

Name: Sister Mary Jane Mertens (Sister Mary Clement)  
Date of Birth: September 4, 1924  
Place of Birth: Kiel, Wisconsin  
Parents: Clemens and Mary ( Marie Menne) Mertens  
Religious Profession: August 15, 1949  
Date of Death: August 18, 2018  
Age: 93  
Years Professed: 75



#### Wake Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Mary Jane Mertens was born on September 4, 1924 to Clemens and Marie (Menne) Mertens in Kiel, Wisconsin. She was baptized at SS. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Kiel on September 7, 1924 and confirmed there on May 23, 1937. Eventually the family grew to number ten children, six boys and four girls.

The family farm where Mary Jane grew up was located two miles west of Kiel. When Mary Jane was nine years old her Grandpa and Grandma Mertens came to live with Mary Jane's family. In a Jubilee reflection Mary Jane wrote, "The family table in our kitchen was the center of much family history. It was there that we shared, not only food, but our stories and lives. Lots of laughs could be heard. Arguments were settled by looking it up in the encyclopedia that her mother had saved from her teaching days. Many rosaries were prayed kneeling at the kitchen chairs around the table during Lent and during times of special need. After supper Dad and the older boys did the milking and the rest of us cleaned up and had play time. Then the table became a school room for us to do our lessons."

Mary Jane and her siblings walked the two miles to Church and to School. This is most likely where Mary Jane developed a great love for walking. If they hurried, however, they sometimes got a ride from Sister Lucy and Sister Marie Bernadette Dorn's Dad who was going their way.

Mary Jane met the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity when she went to SS Peter and Paul School. In all of her growing up years, she always wanted to be a Sister. When she was in the eighth grade her mother said to her, "If you want to be a Sister, we had better go to see what it is like." After getting a tour of the Motherhouse and meeting with Mother Generose, Mary Jane came home with application papers. Her brothers said that she would be back within two weeks! We know that this did not happen!

Mary Jane was accepted and entered Holy Family Convent in August 1938. At the time of her Reception June 13, 1941 she received the name, Sister Mary Clement, after her Mother and Father. It was after Vatican Council II that Sister Mary Clement returned to her Baptismal name, Sister Mary Jane. In August 1944, six years after Sister Mary Jane came to the Convent, her sister, Doris, entered Holy Family Convent. We knew her as Sister Dorothy Ann and later as Sister Doris. Sister Doris ended her earthly journey on June 3, 2013.

Sister Mary Jane earned her High School Diploma in 1942 from Holy Family Academy. In 1951 she earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Holy Family College with a Major in Mathematics and Minors in French and in Education. She earned a Master's Degree in the Teaching of Mathematics in 1967 from the University of Santa Clara in California. In 1987 she earned a Master's Degree in Pastoral Studies from Loyola University, New Orleans, LA.

Sister Mary Jane began her teaching ministry in primary grades which she enjoyed very much. Her gifts for teaching older students were recognized and she was assigned to teach in high school. She had varied cultural and ministry experiences in Wisconsin, Michigan, Nebraska, Arizona, Hawaii and Mississippi which she found to be personally enriching. Sister Mary Jane loved life! Along with teaching and learning she enjoyed doing crafts, reading, playing Cribbage, camping with the family, outdoor activities and adult education.

As she began to experience some health decline, Sister Mary Jane returned to the Motherhouse in 2008. She became a member of the Prayer Apostolate, praying for the Tucson, Arizona Ministries. She moved to St. Rita Health Center in 2010 when she needed more personal care.

This past August 15<sup>th</sup>, Sister Mary Jane celebrated her 75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee of Profession as a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. She enjoyed Community and Family celebrations immensely! A lasting memory of Sister Mary Jane and her Jubilee is a gift of butterfly bushes from family members. They are blooming and attracting lots of butterflies, sign of new life! Sister Mary Jane would glory in this symbolism. This coming Sunday, August 26<sup>th</sup> the Diocese of Green Bay will have the celebration for all the 2018 Sister Jubilarians. Sister Mary Jane will be there in spirit.

In comments for her 75<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Sister Mary Jane wrote for *The Compass*, "Jesus has helped me to live my religious life. He blesses by His presence. Jesus is with us all the time. He loves everyone beyond words, no matter what a person has been or done in their life." In *The Sampling* Sister Mary Jane was asked, "What advice would she give to a young woman seeking the Lord in our religious way of life?" Reflecting on her life experiences she responded, "To learn to live the vows, to live in union with the many Sisters you live with in Community and all those lives you touch through your ministry and remember that God always gives the graces!"

In her words, Sister Mary Jane has been to the mountain, struggled through the valleys and arrived at this time in her life. She has shared at the daily table of the Eucharist, the table of family and Community and the table of ministry. Monday night, August 18<sup>th</sup>, Sister Mary Jane accepted the invitation to enjoy her eternal reward at the banquet table with the Lord and the Communion of Saints.

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