



Name: Sister Karen Krahenbuhl (Sister Donata)
Date of Birth: February 9, 1937
Place of Birth: Rice Lake, Wisconsin
Parents: Donald Philip and Annabel Gertrude (Oettinger) Krahenbuhl
Religious Profession: August 15, 1956
Date of Death: January 28, 2021
Age: 83
Years Professed: 64

Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Karen Ann Krahenbuhl was the first-born child born to Donald and Annabel (Oettinger) Krahenbuhl in Rice Lake, Wisconsin on February 9, 1937. Karen was baptized at St. Joseph Church on February 12, 1937. She took the name Theresa when she was confirmed there by Bishop Albert G. Meyer on April 30, 1950. Karen has a younger sister, Jean, who was born a year after Karen.

Karen attended first grade in a public school in Barron, Wisconsin, where her dad worked in a creamery. Her parents transferred Karen to St. Joseph Catholic School in Rice Lake for second grade. This is where she met her first Sisters, the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. When she went home for lunch she excitedly told her mother that all the teachers were Sisters and everyone's first name was Sister! Since she missed preparation for First Communion the previous year. She and a few other second graders who missed sacramental preparation went to the first grade classroom for lessons from Sister Claretta Doerfler. Sister Helen Kelbel was her teacher the second half of the year. Both of these Sisters made a great impression on Karen. She told her mother that she wanted to grow up to be just like them. When her mother told her dad, he thought it was way too young to make such a decision.

When Karen was in the ninth grade she once again talked to her parents about going to the Convent to be a Sister. At first her Dad said that she had to finish High School. Someone talked to her Dad and convinced him to let Karen enter the Convent as a sophomore. Her mother and dad gave their blessing with the stipulation that she had to stay for the whole year.

In a letter dated January 9, 1952, Karen wrote the following letter:

Dear Rev. Mother M. Edna,

I am interested in your order of nuns. I have been thinking seriously of my vocation. My name is Karen Krahenbuhl. I'm fourteen years old and in the ninth grade.

Will you accept me into your Convent?

*Sincerely,
Karen Krahenbuhl*

As part of the application process, her Pastor wrote the following message dated August 18, 1952:

Karen Krahenbuhl is personally known to me for the past six years. She is a girl of good, sound character, studious and dependable. I hope you will find her a satisfactory candidate for the Order.

*Msgr. Peter F. Meyer
Pastor of St. Joseph Parish*

Karen was accepted and entered Holy Family Convent in August 1952. She completed her high school in Holy Family Academy, receiving her Diploma in 1955. On June 13, 1955 Karen was received into the Novitiate and was given the name Sister Donata, which was a form of her father's name. When Sisters could return to their baptismal name, Sister Donata became known as Sister Karen. Sister Karen followed her dad's request to stay that first full year. At the end of that year and for every year that followed until he died, her dad asked if she was content and happy at the Convent. He would have warmly welcomed her back home if she wasn't.

Sister Karen attended Holy Family College and earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1967 with a Major in English and a Minor in Education. She went on to earn a Masters Degree in Education from Marquette University in Milwaukee in 1975. Sister Karen taught the elementary school grades for sixteen years before she was missioned to the Menominee Reservation where she taught fifth and sixth graders and was also principal for eight years.

What grew to be the love of her ministry years was being assigned to Pisinemo, Arizona, home to the Papago and Pima Native Americans. Here she did Village Ministry, where she visited the sick, conducted monthly Baptism classes as well as parent and student classes for First Penance and First Communion in the villages of Pisinemo, Gu Vo, Hickewon, Santa Cruz and Gunshot. Sister Karen was a good listener for the people. She encouraged and challenged them in practicing their religion and working together to support one another. Her efforts resulted in more of the adults taking responsibility of catechizing their children and taking ownership in caring for the needs in their Village Churches.

After five years in Village Ministry, Sister Karen moved to the San Solano Mission in Topawa, Arizona. Here she served as Administrative Secretary, working in the Mission Office and visiting the Tohono O'odham People in the villages of the pastoral area, going South to the border of Mexico. She helped to implement a systematic training, "Builders of the New Earth Program", to prepare the O'odham for leadership in their Faith Community.

Sister Karen returned to Holy Family Convent when she had health complications. She provided service to the Community in many ways until she needed to use a wheelchair. Sister Karen moved to St. Rita Health Center in 2002 to receive the care that she needed. She enjoyed doing needlepoint, crewel embroidery and was an avid reader. Sister Karen had a deep love for the Southwest and the horses that she met there. She had a good sense of humor and shared that joy with her caregivers.

In her Jubilee reflection Sister Karen wrote, "As a member of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, I have learned to live and grow in knowledge of the Lord." She found encouragement in a quote from Isaiah 30:15, *By waiting and by calm you shall be saved, in quiet and rest your strength lies.* She went on to write, "I am thankful for my loving parents who taught me how to think for myself and always supported me in my life decisions. To my sister, Jean, and all those with whom I have shared my life, know that I keep all of you in prayer before the altar each day." We trust that Sister Karen will now intercede for all of us from her eternal resting place. Thank you, Sister Karen! May you rest in peace.