

Name: Sister Mary Lee Schommer
Date of Birth: May 16, 1942
Place of Birth: Kaukauna, Wisconsin
Parents: Raymond William and Rosalia Ann (Wydeven) Schommer
Religious Profession: August 15, 1961
Date of Death: February 17, 2022
Age: 79
Years Professed: 60



Wake Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Mary Ann Schommer was born in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Appleton, WI on May 16, 1942 to Raymond William and Rosalia Ann (Wydeven) Schommer. She was baptized at St. Mary's Church in Kaukauna on May 31, 1942 and confirmed there on November 13, 1955. Mary Ann had three older brothers, Ray, Dan and Mark, and was the youngest in the family. Her brothers were disappointed that she wasn't a boy because they wanted to start a basketball team!

The Catholic faith was very important to the Schommer family. They were active in all parish activities and all the children were sent to St. Mary's Catholic School in Kaukauna for Grades K to 8. The Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity staffed the school. Mary Ann liked her Kindergarten teacher, Sister Beata Warneck. Mary Ann had seen the example of volunteering from her parents, so she volunteered her Dad to make fifty chairs for Sister Beata's classroom. Sister had fifty students in the morning and fifty in the afternoon, so fifty chairs were enough! As the project neared completion, her Dad told Mary Ann to keep her hands in her lap and not to volunteer him any more unless she asked him first.

Mary Ann grew to like all the Sister teachers who very much influenced her vocation. While in 8th Grade she talked to her Dad and Mom about being a Sister. With their approval, she wrote the following letter dated December 13, 1955:

Venerable Mother Edna,

My name is Mary Ann Schommer. I am 13 years old and attend the 8th Grade at St. Mary's. I have been praying hard and thinking of joining your Community for some time. I have talked to my teacher, Sister Mary Ann, and to the Pastor, Reverend Father Peter A. Salm of St. Mary's Church. I feel that God is calling me to this state of life. I have my parent's permission to enter the Convent after eighth grade. Would you please send me a registration blank and any other information I may need to prepare for my entrance?

*Sincerely in Christ,
Mary Ann Schommer*

Mother Edna did send Mary Ann application forms and other needed health documents to be returned. A letter of recommendation from her pastor was dated January 18, 1956:

Venerable Sisters:

Mary Ann Schommer has informed me that she has applied for admittance in your Religious Community. This coming June she graduates from St. Mary's Parochial School. As a student of our Parochial School, she was always sincere in her work, friendly to her fellow-students, respectful towards her teachers, regular in the reception of the Sacraments, irreproachable in her morals and habits. Consequently, I recommend her most highly to become a member of your esteemed Community.

*Sincerely yours in Christ,
Rev. Peter A. Salm, Pastor*

Her teacher, Sister Mary Ann, also sent an overview of Mary Ann's accountability as an 8th Grade student. Her report included excellence in scholarship, attendance and work habits. Mary Ann was reported to be very obedient and conscientious. She memorized rapidly and played flute in the school band. Her medical history form was dated February 10, 1956. Her Doctor included, in part, the following letter:

Reverend Mother Superior or To Whom It May Concern:

I have delayed Mary Ann Schommer's physical examination and medical history. Mary Ann has a congenital heart disease and, in the fall of 1948, she developed Rheumatic Fever and was kept at bed rest for some months. She has made a very good recovery, but has kept a slightly enlarged heart and is prone to be susceptible to virus infections. After careful examination, I wish that Mary Ann might have an opportunity to try and qualify for what I feel is her vocation and therefore, I am more than half recommending her for admission. I feel that observation and further study might find her better fitted physically than is apparent at the present time.

*Yours very truly,
A. E. Bachhuber, M.D.*

Mary Ann was accepted and entered Holy Family Convent on August 22, 1956. She completed her High School in Holy Family Academy, receiving her Diploma June 1, 1960. Two weeks later on June 13th, Mary Ann was received into the Novitiate. Having been born in the month of May and being named in honor of the Blessed Mother, Mary Ann was pleased to be given the name, Sister Mary Lee.

Sister Mary Lee continued her education at Silver Lake College of the Holy Family where she earned a Bachelor of Art's Degree in Elementary Education with a Major in History and a Minor in English. In 1979 Sister Mary Lee earned a Master's Degree in Education Administration in the

Elementary School from the University of Dayton in Ohio. Recognizing the great needs of students and families during her years of being teacher and administrator, Sister Mary Lee studied at the Washington University in St. Louis, MO. She completed the course work and earned a Master's Degree in Social Work in August 1992.

Sister Mary Lee used the social work education to teach classroom guidance as well as counsel individual children and their families. In her Jubilee Year Sister Mary Lee reflected, "I tasted the goodness of the Lord in my ministry of being a principal, and a teacher in Catholic Schools for 24 years. This truly was an experience of God's goodness in my life. It was a privilege to minister to families and their children in a Catholic School and Parish, where knowing, loving and serving God was the priority." (*The Compass*, July 30, 2021) One of many former students stated that they had many fond memories of Sister Mary Lee. She was a great leader and always had time for each person who came to talk with her.

Sister Mary Lee served in several Community service and leadership roles during her lifetime. She liked to read and do crafts, walk and ride bike. She also loved to sing. Most of all, she loved the Green Bay Packers! She said that she was blessed to be like her Mom. They both talked a lot and they liked children. The qualities she acquired from her Dad were understanding and having a good sense of humor. At the time of her Jubilee she also reflected on her many blessings. She was grateful for the faith of her Dad and Mom which they instilled in her. She thanked God for her brothers and her sisters-in-law, her nieces and nephews.

Due to having some limitations because of Parkinson's Disease, Sister Mary Lee moved to St. Rita's Health Center in June 2012. She was especially grateful for the help and support she got from the Sisters throughout her life, as well as the nursing care she received for the past ten years. A meaningful Scripture verse from the Prophet Micah 6:8 gave Sister Mary Lee encouragement and direction every day: *This is what the Lord asks of you, only this: Act justly, Love tenderly, Walk humbly with your God.* In Sister Mary Lee's words, "This verse, from Micah, is all encompassing, covering every situation and action of life. I thank God for the past, celebrate the present and journey into the future with hope and joy."

Thank you, Sister Mary Lee, for being a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. We can only imagine the great reunion when we all end our earthly journey and meet again. Thank you for being a blessing in the lives of so many people. Your smile, humming and sense of humor will remain in memories. Please intercede for the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity as we journey into the future with hope and joy.

Eternal Life grant to Sister Mary Lee, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon her. May she rest in peace. Amen!