

## Addendum Part 1

### A Brief History of the Immaculate Heart Order

The Daughters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM) was founded by Father Joaquin Masmitja de Puig in 1848. The Order was created in Spain, as a response to the first and second Carlist wars, which took place between 1833–1840 and 1846–1849 respectively. These were civil wars having to do with the monarchy, and created difficulty for the citizens, especially women, living through them. The article “Immaculate Heart Community: A Story for the Ages” in *Discover Hollywood’s* Winter 2020 issue, describes the mission of the Order from its inception: “to [serve] impoverished women, offering them a path to education.”

Twenty years later, Bishop Amat of California requested that 10 of the sisters be brought to California to teach in several schools around the state. After less than two decades on American soil, the IHM had grown exponentially and had strong roots in the United States. The sisters settled in Mother House, a building on the corner of Franklin and Western Avenue in Los Angeles, where they lived and inaugurated new members into the Order. They eventually opened the Immaculate Heart College, which became a prestigious institution known for its strong emphasis on community and political action through art and learning. A Wikipedia article on the history of the Order and the College explains:

In the late 1960s, in response to directives from Vatican II [definition below] as well as participation in therapy experiments run by researchers from the Esalen Institute, the Sisters followed the guidance of Pope Paul VI and conducted an extensive review of their structure and proposed changes in how they prayed, worked, lived together and governed themselves...[Cardinal McIntyre] ordered the removal of all Immaculate Heart Sisters teaching in Los Angeles diocesan schools, and finally presented the Community with an ultimatum: either conform to the standards of traditional religious life or seek dispensation from vows. In the end, 90% chose to dispense from their vows ...



Image: “First photo of some members [of the IHC] in secular dress, 1970.” ([Anitacasparry.com](http://Anitacasparry.com))  
These sisters “[reestablished] themselves as the Immaculate Heart Community (IHC) becoming the only full order of women to leave the Catholic church yet remain in community together.” (*Discover Hollywood*) They reorganized their institutional work under separate non-profit corporations: Immaculate Heart High School, Queen of the Valley Hospital, La Casa de Maria Retreat Center, and Immaculate Heart College. The sisters still work together to serve their communities today.

### **More on Vatican II:**

In January 1959, Pope John XXIII assembled Roman Catholic religious leaders to settle doctrinal issues. This Second Vatican Council, also known as Vatican II, was the first in nearly 100 years. From “Why Is Vatican II So Important?” on [NPR.org](http://NPR.org):

The council called between 2,000 and 2,500 bishops and thousands of observers, auditors, sisters, laymen and laywomen to four sessions at St. Peter’s Basilica between 1962 and 1965. Cultural changes in the aftermath of World War II spelled a need to reconsider church practices. These meetings did just that — 16 documents in total came out of it, laying a foundation for the church as we know it today.

... a theme of the documents was reconciliation. In keeping, they allowed for Catholics to pray with other Christian denominations, encouraged friendship with other non-Christian faiths, and opened the door for languages besides Latin to be used during Mass. Other new positions concerned education, the media and divine revelation.

Most prominently, says Xavier University’s Peter A. Huff, the council highlighted the church’s willingness to operate in the contemporary realm.

Vatican II’s massive reforms caused a divide within the Church – conservatives who rejected it and others who embraced it.

### **A Note on the Dispensation of Vows:**

According to the original Catholic Encyclopedia, as shared in [Catholic Answers’ article](#) on the subject:

The *raison d’être* for dispensation lies in the nature of prudent administration, which often counsels the adapting of general legislation to the needs of a particular case by way of exception...the Divine purpose of the Church, the welfare of souls, obliges it to reconcile as far as possible the general interests of the community with the spiritual needs or even weaknesses of its individual members.

In other words: dispensation does not mean one is released from an oath taken or a rule of the Church, but rather the admission by the Church that the oath or rule should never have been applied to a specific person in the first place. It is a way of excusing one from an oath or rule that allows the Church to avoid admitting that the rule itself is flawed.

Since their separation from the Catholic Church, the IHC has been run by a string of powerful women including Anita Caspary, who is “the only woman in United States history to be Mother General of a Catholic order of sisters and president of a lay community” (*Discover Hollywood*), Dr. Helen Kelley, and Karol Schulkin. More recent work of the IHC includes help founding Housing Works (support for unsheltered population facing mental health and addiction), and establishment of La Casa de Maria in Santa Barbara, which is one of the first marriage retreat programs in this country.

Over the years, the IHC has made a tremendous difference to the Los Angeles community. Here is a brief story from *Discover Hollywood* that captures the kind of work they do and the passionate, kind, rebellious spirit with which they do it:

John Mutz was a Los Angeles police captain at the time. “I was concerned about their safety because it was a very dangerous neighborhood,” John explained. “I told Socorro [Socorro Meza, who attended both Immaculate Heart High School and College and was an IHC member for 79 years before she passed away in 2011 (*Legacy.com*)], ‘I can’t protect you.’ She said, ‘We don’t need your protection. You don’t understand the negative impact that your officers have in this immigrant community.’”

