

Name: Sister Judith Norwick (Sister Mary Isaac)
Date of Birth: April 26, 1940
Place of Birth: Rice Lake, Wisconsin
Parents: John and Dorothy (Schneider) Norwick
Religious Profession: August 15, 1959
Date of Death: June 25, 2019
Age: 79
Years Professed: 59



Wake Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Judith Ann Norwick was the first of seven children born to John and Dorothy (Schneider) Norwick on April 26, 1940 in Rice Lake, Wisconsin. She was baptized on May 12, 1940 in St. Joseph Church in Rice Lake. Judy made her First Holy Communion in Second Grade on April 18, 1948 and received the Sacrament of Confirmation in Seventh Grade on April 4, 1954.

Judy attended St. Joseph School in Rice Lake for nine years. This is where she met the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Judy began thinking about going to the Convent in the Seventh Grade. She knew other girls from the Parish who entered Holy Family Convent. Her one hesitation was her perception that Sisters went to summer school forever! Despite this drawback Judy wrote the following letter to Mother Edna dated February 19, 1955.

Last year I talked to Monsignor Meyer and he told me that I should wait until I finish the ninth grade. I have been praying for two years and I think that our Lord is calling me to Religious Life. I am the oldest of six children. My parents think that I should wait until after high school, but of course, we have no Catholic High School here. Would you please accept me as a candidate? Thank you very much and may God bless your work. Sincerely, Judy Norwick

Judy wrote another letter dated July 21, 1955.

Dear Rev. Mother,

I am writing to let you know that I will not be coming to Manitowoc for school this fall. I am attending the Villa St. Scholastica in Duluth and am not sure if I will enter the Convent after graduation or not. Thank you for giving me permission to attend Reception in June. I appreciated it very much. I spoke to Sister Gladys, principal at Rice Lake last year, and she told me to write and tell you that I will not be coming in August. Thank you very much. Sincerely, Judy Norwick

When Judy was home for the Easter vacation that year she visited with Sister Gladys. Sister Gladys once again encouraged Judy to write to Mother Edna. The following letter, dated April 18, 1956, was Judy's response to Mother Edna.

Dear Mother,

I received your letter on Monday. I hope this will be the information you need. First of all, my mother wanted me to go to St. Scholastica because it was so close to home and I would be able to come home every six weeks. I was not entirely opposed to that idea, but after a few months, I realized that I really wanted to become a Franciscan Sister. Since I had the Franciscans in grade school, I feel that I know them better. It was during our retreat in January that I decided I wasn't going back to Duluth next year. I then talked to Sister Romanus, the prefect, and she said that it would be good if I went to Manitowoc to become a Franciscan. My mother approves of my entering at Manitowoc in August. I hope that you will find me acceptable. Thank you very much. Sincerely, Judy Norwick

Judy was accepted and entered Holy Family Convent on August 22, 1956. She finished her High School education in Holy Family Academy and was received into the Novitiate on June 13, 1958. Judy was given the name, Sister Mary Isaac, after the North American martyr, Saint Isaac Jogues. This name was appropriate, since in her application paper, Judy wrote that she was most interested in doing missionary work to save souls, not only her own but others as well. Sister Mary Isaac returned to her Baptismal name after Vatican Council II gave this permission.

Sister Judy earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Holy Family College in 1970 with a Major in English and a Minor in Mathematics. She taught Grades 5 and 6 in Wisconsin schools for 22 years. Along with teaching, Sister Judy dealt with cancer. Because this was draining on her, she asked for a year off. This turned out to be 32 years out of the classroom! After that one year off to be a driver and secretary for Sister Phyllis Schouten, Sister Judy returned to the classroom to help adults in Ohio who were working for their High School Diploma. In the years that followed, she very much enjoyed parish ministry and catechesis in Ohio, Wisconsin, Nebraska and Mississippi. Sister Judy was generous in offering her time and energy to help anyone in need in the parish and school. She loved to visit the homebound, the hospitalized or those in nursing homes, and help in the local food pantry. Sister Judy always had a smile, a greeting and knew no strangers.

She enjoyed sports, reading, tutoring small groups in math and ministry among the poor. She enjoyed helping and ministering for our Sisters in St. Rita Health Center. Sister Judy left Greenwood in June and was looking forward to being a part of the St. Francis Convent Community. She was looking forward to celebrating her 60th Jubilee with her family, Community and friends. Sister Judy volunteered to proclaim the First Reading from the Prophet Isaiah for the Jubilee Mass. The reading speaks of Jerusalem, however, the words fit Sister Judy, too. "Rejoice and be glad because of her, all you who love her, exult, exult with her, all you who were mourning over her!"

In a reflection that she wrote on her life as a Franciscan Sister she wrote, "I am still amazed at all the unique experiences I have had! I've been very fortunate to be able to do so many interesting things, to go to so many different places and to meet so many wonderful people. I am grateful to the Community and my family who have always been supportive. I am most grateful to God who set His heart on me and chose me, not because I was the greatest, but for love of me." For love of Sister Judy, God called her home on Tuesday. Her death was not expected, however, Sister Judy leaves us one last lesson, to always be ready to answer God's call!
May Sister Judy rest in peace. Amen!