



Name: Sister Mary Jerome Wensel  
Date of Birth: March 20, 1933  
Place of Birth: Antigo, Wisconsin  
Parents: Glenn Albert and Antonia Marie (Mares) Wensel  
Religious Profession: August 15, 1953  
Date of Death: January 4, 2023  
Age: 89  
Years Professed: 69

Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Donna Mae was born to Glenn Albert and Antonia Marie (Mares) Wensel on March 20, 1933 in a hospital in Antigo. Her mother died four days after Donna Mae was born. Her maternal grandparents, Charles and Cecilia Mares, who lived in Elcho, Wisconsin, raised Donna Mae. Her father lived with them for several years and eventually married her step-mother, Adeline Bush.

Donna Mae's grandparents were her God-parents when she was Baptized at Holy Family Church in Elcho on April 2, 1933 by Father Theodore Verbeten. She took the name Margaret when the Most Rev. Stanislaus V. Bona administered the Sacrament of Confirmation there on October 22, 1945. Her sponsor was an Aunt, Blanche Davis, her mother's sister.

Donna Mae was very sick, as a child, and her grandmother spent a lot of time caring for her. Her grandmother died in 1944 when Donna Mae was eleven years old, so she was raised by her grandfather. She helped him on their small farm and helped to care for the horses.

Donna Mae attended Elcho Grade School and the first two years of the consolidated Elcho High School. She loved working with the horses and wanted to be a horsewoman, a cowgirl or something to do with horses, or maybe a nurse. In the summer, the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity from Holy Family Convent taught Catechism classes. Donna Mae enjoyed attending the Catechism classes and visiting with the Sisters. She was especially influenced by Sister Servatia Hoffmann in her desire to be a Sister. Among other circumstances that God put in her path, there was a connection that was striking to Donna Mae. Her home Parish was Holy Family and the Sisters were from Holy Family Convent. She believed that Our Lord was saying to her, "I have chosen you."

Mother Edna received the following letter dated May 9, 1950:

*Dear Reverend Mother,*

*I met the Sisters at Elcho last summer while they were teaching Catechism and spoke to them about entering the Convent. I am living with my Grandfather and he has promised to let me go to the Convent this summer. Would you please send me an application blank? I would like to know what articles I will be expected to bring with me. I hope and pray that I may someday be a Sister.*

*Very Gratefully yours,*

*Donna Wensel*

Donna Mae's pastor wrote the following letter of recommendation dated August 19, 1950:

*Dear Mother Edna,*

*I hereby favorably recommend Donna Mae Wensel to be received as a candidate in your sisterhood. I have known Donna Wensel for six years and have every reason to believe that she is morally very good. Her disposition is such that to our mind, she would be very acceptable in your Convent.*

*Sincerely in Christ,*

*Rev. Edward N. Haessly, Pastor*

Donna Mae was accepted, and she entered Holy Family Convent on August 20, 1950. She earned her High School Diploma from Holy Family Academy. When she completed her Postulancy she was received into the Novitiate. On her Reception Day, June 13, 1952, Donna Mae was given the name Sister Mary Jerome.

Sister Mary Jerome continued her education at Holy Family College where she earned a Bachelor of Arts Degree in 1964 with a Major in Biology and a Minor in Mathematics. She taught primary and middle grades in Manitowoc for four years and for 15 years she taught seventh and eighth graders in Wisconsin, Michigan and Ohio.

In 1973 Sister Mary Jerome was missioned to Silver Lake College, becoming a member of the Staff and Manager of the Print Shop and the Mail Room. During her tenure, Sister Mary Jerome was industrious and creative in building up her area of responsibility through collaboration with Holy Family Convent Communications Department, attending workshops, being creative in securing needed print and postal equipment and keeping the department up-dated and current. Those efforts of being instruments of communication among people were acknowledged by the Office of Public Relations, directed by Sister Thomas More Bertels, who established the ARIEL AWARD. She believed that the College needed to give recognition to those persons who became involved in the development and progress of school publications. Sister Mary Jerome was recipient of the Ariel Award in 1978 and unofficially for the years that followed. One of the Sisters who knew her well said, "My memory of her is one of silent strength, working for years in printing so much for the College. She recognized the importance of quality print and worked behind the scenes to support all the College efforts. She was a humble servant and suffered for many years with physical limitations of mobility and failing health."

When Sister Mary Jerome was asked about her special talents, skills, hobbies and interests she named woodworking, electronics, music, cars, sharing many skills and hobbies. Sister Mary Jerome was a member of the group named the "Seraphic Apostles of Mary." She had a deep devotion to Our Blessed Mother that was expressed in the hundreds and hundreds of Rosaries she made to spread devotion to her. Sister Mary Jerome passed the Rosary making art on to those who asked her to teach them. In her Jubilee reflection she wrote, "God has been good in giving me the talents I have and the opportunity to use them in many varied ways. Thanks to all who have helped me along the way, especially Sister Janice. I thank my family that I got to know over the years."

Sister Mary Jerome, thank you for being a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. May you rest in peace.