John continued, “I said, ‘No Sister, you don’t understand. We’re here to help make things better.’ She said, ‘Our challenge is not only poverty and lack of social services, our problem is also with the police. You could help us or you could leave us alone.’”

What followed was relationship between the IHC and LAPD that had a positive impact within the community. More students graduated from high school and experienced a life beyond what they expected.

John continued, “We did some really extraordinary things in Blythe Street, later named Casa Esperanza. And it still goes on today. What I learned there was so impactful that I’ll never forget it.” The model that worked so well for Blythe Street was adopted into other cities throughout Los Angeles.

After John retired from the police department, he accepted Socorro Meza’s invitation to join IHC. “The Community has supported me in continuing my social justice work. There are incredible memories that I have now with many of those women who really took me in, inspired me and modeled what I needed to know as a police leader.”



Immaculate Heart Order 1960 ([Anitacasparry.com](http://Anitacasparry.com))

**Here is a more detailed timeline of the order, taken directly from the [Immaculate Heart Community website](#):**

- **1848:** In Olot, Spain, Father Joaquin Masmitjá founded a religious order for women, the Daughters of the Most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary (IHM).
- **1871:** At the request of Bishop Thaddeus Amat y Brusi of California, ten IHM Sisters arrived from Spain in Gilroy and San Juan Bautista, California.
- **1886:** Several IHM Sisters moved to Los Angeles to open Saint Vibiana Cathedral School.
- **1906:** Immaculate Heart Motherhouse and Immaculate Heart High School were established in Los Angeles.
- **1916:** Immaculate Heart College was chartered in Los Angeles as the first standard Catholic college for women in Southern California.
- **1924:** IHM Sisters in California separated from Spain and founded a new order.
- **1943:** Immaculate Heart Novitiate was established in Montecito, California.
- **1955:** La Casa de Maria Retreat Center, located on the property in Montecito, was opened for married couples' retreats.
- **1965:** The IHM religious community inaugurated a renewal program in accordance with the directives of Vatican II, including wearing contemporary clothing instead of habits (outer dress traditionally worn by Sisters) as each Sister chose, praying together when and where the Sisters could assemble, improving the educational credentials of Sisters who taught in the community's schools, and teaching smaller classes of students.
- **1967:** The IHM Sisters were ordered by Cardinal James Francis McIntyre to end their renewal innovations, or withdraw from teaching in all Los Angeles Archdiocese schools.
- **1969:** (May): The IHM Sisters were told by representatives of the Vatican that they could not remain Sisters unless they agreed to return to wearing habits and other stipulations concerning life, ministry, and worship made by the Vatican.
- **1969:** (December): 327 IHM Sisters, the majority out of 560 Sisters, decided to ask to be released from their vows.
- **1970:** (March 28): The new lay Immaculate Heart Community was founded by 220 of the former IHM Sisters, no longer under the control of the Los Angeles Archdiocese.
- **1974:** The ecumenical Center for Spiritual Renewal opened on the La Casa de Maria grounds in Montecito.
- **1980:** An apartment complex, the Kenmore Residence, was purchased for elderly Community members wishing to live together.
- **1982:** Immaculate Heart College Center opened as the first national program for Feminist Spirituality conferring advanced degrees.
- **1992:** Casa Esperanza, an outreach and immigrant support center, was founded in Panorama City, California focusing on acculturation experience and gang prevention.
- **1995:** The Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the Immaculate Heart Community was celebrated.

- **1995:** The Corita Art Center was established in Los Angeles.
- **1996:** Alexandria House was founded as a collaborative program providing supportive housing for women and children.
- **1998:** The 150th Anniversary of the Spanish foundation of the IHM order took place.
- **2003:** Housing Works was founded to ensure housing as a basic human right for homeless people seeking permanent housing in Los Angeles.
- **2007:** The fINDings art and community center was founded in San Pedro, California.
- **2010:** The Fortieth Anniversary of the Immaculate Heart Community was celebrated.
- **2016:** IHC established three commissions to focus on collaborative work: Commission for Justice for Women, Environmental Commission, and Commission on Justice for Immigrants and Refugees.
- **2020:** The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Immaculate Heart Community of California was delayed for celebration due to the 2020 pandemic. Seizing a new opportunity for the Community, all programs transferred online.

### A Brief History of the Immaculate Heart College

The Immaculate Heart College was officially chartered in 1916. It was the first standard Catholic college for women in Southern California, and among the earliest to offer women higher education at both the undergraduate and graduate level. Its inception followed the opening of several other educational institutions by the sisters, including Saint Vibiana Cathedral School, and Immaculate Heart High School.

