



## Congregation of the Humility of Mary

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### **Parish Honors CHM Sister for 30 Years of Ministry**

On Sunday, June 12, Sister Elaine Hagedorn, a member of the Davenport based Congregation of the Humility of Mary (CHM), will be/was feted at Visitation/Our Lady of the Americas Parish in Des Moines, Iowa. Resigning after 30 years of ministry in the parish, Sr. Elaine will be on sabbatical for a year after which she plans to “get back to ministry.” She insists that she is not retiring.

At Visitation Parish Sr. Elaine served as Director of Religious Education and Pastoral Minister for 22 years beginning in 1975. As the religious education enrollment increased the parish hired Sr. Elaine’s biological sister and fellow CHM, Sr. Jeanie Hagedorn, as her part-time assistant. The sisters worked together for five years until the needs of both religious education and pastoral ministry became increasingly demanding. The parish had begun to see a sizable influx of Hispanic families with the unique needs of a new immigrant community. Sr. Elaine chose to concentrate fulltime on the Pastoral Ministry area and Sr. Jeanie assumed fulltime responsibilities for the Religious Education program for public school students. Sr. Elaine’s full attention was then focused on service to the elderly, the sick and the dying as well as coordination of adult faith formation and peace and justice efforts in the parish.

The area in which she worked resembled a mini United Nations – with many different ethnic groups, the majority from Hispanic descent. This provided the opportunity to work for peace and justice on a practical and an educational level. Sr. Elaine realized that people sometimes suffer injustices because they are either unaware of their rights or the resources available to them. For example, when she visited shut-ins she would sometimes find elderly who were not getting their basic needs met, so she would contact the appropriate referral agency for the necessary assistance.

In the Visitation Parish, many adults have not had the opportunity for a college education. So Sr. Elaine tried to see that people were given opportunities to learn more, either by offering classes on the parish level or by identifying existing educational opportunities in the Des Moines area, both in the Catholic and public sectors. “Knowledge is a resource that people can use to work towards equitable living and working conditions,” she said. Sr. Elaine also kept her parishioners informed about peace and justice issues, so together they could work towards a just society, often working ecumenically.

Born in Denison, Iowa, and raised in Des Moines, Sr. Elaine entered the Congregation of the Humility of Mary in 1957 and professed religious vows in 1960. She holds a bachelor’s degree in education from Marycrest College, taught for eight years in Catholic schools in Iowa, served four years as a principal in Marshalltown, and then as area coordinator for the Des Moines Diocese Social Action division for a year. She worked for Meals on Wheels in Des Moines for two years before starting her work at Visitation Parish.