

Name: Sister Mary Wilma Trottier
Date of Birth: July 21, 1936
Place of Birth: Ashland, Wisconsin
Parents: William Martin and Mabel Josephine (De Hate) Trottier
Religious Profession: August 15, 1955
Date of Death: December 22, 2023
Age: 87
Years Professed: 68



Reflection by Sister Natalie Binversie, Community Director

Rhetha (Rita) Marie Trottier was born two months premature on July 21, 1936 to William Martin and Mabel Josephine (De Hate) Trottier in Ashland, Wisconsin. Her twin brother, Joseph, who was born after her, lived for twelve hours. Both Rhetha and Joseph were baptized after birth by a Sister Nurse in St. Joseph Hospital in Ashland, Wisconsin. The ceremonies of Baptism for Rhetha were held at Saint Agnes Church in Ashland on November 8, 1936. She was confirmed at St. Mary's Church in Rhinelander, Wisconsin on October 19, 1947 by the Bishop of The Superior Diocese, Most Rev. Albert G. Meyer, S.T.D.

Rhetha likened her life to a love story from the time that her parents met, through the Great Depression, the birth of her older sister, Jeannine, and her younger brother, Bill. Family was extremely important and supportive. The family moved to Rhinelander, Wisconsin when Rhetha was a sixth grader. She was uncertain of adjusting to attending St. Mary's School, which was staffed by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Rhetha fell in love with Sister Janice Chervanek and sort of began to like school. She especially loved history and in the seventh grade she found herself engrossed in Geography books and maps. At this time Rhetha was thinking of being a Sister. She shared this desire with her teacher, Sister Mary Clarence Elliot, who smiled and told her that she hoped God would think so, too! Rhetha loved the eighth grade and Sister Alena Murray, who had the philosophy of "no fooling around/do your work!" She read library books to the students and told them about her adventures in other states, especially from the far away Arizona desert Mission.

After graduating from eighth grade, Rhetha wrote to Holy Family Convent for entrance papers. Her Mom decided that she needed to go to High School for a year. After Easter of her freshman year she asked her Mother if she could go to the Convent in August. Her Mom told her to check with her Dad who in turn said, "Check with your Mom." Her Mother gave Rhetha her blessing!

Rhetha wrote the following letter dated February 15, 1951:

Dear Sister Mary Ellen,

Last year I sent away for an entry blank to your Community. I did not fill it out because mother and dad changed their minds and decided that I should have one year of high school first. A few days ago, I brought up the subject and they said that if I still had my mind made up I could go for sure this year.

I was wondering if I could use the entry blank from last year or should I get new ones? If I must get new ones, would you please send me some? Thank you very much.

*Yours sincerely,
Rhetha Trottier*

Her pastor wrote the following letter of recommendation:

Dear Mother Edna:

I wish to take this opportunity of recommending Rhetha Trottier as an aspirant to your Convent. She has demonstrated signs of a genuine vocation. Her conduct has been beyond reproach. She has been leading a very pious and devout life. I hope and pray that you will find her a welcome prospect to your Community.

Very sincerely yours,
Rev. Arthur F. Shank

Rhetha was accepted and entered Holy Family Convent Postulancy on August 23, 1951. She completed her High School education at Holy Family Academy and received her Diploma in May of 1954. On June 13, 1954 Retha entered the Novitiate of the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity and received the name, Sister Mary Wilma.

Sister Mary Wilma continued her education at Holy Family College earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree on May 18, 1969 with a Major in History and Minors in English and Theology. After teaching intermediate grades in Wisconsin and in Michigan for almost 30 years, Sister Mary Wilma served as homemaker and then retired to help care for the Sisters in St. Rita Health Center and St. Francis Convent. She especially liked to sew, cook, cut and style hair.

As her health declined in 2017, she moved to St. Rita Health Center. She continued her Prayer Apostolate Ministry of praying for the Sisters and people of Chassel, Michigan. Sister Mary Wilma had a great sense of humor and enjoyed the fullness of life. In her Jubilee reflection she wrote, "I am so blessed with the love that started with my parents and continued with my family and all the people I have come to know. I am French-Canadian, a 'Hodag', from Rhinelander and above all, a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. God's working in my life is unique and love-filled."

Sister Mary Wilma, we are grateful that you heard God's call and responded to become a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. You believed and trusted that God knew what He was doing in your life. Because of your Faith, you lovingly accepted your sufferings and limitations to participate in Christ's work of redemption. On the night of December 22nd, you gave yourself up completely and handed yourself over totally to our Lord Jesus Christ. You now rejoice with your crowd members, the "Petals of the Mystical Rose" and with the Communion of Saints. May you enjoy your eternal reward and continue the love story that began so many years ago.

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