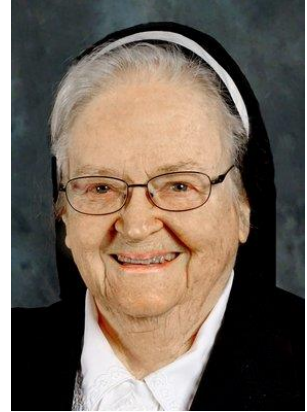


Name: Sister Virgine Van Thull
Date of Birth: February 21, 1933
Place of Birth: Kimberly, Wisconsin
Parents: Anton and Evelyn (Stattery) Van Thull
Religious Profession: August 15, 1956
Date of Death: September 21, 2020
Age: 87
Years Professed: 64



Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Mary Elizabeth was born on February 21, 1933 to Anton and Evelyn (Slattery) Van Thull. The family included two half-brothers, four half-sisters one older brother and one younger sister. Mary Elizabeth was baptized at Holy Name Church, Kimberly, Wisconsin on February 26, 1933 and received the Sacrament of Confirmation there on April 25, 1945.

Mary was taught by the Dominican Sisters at Holy Name Grade School from grades one to eight. She attended Kimberly High School, graduating at the top of her class on May 31, 1951. One of her great joys was playing the flute in the High School Band. It was at that time that Mary was accepted as a special student at Lawrence College to advance in her flute playing musical skills.

After completing high school, Mary worked as a dental assistant and did office work. Father Earl Schuh recognized the potential of Mary's vocation to become a Sister. He encouraged Mary to attend a ten-day training program called Grailville, an international woman's movement, in Loveland, Ohio. One of the main topics was "Liturgy is the Normal School of Sanctity for the Laity." The following October Mary returned to join their fifteen-month training program. After she completed the program Father asked her to go someplace where she would come in contact with Sisters.

It was at this time that Mary entered the Racine Dominican Congregation as a Postulant. This is the Community that her sister, Sister Theresa, had entered. Mary was there as a Postulant and left. After she returned home, a friend acquainted her with the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Mary visited Holy Family Convent where she was greeted by Sister Virginia Marie Roll. Mary was given a tour of the Motherhouse and met many welcoming greetings and smiles along the way. After Mary returned home, she wrote the following letter to Mother Edna, dated June 20, 1954:

Dear Mother,

I was in the Convent this afternoon with the idea of asking for an appointment to tell my story. I was given much more than that though! It was an enjoyable afternoon.

Would you please consider my application? As Sister told me this afternoon, you have found that some girls have extra challenges adjusting, when they have been in another Convent like I have been. I would like to say that this will be a going forward for me. Yes, if God sees fit to lead me to your Community, there will be no looking back, only gratitude for His goodness. If you would like to talk to me before sending the application blanks, I will gladly come in at your convenience.

Thank you very much for the kindness this afternoon. I hardly expected this, especially on such a busy day. I will be waiting to hear from you with great hopes that I may be found worthy to go "To God Through St. Francis." My prayers are with you.

Gratefully, Mary Van Thull

Mary was sent the application blanks and her Pastor wrote the following letter of recommendation:

Venerable Mother Edna:

Received June 28th your request concerning Mary Van Thull. In reply I would say, according to me, Mary has a vocation to Religious Life. Of course, some edges will have to be polished somewhat.

Respectfully, Father C. B. Vanden Borne

Mary was accepted and entered Holy Family Convent on August 22, 1954. When Mary was received into the Novitiate, June 13, 1955, she was given the name, Sister Virgine. She wanted a name associated with our Blessed Mother, since devotion to Mary and praying the Rosary were important in her family.

Sister Virgine attended Holy Family College earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree, May 18, 1969 with a Major in History and a Minor in English. She attended Aquinas College in Grand Rapids, Michigan where she earned a Master's Degree in Religious Education in 1977.

Sister Virgine was a classroom teacher in grades five through eight for 17 years and a Religious Education instructor for 13 years. When Sister Virgine taught at Catholic Central in West Point Nebraska, she was involved in Peer Ministry, which was a way to help High School students use their talents and faith in being active members in the Church and supportive of one another. She held that everyone had special gifts that needed to be celebrated when they were used well. This was one of the main ideas she carried with her from the Grail. Another idea was that a person belonged where they were needed. Helping others never ends. There is always something a person can give, something they can contribute. Sister Virgine demonstrated this in the beautiful cakes she decorated for our Jubilee celebrations.

For 30 years Sister Virgine used her gifts and talents making crafts and doing outreach projects. Seventeen of those years she was the Craft Room Coordinator. She had a great love for the poor. Along with the help of other Sisters, thousands of items were made over the years including bibs, caps, blankets, scarves, Cuddle Pups and other stuffed animals, that were distributed to cancer patients, people in nursing homes, assisted living facilities and outreach facilities in Manitowoc, including The Crossing, The Cancer Center, Pediatric Center and the Linus Project. Sister Virgine knew that she was blessed in so many ways. She wanted others to share in her blessings, gifts and talents.

In her Jubilee reflection Sister Virgine wrote, "My heart is filled with gratitude for every memory and experience I have had. The challenges helped me to grow. My life is a gift from God as well as a gift to God. I have had so many opportunities to learn from others, my family, my Sisters, the students and their families. I was inspired by them to always do my best. My answer to anyone leaning toward this life is for the person to take advice from Mary, Jesus' Mother. 'Do whatever He tells you to do!'"

Thank you, Sister Virgine, for listening to Our Blessed Mother's advice to say yes, to be a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. May you rest in peace. Amen!