

Name: Sister Maria José Scharinger (Sister San José)
Date of Birth: June 10, 1928
Place of Birth: Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin
Parents: William C. and Ida (Jacoby) Scharinger
Religious Profession: August 15, 1951
Date of Death: July 10, 2018
Age: 90
Years Professed: 71



Wake Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Grace Margaret Scharinger was born on June 10, 1928 to William and Ida (Jacoby) Scharinger in Sheboygan Falls, Wisconsin. She was baptized on June 17, 1928 at St. Mary's Church in Sheboygan Falls.

Grace took the name Mary when she was confirmed at St. Mary's on November 29, 1942. Grace was the fourth youngest of nine children. There were six girls and three boys.

Grace's parents were deeply religious and this witness was inspirational for Grace and her siblings. Her Mom attended daily Mass at St. Mary's Church, which was at the end of the block where they lived. All the neighborhood friends knew that the Scharinger Family had a 7:00 p.m. designated prayer time each evening. Grace's mother died when Grace was 12 years old and her Dad continued the family religious practices. As her older sisters graduated from high school they took turns managing the house with the help of the rest of the siblings. Grace's responsibility after school was to make supper and take care of the three younger children. One of those three siblings is known to us as Sister Dismas.

St. Mary's did not have a Catholic School at the time, so Grace attended the public school which was across the street from their house. In those days she never thought of becoming a Sister until one evening when she was in eighth grade she was talking to her older brother, Joe, about what they valued in life. Joe said to her, "It sounds to me like you want to be a Sister." It took her a year to decide that Joe was right. She did want to become a Sister.

Although no Sisters lived in Sheboygan Falls, Religious were very visible and known in the family. Holy Family Convent was the home of her Grandpa Scharinger's two sisters, Sister Anna and Sister Barbara. Her Dad's two sisters, Sister Mary Teresa and Sister Francis Teresa also were in the Community. There were also several cousins who entered the Convent through the years, including Sister Judith Norwich. It was not surprising when Grace's oldest sister entered

Holy Family Convent and became Sister Teresa Clare. Having received the blessing from her Dad, Grace entered Holy Family Convent on August 15, 1943.

At the time of her Reception, June 13, 1944, Grace wanted a name with some form of Joseph after her brother Joseph. Since there were already many Sisters using that name, Sister Josepha suggested the Spanish form. Grace requested Maria José, however, Mother Perpetua had just visited San José Mission, so Grace became Sister San José.

Sister San José completed her last three years of High School at Holy Family Academy and continued her higher education at Holy Family College. On July 27, 1962 she earned a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in English and minors in History and French. Sister San José received a Masters of Arts Degree from Creighton University, Omaha, NE on August 1, 1969 with a major in English.

The first twenty one years of teaching, Sister San José taught grades one through eight in Wisconsin schools. She taught High School for about 10 years at St. Ambrose in Ironwood and at Roncalli in Manitowoc. In 1980, Sister San José was asked to go to teach at Maria Reina in Lima, Peru. Since she had a masculine name, it was advised to take a feminine name before going to Peru. This is when she got the name of her first choice and became Sister Maria José. The Departure Ceremony for Sister Maria José was on July 19, 1980. During the Evening Prayer Service, Father Walker presented Sister Maria José with her mission cross.

Sister Maria José found all of her years in religious life enjoyable and rewarding, however, the 19 years in Peru meant the most to her. She was always deeply grateful to God and to the Community for giving her this missionary opportunity. Not only did Sister Maria José treasure the Peruvian experience, the people who knew her there also valued all she was and did. In one of her formal yearly evaluations the Principal of Maria Reina School, Mr. Eduardo Pecol, wrote, "Sister Maria José is an excellent English teacher. She is creative, exercises common sense, is careful and clearheaded. She considers her and the school's success as synonymous and welcomes new assignments as opportunities to prove her abilities. Sister Maria José has the ability to grasp a situation and draw correct conclusions. She reaches sound decisions promptly, is not easily disconcerted and is discreet."

Another Principal, Maria Isabel Quinones, affirmed Mr. Pecol's evaluation and added, "She is not just deeply involved with her students' reality, but also with the school and her colleagues, trying to assist them whenever they need her. We can say that she is a role model. She projects her humbleness through her classes and many other virtues and values that are part of the Franciscan Charism. In other words, we can say that she shows through her daily actions the coherence that the Franciscan and Marianist Congregations proclaim."

Sister Maria José left Peru in 1999 and was missioned as laundress in the Convent at Slinger, WI. In 2004 when Slinger closed she came to the Motherhouse to tend gardens and the Coffee Shop. Sister Maria José commented that this was another way to get to know and appreciate our Sisters and to be glad that she was where she was. No matter what she was asked to do, it only mattered that she was serving the Lord. This was her attitude when she had to leave her Coffee Shop ministry and move to St. Rita Health Center the end of May.

When asked what her special talents, skills, hobbies and interests were, Sister Maria José said she liked music, playing the guitar and Medieval Recorder. She was a member of the Guitar Group until this spring when she was having difficulty with her eye-sight. Using her skills of English, French and Spanish, she was also a writer and a translator. Some of Sister Maria José's poems were sold and published in periodicals: The Cord, Franciscan Message, and Our Little Messenger. One of the poems entitled, "If I Could," was published by Pflaum in the July 1961 issue of Our Little Messenger. The poem follows:

If I Could
If I could fly across the years
And order any stop,
I'd ask the man to put me down
Outside St. Joseph's shop.
I'd help him sweep the workshop floor;
I'd bring our Lady joy;
Then maybe they would let me hold
Their little Baby Boy.

Sister Maria José had a deep devotion to St. Joseph. Maybe he accompanied her on Tuesday evening to assist her in the journey to new life in Jesus. Sister Maria José has advice for anyone discerning Religious Life. "Keep your heart open to follow the Lord's guidance. There is no one else so full of surprises or so full of love."

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