

Name: Sister Jean Heppler (Sister M. Paschal)
Date of Birth: October 4, 1924
Place of Birth: Oshkosh, Wisconsin
Parents: William N. and Emma (Drexler) Heppler
Religious Profession: August 15, 1943
Date of Death: December 13, 2017
Age: 93
Years Professed: 74



Wake Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Eugenia Frances Heppler was born in Oshkosh, Wisconsin on October 4, 1924 to William and Emma (Drexler) Heppler. She was baptized the next day, October 5th at Sacred Heart Church in Oshkosh. Eugenia took the name Anna when she was confirmed in Sacred Heart Church on October 1, 1939 by Bishop Paul P. Rhode.

Eugenia, who was called Jean, was the youngest of seven children. She grew up in a faith-filled family that held on to meaningful ancestral practices, traditions and customs. Monday night was family night which meant everyone was home to enjoy one another. On Sunday evening each child could invite a friend for supper. During Lent and the months of May and October the family prayed the rosary together each evening. On Holy Saturday the Heppler family would pack a basket with the food that they were going to use for Easter and take it to Church for Father to bless.

Jean attended Sacred Heart School where she got to know her teachers, the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. She also got to know the Sisters of Our Sorrowful Mother through her older sister who worked at Mercy Hospital in Oshkosh. It seems that Jean always wanted to be a Sister. When she was in eighth grade Jean knew that she had to make a decision if she wanted to be a teaching Sister and go to Manitowoc after eighth grade. After making a Novena to Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Our Lady made it clear to her that being a Sister was God's plan for her by making her desire even stronger.

Among Sister Jean's personal items was a reflection that she had written in regard to her vocational call. She wrote, *When I was in the eighth grade I desired a bicycle with all my heart, but I also wanted to be a Sister. One day my Mom said to me, "I'll buy you a bike if you don't go to the Convent." I was highly incensed that she'd say such a thing, so I answered (however, not very kindly), You can keep the bike, I'm going to the Convent! As I look back now, I believe she was testing me to see if I really wanted to be a Sister.*

Jean applied to enter Holy Family Convent and was accepted. Before she entered on June 11, 1940 she experienced another family tradition. When a child left home for their vocation, they knelt before their Dad, whom she called "Pa." Pa gave his blessing for the new life that would begin. Pa did this for

Jean before she left for the Convent. He added, "Remember you are going to a life of sacrifice, but the doors at home are open if you want to come back."

At the time of her Reception, June 11, 1941, Jean received the name of Sister M. Paschal. After Vatican Council II, since the name did not have a special meaning for her, she returned to the form of her baptismal name by which she was known and became Sister Jean.

Sister Jean earned her High School diploma from Holy Family Academy in 1944. She attended Holy Family College and earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree with a Major in History and a Minor in English on July 27, 1962. During the forty some years of ministry in elementary education, Sister Jean taught all the grades from 1 to 8 and was also principal about 20 of those years. After Sister Jean left the ministry of education she served as a nurse assistant, Communications Department Coordinator, Sacristan and was a member of the Prayer Apostolate.

When asked to list her special talents, skills, hobbies and interests she identified: good organization, adaptability, sociable, cooking, driving, typing, teaching, crocheting, knitting, lettering, reading, swimming, crafts, art, music, people, learning more scripture background and keeping up-dated to have the information I need. Sister Jean was conscientious in finding courses for continuing education to fulfill her ministry assignments. When she applied she identified reasons for taking the courses. Some of these included:

- To become more skillful in teaching religion
- To become a more effective teacher
- To be able to interview teachers with more background material
- To become more skillful in the art of listening
- To help me better recognize learning disabilities in students and act upon them
- To learn how to make programs for the computer
- To help me in the Communications Department
- To aid me in my work especially in layout for publication
- To learn more on graphic design
- To help me learn to be a sacristan here at the Motherhouse
- To enhance my knowledge of Scripture which will help me to grow in Spirituality

At the time of her Jubilee Sister Jean reflected, "I am filled with wonder and gratitude to the God who loves me. I believe that God has called me by name, and unworthy as I am, I want to listen and respond to this call. My life has been enriched by the hundredfold promised to us, family and friends who have supported me and challenged me. I have been blessed through the Vows, educational opportunities, unlimited spiritual opportunities and the blessings of our healthcare. I thank God for the deep faith of my parents, my family and my Religious Community who drew the best from me and have helped me to grow."

We also thank God for gifting the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity with Sister Jean's life and witness these past 74 years. May she continue to intercede for us from her eternal resting place.

Eternal rest grant to Sister Jean, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace.