitful proposition under the Redemptorists than under Bishop Lefevere, and she begins to seek a way to keep the sisters in a relationship with the Redemptorists, especially after Rev. Gillet is replaced by Rev. Joos. Gillet leaves after only two years with the sisters

on order of his superiors because of Bishop Lefevere's failure to financially support the Redemptorist mission in Michigan. Then in 1848 Maxis is in communication with Saint John Neumann, C.Ss.R. then Bishop of Philadelphia who asks her if the IHMs would teach at a school in his diocese, Schuylkill County specifically. Maxis accepts Neumann's offer before speaking with Lefevere out of a deep desire to keep that Redemptorist connection for the good of the order, but both Lefevere and Joos refuse to let the IHMs go. In response Maxis offered her resignation as superior general citing the bishop's lack of confidence in her. Lefevere fears losing the sisters from his diocese and makes the matter an issue of obedience, and he is also clearly offended to be challenged by not only a female religious but a female religious of mixed race no less. Maxis had already sent some sisters to Pennsylvania, and Lefevere in response accepts Maxis's resignation as superior and replaces her with S. Alphonsine. He also recalls the sisters from Pennsylvania and replaces them with three other sisters, one of whom is Maxis. Then he takes a further step of essentially asserting that the IHMs in the Diocese of Philadelphia are no longer part of the Monroe community. It is now two orders of IHMs and he forbids the Monroe community from communicating with what will one day become the Immaculata community. The whole IHM community splits approximately evenly with half the community, twelve sisters, staying in Monroe and the other half leaving for the Diocese of Philadelphia.

Maxis, however, did not abandon her sisters in Michigan. She enlisted the help of the Redemptorists in a letter writing campaign to the IHMs in Monroe trying to convince them to leave and come to Pennsylvania. Some IHMs did in fact leave and joined their fellow sisters in Pennsylvania. However, other IHMs in Monroe gave the letters to Lefevere, who again feared losing his sisters and believed that Neumann was playing an active role in the

campaign to remove the sisters from his diocese. Again Lefevere is also angered that a woman of mixed race would challenge him. Shortly thereafter Archbishop Wood succeeded Neumann as Bishop of Philadelphia, and Bishops Lefevere and Wood actively discussed a plan to expose and discredit Maxis by making public her mixed race on the eve of the Civil War. It is for this reason and others that Maxis will eventually leave for the good of the IHMs and reside with the Grey Nuns in Ottawa, Canada for eighteen years. She never takes vows with the Grey nuns, although she does wear their habit typically. She would at times wear her “blues” and continued to live as an IHM in exile.

Maxis not only continued to live as an IHM she also made attempts to return to Monroe. In 1868 Maxis and Frances Renauld, another IHM who had left Michigan for Pennsylvania, tried to rejoin Monroe but Lefevere would not permit Maxis to return, while he did permit Renauld to do so. Maxis instead lived out her last years with the IHMs of the Immaculata, then West Chester, community. Maxis would die soon after and in 1892 Rev. Joos would refuse to accept Maxis’s handwritten copy of the foundation years, and actively intervened to derail a biography of her that Rev. F.X. Schuttgen, C.Ss.R. intended to write. Maxis’s story, however, seems to have survived orally amongst the IHMs in Monroe despite attempts to in effect read her out of any active role in IHM history, but by the late 1800s events occur that make it harder to completely read Maxis out of IHM history. Shortly before Maxis’s death the IHM community in West Chester (Immaculata) unexpectedly reconnected with Rev. Gillet, who is by that point a Cistercian in France. Then in 1892 the deaths of both Gillet and Maxis lead to a need to formalize the order’s historical record, and Maxis’s racial background almost immediately becomes an issue. Lastly Rev. Edward Joos dies in 1901,

and perhaps for the first time since Rev. Gillet the order has an opportunity to independently define itself. Would they take it?

Rev. Francis T. Parr, C.Ss.R. comes to West Chester from New York to preach a retreat in 1902, and arrives with two items he found while cleaning out Rev. Schnuttgen's room after his death. He has Maxis's hand written copy of the foundation that Rev. Joos had refused to accept in 1892 and her book of poverty (prayer book.)⁸ Most IHMs knew nothing of Theresa Maxis, and those loyal to Joos began writing revisionist histories in an attempt to minimize Maxis's role within the history of the community. The revised histories attempt to almost completely purge Maxis from the order's history.