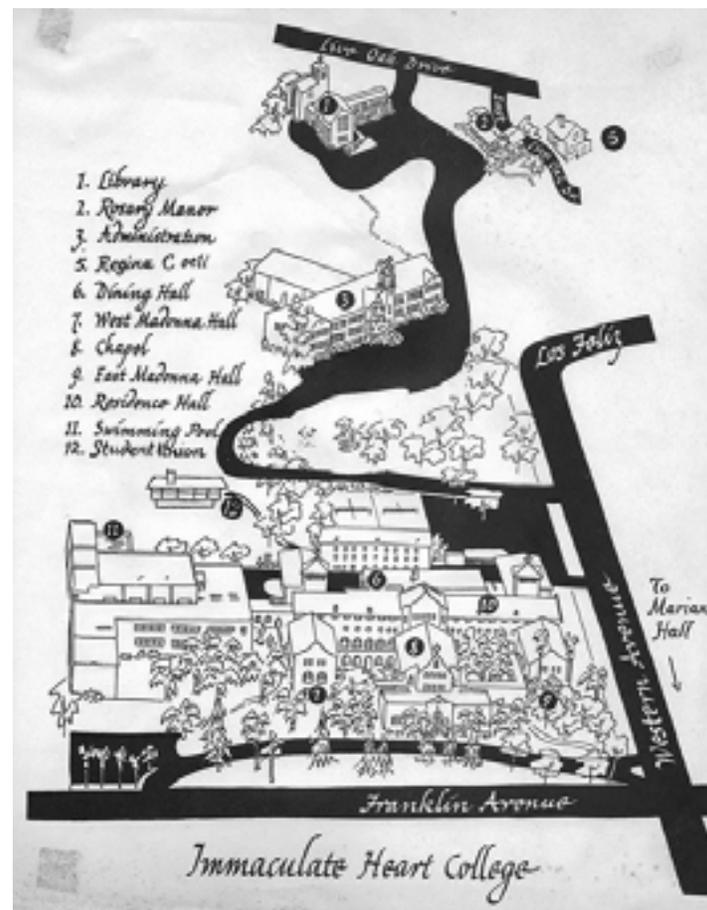


Image: Immaculate Heart College Map 1961 ([Anitacaspary.com](http://Anitacaspary.com))

In 1924 the Immaculate Heart Sisters in California gained independence from Spain and became a Pontifical (approved directly by the pope) order. After that, the Order began to find their identity in the US. “They opened a Novitiate and Retreat Center in Montecito, began hospital ministries, and staffed many Catholic elementary schools and Catholic high schools.” ([IHC.org](http://IHC.org)) They even went on to open schools in other places like Texas, Arizona and Canada over the next few decades.

After what they refer to on their website as an “irreconcilable impasse” with Cardinal McIntyre and the Catholic Church, many of the sisters lost their teaching positions in Archdiocese schools. This caused great pain to the women who loved their work and to their students, many of whom feel the impact of the sister’s teachings to this day.



Image: Corita teaching her students ([Corita.org](http://Corita.org))

In 1981, after some financial difficulty, the Immaculate Heart College campus was sold to the American Film Institute. “Despite the closure of the college, IHC was one of the largest teaching orders in California with schools established throughout Los Angeles, San Bernardino, the Bay Area up to British Columbia and San Diego.” (*Discover Hollywood*) A year later, “Immaculate Heart College Center opened as the first national program for Feminist Spirituality conferring advanced degrees.” ([IHC.org](http://IHC.org)) The Center also closed in the year 2000. Though the College itself no longer exists, its impact is still felt deeply by its former teachers and Alumni, and by all the communities Immaculate Heart College prepared them to serve.

### **Corita’s Influence on the Order and the College, 1952-1968**

Sister Mary Corita’s journey and that of the Immaculate Heart Order are inextricable. The trajectory of her artwork and her life went hand in hand with the changes occurring in the Order,

particularly in her last 16 years as a nun. When Corita's art began to flourish, winning the Los Angeles County print competition and the California State Fair in 1952, Immaculate Heart College gained more notoriety (though it was already successful). The spirit of loving resistance that always existed within the Order gained strength. When the sisters received directives from Vatican II, they "embraced the call to transformation." (*IHC.org*) As the Order rose to meet the needs of the surrounding community, so too did Corita and her art. She led organization of the 1964 Mary's Day celebration, which was radical in its exuberant expression of faith. A year later, she created "My People," which was a response to LA media's coverage of the Watts Uprising (a six day protest against police violence, according to *Wikipedia's article* on the subject), and her first explicitly political work. Corita sought dispensation of her vows in 1968, a year earlier than the 327 sisters who would go on to found the Immaculate Heart Community. I think it is possible that it was her choice, at least in part, that inspired them. When she died, Corita left her unsold prints and her copyrights to the IHC. They would go on to open the Corita Art Center to honor her work and her legacy.



Image: "My People" (*Corita.org*)

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### **Helpful Links:**

Here is a map of the campus to give a more concrete sense of location:

<https://california.hometownlocator.com/maps/feature-map.ftc.3.fid.243776.n.immaculate%20heart%20college.cfm>

This is the Alumni Facebook page. It is a lovely look at the community the sisters built, and how it lives on today:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/50677328211/>