

Name: Sister Mary Hugh Kerkhof
Date of Birth: January 1, 1928
Place of Birth: Hollandtown, Wisconsin
Parents: William and Kathryn (Jackels) Kerkhof
Religious Profession: August 15, 1946
Date of Death: August 23, 2020
Age: 92
Years Professed: 74



Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Mary Rose Kerkhof was born on New Year's Day, January 1, 1928. She was the seventh child of William and Kathryn (Jackels) Kerkhof from Hollandtown, Wisconsin. She was baptized at St. Francis Church in Hollandtown on January 5, 1928 by Father Louis Van Oeffel. Mary Rose was confirmed there on April 17, 1938 by Bishop Paul P. Rhode.

There were eleven children, six boys and five girls in the Kerkhof family. Three children between Mary Rose and her younger sister died as small children. Mary Rose and her siblings attended St. Francis School in Hollandtown, which included two years of High School. In March of her sophomore year there was a study of the three walks of life, the married life, single life and religious life. Mary Rose thought seriously about this and finally went to Sister Jane Francis Doolan and told her that she was interested in going to the Convent to become a Sister.

Mary Rose was very familiar with Sisters and the religious life. She was taught by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. She had a first cousin in the Community, Sister Cyrilla Jackels, who was a couple of years older than she was. Mary Rose also had five aunts, her father's sisters, who were Perpetually Professed members of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity: Sister Ignatius, Sister Everildis, Sister Theonella, Sister Eileen and Sister Merilda. In years to follow, a niece, Sister Rochelle Kerkhof, would join the Community and be added to the litany of women Religious in the Jackels/Kerkhof Family.

In a letter dated May 21, 1943 Mary Rose wrote the following letter to Mother Perpetua:

Dear Mother Perpetua,

I've come to seek admittance at Alverno. For the past ten years I've been attending school at St. Francis, Hollandtown and I think I'd like to follow in the footsteps of the Sisters I've been with for years. I think, Mother, you'll recognize me as Sister Theonella's niece. If you wish to know more about me, she'll be happy to answer any inquiries. You can talk to Sister Jane Francis, too.

I trust that my petition to enter may be granted. Hoping to receive a favorable reply, I am...

Sincerely yours, Mary Rose Kerkhof

Mother Perpetua did respond with a letter on May 27, 1943 and sent Mary Rose the Application Form and other blanks. Mary Rose was accepted and entered Holy Family Convent on August 22, 1943. On her Reception Day, June 13, 1944 Mary Rose received the name Sister Mary Hugh. Sister Mary Hugh aimed to live up to the meaning of her name, to use her mind, heart and spirit to be an inspiration for others and to use the intelligence that God gave her for the good of others.

Sister Mary Hugh completed her high school education at Holy Family Academy in 1945. She earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Holy Family College in 1958 with a major in Education and a minor in English. Sister Mary Hugh spent all of her 74 years of Religious Life ministering in the state of Wisconsin. She taught 47 years with 24 of those years also serving as principal. Continuing to use her gifts and talents, Sister Mary Hugh was coordinator at St. Paul Manor in Kaukauna for eight years and then moved to Holy Family Convent to minister as an assistant in our Health Services.

In 2012, Sister Mary Hugh was called to live the Gospel and serve God's people in St. Rita Health Center. Sister Mary Hugh was quite witty and humorous making pithy comments. She demonstrated a spirit of contentment and peacefulness even as she struggled with health issues and the aging process. She lovingly accepted her sufferings and limitations to participate in Christ's work of redemption, praying daily for the Green Bay Ministries.

Sister Mary Hugh lived her life to the fullest. She died in the 74th Anniversary of her Religious Profession. We thank God for the gift of Sister Mary Hugh's life, example and years of service as a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. In a previous Jubilee reflection Sister Mary Hugh wrote: *I am grateful to God for calling me to Religious Life. There is great peace, joy and satisfaction in being able to reach out to so many people and to spend my life working totally to help spread God's Kingdom with my Franciscan Sisters. My life has been enriched by the people whom I have worked with, friends who have supported me and the challenges I have faced. I greatly appreciate and thank my family and teachers who were a great influence to me in my early years and helped me along the way. I am also grateful to my Religious Community of Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity for their companionship and for the spiritual and educational opportunities provided me to help me in my work and grow in God's love.*

On Sunday evening, Sister Mary Hugh gave herself up completely and handed herself over to Our Lord. Sister Mary Hugh will be buried on August 26th, the day before her Feast Day. Eternal Life grant to Sister Mary Hugh, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. AMEN.