

Name: Sister Mary Louise Skutz
Date of Birth: May 10, 1925
Place of Birth: Cross Village, Michigan
Parents: John Joseph and Helen Veronica (Guzior) Skoczylas (Skutz)
Religious Profession: June 14, 1947
Date of Death: August 25, 2018
Age: 93
Years Professed: 71



Wake Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Sophie Mary Rose Skoezylas was born on May 10, 1925 to John Joseph and Helen Veronica (Guzior) Skoczylas in Cross Village, Michigan. She was the third youngest of nine children. She was baptized on May 17, 1925 at Holy Cross Church in Cross Village. Sophie was confirmed there on May 20, 1941.

Sophie's parents immigrated to the United States from Poland and met in Camden, New Jersey. After they married, they worked to save money to buy 40 acres of farmland twenty four miles from the Mackinaw Bridge. This is where Sophie was born. She had four brothers and four Sisters. When she and her siblings were old enough to attend school they went to Holy Cross Grade School where the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity taught. The Franciscan Friars were the priests in the parish. Her parents chose the Catholic School over the nearby Public School because they wanted their children to learn the Catholic Faith.

After her grade school was completed, Sophie moved to Petoskey, Michigan and attended St. Francis Xavier High School where the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity taught. Sister Gabriel Kerner was the music teacher and taught Sophie to play the piano accordion. Her favorite teachers were Sister Ann Patrick Graney and Sister Margaret Krueger. These Sisters planted and nurtured the seed for Sophie's vocation. They were easy to talk to about anything that was a concern. They helped Sophie discern her vocation through their affirmation and encouragement, through their loving care and understanding. Sophie had won the Valedictorian Scholarship to St. Mary's Nursing College in Grand Rapids, Michigan. She told the Sisters that she would check out the idea of being a Sister after nursing College. Sister Gabriel was to have told her, "Don't give your old bones to Jesus. Go now! We have training for nursing and three hospitals you can nurse in."

Sophie did listen to Sister Gabriel's advice. She wrote the following letter to Mother Perpetua dated June 8, 1945:

I will endeavor to write this letter tonight even though I don't know how to say what I have in mind. No doubt my name is not altogether unfamiliar to you, for Sister Louis Gonzaga has written that she mentioned me to you. She has also probably told you of my aspiration to be a nun. That is my reason for writing this letter. I've had the desire to be a nun for some time and I'm almost sure I'd like to live the rest of my life as one. At least I'd like to go to the Convent to see if I really have the vocation. I have spoken to Sister Patricia, the superior here, Sister Gabriel and to Father Austin. They have been very

*helpful. I hope I have the necessary qualifications. Would you please send me further information?
Thank you very much.*

Sincerely yours, Sophie Skutz

Mother Perpetua responded to Sophie's letter and Sophie wrote her back on June 25, 1945.

I have received your very nice letter and was happy to hear from you. I intended to answer sooner but I had to wait till a couple of other things were taken care of. I am glad to say though that I shall be able to come in August as I have planned and as you suggested. I haven't my mother's consent yet, but when I go home in July I am sure that I can convince her. I am really very anxious to see the Convent, you and everything.

I have already obtained the statements of the doctor and dentist, and I'm mailing them along with my application blank. There is one thing about it that I'd like to explain and that is in regard to my name. Since the time that I was a child, my parents have gone by the name of Skutz when legally our name is Skoczylas. I see now that it was an unwise thing to do, because there is no reason of importance for doing so except that it was easier to pronounce and spell. My parents did not seem to care and I, not realizing, have always used the name. I feel that I should go by my real name hereafter unless it doesn't make any difference now, but I thought I should tell you.

Thank you very much for including me in the Community prayers. I, too, am praying that all turns out well. I am sure it will. May God bless you!

Sincerely yours, Sophie

Sophie was accepted and she entered Holy Family Convent on August 19, 1945. At the time of her Reception, June 13, 1946, Sophie received the name Sister Mary Louise. Her new name signified to her that she was leaving life in the world and entering Religious Life, becoming a Bride of Christ.

Sister Mary Louise attended Holy Family College receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1964 with a Major in Education and a Minor in Natural Science. Through the National Science Foundation Scholarship Sister Mary Louise earned a Masters in Science in 1971 from Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, Oklahoma. Due to health concerns Sister Mary Louise was encouraged to apply for the Extension Society's Master's Degree in Biblical, Sacramental and Moral Theology and Religious Studies. She applied and received the scholarship. In 1976 she earned a Master's Degree in Religious Education from Fordham University in Bronx, New York.

Sister Mary Louise did not become a nurse, however, she kept her love for the sciences. There was a need for teachers in the Community, so for 18 of 28 years she taught Science to Junior High and High School students in Wisconsin and Michigan. Sister Mary Louise ministered as a Pastoral Minister and Catechist. She was a Sponsor Presence at Holy Family Memorial Medical Center and was a care-giver for her sister. Sister Mary Louise was a member of the Prayer Apostolate praying for the General Administration. This really meant praying for the whole Community! She joined her suffering to those of Jesus for the conversion of sinners and to get ready for Heaven and the Divine Mercy assured her. Reflecting on all the various faith experiences she had as a Religious, Sister Mary Louise said, "My most rewarding one is to know I have helped many people to know Jesus better and to have done God's Will by following His plan for my life on earth. I want to thank my Community, my care-givers, my family and friends for all the help given me along the way to know, to do and to live out God's Will."

Eternal rest grant to Sister Mary Louise, O, Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in God's peace and in His Divine Mercy. Amen!