



Name: Sister Theresa Schleis (Sister Mary Jeremias)

Date of Birth: December 7, 1927

Place of Birth: Carlton, Wisconsin

Parents: Jacob M. and Frances G. (Konop) Schleis

Religious Profession: August 15, 1946

Date of Death: July 20, 2023

Age: 95

Years Professed: 76

#### Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Theresa Mary Schleis was born in the Township of Carlton in the County of Kewaunee, Wisconsin to Jacob and Frances (Konop) Schleis on December 7, 1927. She was baptized in St. Mary's Church in Tisch Mills, Wisconsin on December 14, 1927.

Theresa grew up on the family farm, the fifth child of eight. She had three brothers and four sisters. Theresa helped with the farm chores in the morning before school and after supper in the evening. Theresa attended Sandy Bay Public School with her brothers and sisters in a one-room school house, in the County of Kewaunee. During her nine years of schooling, in three different years, she earned awards for "Punctual and Regular" attendance. Theresa did not complete high school so that she could help with the farm and house chores. Working side-by-side with her mother, Theresa learned many homemaking skills including cooking, baking, cleaning and organizing.

Theresa's family parish was St. Joseph's in Norman. Her patron saint was St. Theresa of the Child Jesus, to whom she prayed to help her decide her vocation. She had the witness of her Mother who prayed an hour every day. In the evening, the family prayed the Rosary together.

Theresa's great-aunt, Sister Basilia Konop was a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. The family visited her twice a year. This is where Theresa met other Franciscan Sisters, and her desire to be a Sister grew. Theresa had a school friend, Anna Hlinak, whom we know as Sister Mary Charles. The two of them usually cleaned the Church together. Theresa had been thinking about going to the Convent. One of the times that they were working together, she found out that Anna had made up her mind and was going to the Convent. Theresa decided to ask her parents to go with Anna. Theresa received her parents' blessings. They made plans and traveled to Holy Family Convent where they met Mother Perpetua. Anna and Theresa returned back home with entrance papers. Theresa completed the forms and was accepted. She entered Holy Family Convent on August 26, 1944.

On Reception Day, June 14, 1945, Theresa was given the name Sister Mary Jeremias. During the renewal years of Vatican Council II, she requested to return to her baptismal name and became known as Sister

Theresa. Her special devotion to the Little Flower remained a source of blessing for her, throughout her life.

When Sister Theresa was a Postulant, she was asked what she would like to do, what ministry she would like. She said that she just wanted to serve God in whatever way He wanted. She was asked if she wanted to be a Homemaker and that is how she served God for 55 years in the states of Wisconsin, Ohio, Nebraska and Arizona. Sister Theresa returned to the Motherhouse in 2002 to semi-retire and help where she was able. She appreciated having more time to spend in prayer and reading, crocheting and knitting.

With declining health, Sister Theresa moved to St. Rita Health Center in March of 2015. She continued to be faithful to her mission to her Prayer Apostolate, praying for the Community Health Clinic.

In an interview at the time of her Jubilee, Sister Theresa commented that “every little thing matters in life. Every day, I try to offer up every beat of my heart, every breath that I take, every blade of grass I see out of my window, every drop of rain, because that is the only love I can give to God. I am grateful for all that has happened in my life, the challenges, the sufferings and the blessings. We all learn from each other and give to each other. My goal is to live a saintly life. I always want to make people feel welcome and good about themselves. A special gift is to grow more holy every day.”

Sister Theresa was grateful for the support of her parents, brothers, sisters, their spouses, nieces, nephews and all of her Franciscan Sisters. She treasured the witness of her friend, Father John Dombrowski, and her priest relatives serving in the Diocese of Green Bay: Father Richard Klingeisen, Father Paul Pailer and Father Mark Mleziva. In her words, “It is all about growing closer to my Spouse in preparation for my journey home to Heaven, whenever our good and loving God calls me. It is all about praying, trusting in God, being a peace-maker and accepting all the little crosses that God sends my way. God has truly showered me with countless blessings.”

Sister Theresa participated in Christ’s work of redemption in suffering loss of hearing and eyesight. She was grateful for all the care she received in St. Rita Health Center as she was ending her earthly life. Thank you, Sister Theresa for your witness as a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. You were ready to return to your Spouse many times in the past few years. You peacefully left this world on Thursday morning when Jesus called you home. May you enjoy your eternal reward with God.

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