Most superiors in Monroe and West Chester kept strict control regarding IHM self-presentation to the point of even conducting campaigns to deny Maxis's biracial nature with the help of Josephite priests, faculty at The Catholic University of America, Philadelphia's Dennis Cardinal Dougherty and Bishop Michael James Gallagher of Detroit. This concern over the role of Maxis and her biracialism continued well into the late twentieth century. It is only with the publication of *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary* in 1997 that an honest and frank historiography is presented about IHM history. All three orders of IHMs – Monroe, Immaculata and Scranton – now acknowledge the importance of Mother M. Theresa Maxis, and besides meeting amongst themselves to cooperatively plan at times and discuss the challenges confronting their orders they now also include the Oblate Sisters of Providence and openly acknowledge the

⁸ A component of IHM spirituality is that each sister typically keeps a book of poverty, which is in effect a prayer book. It is a notebook that sisters are encouraged to write down prayers, readings and quotes that are of personal importance to them in their prayer life. This sort of resource would give great insight into the internal spiritual life of an IHM.

connection between Maxis and that order. IHMs will now openly speak of Maxis's biracial status and of the limited role of women in the church. While these are all good and important steps generally speaking, IHM history, for those sisters associated with Immaculata, has not been articulated into a clear and cogent charism that incorporates Maxis's story into the order's history. The order still struggles with identity. The charism seems to consist of a disparate collage of Marian, Alphonsian, and Jansenistic reliance on rules that incorporates Gillet and Maxis, but never fully incorporates them. Neither is the role of Saint Teresa of Avila particularly clear in relation to IHM charism. At end it is largely a rudderless charism with the direction of its future largely unclear and unarticulated.

V. Conclusion

At end we are left with components of a potential charism that can be hopeful and inspiring alongside other components that are deeply problematic. There are more questions than answers. Is there an unspoken IHM charism that expresses a spirituality of Alphonsus and Maxis? Is it a counterpoint to the Jansenist tendencies and an excessive reliance on rules and legalistic structures to define spirituality and morality in the IHMs? Is there also a sense of personalism in the sense of creativity and practicality or an intellectual life? There seem to be first two and then multiple IHM charisms parading as one. This is not something atypical of Catholic religious orders, especially female religious orders that were often hindered from directing themselves because of a priest superior assigned by the bishop. Margaret Susan Thompson has written about this very issue with the IHMs and asserted, "Perhaps what is required here is a new component the spirituality of poverty – recognition that congregations

do not own their past exclusively but, rather share them with a larger community.”⁹ Until recently writings about religious communities – male and female – have tended to be generalized, reassuring, affective and even at times hagiographic rather than held to the standards of more scholarly historical standards. Accuracy was often sacrificed for piety, and facts were at times supplanted by myths due to matters deemed embarrassing or problematic to the order in question. This sort of approach, however, distorts the historical record and directly undermines charism. It makes it impossible for members of a particular religious congregation to respond in ways that are valid to the mission and charism of the order and historical reality. Vatican II called all religious orders to return to the thought of their founders, and as a result Gillet and Maxis have taken on a more central role in IHM identity for all three communities, but there are still serious and outstanding questions of the degree to which the IHMs of Immaculata have integrated this new historical and spiritual understanding to make their mission and charism both more concrete and reflective. It seems to me that there is a profound story to be told that could articulate a newly invigorated sense of mission and charism to both the IHMs and the laity who work with them before the order declines in numbers to such a degree that the recovery of the past may not be possible, and Immaculata University particularly finds itself lacking a clear sense of what it means to be an IHM university. Such a reality then begs a larger question about the ability of IHM institutions, especially a university, to sustain itself long-term in the increasingly competitive higher education marketplace. Instead of articulating a clear Catholic identity and IHM charism they have in recent years reduced the role of the liberal arts, a keystone of Catholic higher education, and focused primarily on developing professional degree programs.

⁹ Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. (1997). *Building Sisterhood: A Feminist History of the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary*. (pp. 11) Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.

Correspondingly they have struggled to maintain a consistent and healthy enrollment. The university's enrollment problems are distinctly related to the lack of a clear Catholic identity and charism coupled with a recruitment and retention strategy that targeted potential students from recruitment pools that were innately problematic. Lastly all of these factors have conspired to place the university and the IHMs at the whim of the marketplace since they have failed to define themselves the market has done it for them.

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