



Name: Sister Mary Charles Hlinak  
Date of Birth: September 16, 1923  
Place of Birth: Town of Carlton, Kewaunee County  
Parents: Charles and Mary (Herold) Hlinak  
Religious Profession: August 15, 1946  
Date of Death: February 11, 2024  
Age: 100  
Years Professed: 77

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

Anna Ludmilla Hlinak was born on September 16, 1923 to Charles and Mary (Herold) Hlinak in Carlton, Wisconsin, in Kewaunee County. She was baptized at St. Joseph Church in Carlton on September 23, 1923. Anna took the name, Julia, when she was confirmed by Rt. Rev. Paul Peter Rhode, Bishop of Green Bay, on July 6, 1938 at St. Joseph Church in Carlton.

Anna was the third oldest of eight children, six boys and two girls. Anna and her family lived with her Grandpa and Grandma on her mother's home farm in Kewaunee County. She attended a one room school for eight years and in 1937 graduated from East Twin River Grade School.

At home, religion was a very important part of family life. Her Father and Mother passed on their deep faith to their children. Attending Mass, praying the family rosary, Stations of the Cross during Lent and devotions offered at St. Joseph Church always found the family participating. All of these religious practices nurtured Anna's early desire to be a Sister. A profound inspiration for Anna was Sister Reinhart, her mother's sister. Anna always looked forward to Sister Reinhart's one-day visit each year. Anna wanted to be like her, a homemaker dedicated to Christ. As a demonstration of deep faith and giving back to God, at the time that Anna was born, her mother wrote to Sister Reinhart and gave her this message, "When you celebrate your Silver Jubilee, our daughter, Anna, will be a novice."

After eighth grade Anna stayed home and worked on the farm. There was plenty of work with milking the cows, picking stones out of the field every spring, pulling out the mustard weed in later summer and bundling grain shocks in the early fall. In the house, Anna cleaned, cooked and baked for the family. When she was 18 she went to work in a factory in Algoma for a year. The call to Religious Life was always on Anna's mind. She went to Holy Family Hospital in Manitowoc and worked in the diet kitchen on third floor. After a summer at home, Anna returned to Holy Family Hospital and worked with her aunt, Sister Reinhart in the main kitchen of the hospital.

One day in the following summer, Theresa Schleis and Anna were cleaning the church and sharing hopes of becoming Sisters. That fall on August 26, 1944, at the age of 20, Anna entered Holy Family Convent

and became a Postulant. On her Reception Day, June 14, 1945 Anna received the name Sister Mary Charles after her parents.

Sister Mary Charles did follow in the footsteps of Sister Reinhardt and became a homemaker. She attended food seminars at Aquinas College in Grand Rapids and evening classes at Holy Family College in the summers to keep up on new ideas in preparing food. Sister Mary Charles was a homemaker for almost 70 years, mostly at missions with a large number of Sisters. She was in various missions in Wisconsin, in Ohio and Michigan. Her kindness was known everywhere she went. In Ohio many people came to the door begging for food. Sister Mary Charles befriended one little grandpa that came often. Eventually Sister invited him into the entry, where she gave him a hot meal. After a time, he became Catholic and Sister Mary Charles was invited to his Baptism.

Sister Mary Charles loved being a Homemaker! She found it to be a privilege and a joy to serve her Sisters. She tried to do special things for the Sisters. Some recall that in Lent many Sisters would give up candy, so, to satisfy their craving for candy, Sister Mary Charles would make fudge frosting and put it thick on the cake! She very much liked to mentor the young Sisters in their baking and cooking skills. She shared her baking tips and taught the ladies in the kitchen at St. Francis Convent how to make bread.

When Sister Mary Charles moved to St. Rita Health Center in 2014, she continued to spread the joy that she shared wherever she was. There was never a complaint from her. There was always a smile and a warm greeting or expression of gratitude. In St. Rita's, she had extra time to read, pray rosaries and listen to programs that drew her closer to Jesus.

In her Jubilee reflection Sister Mary Charles commented, "I am filled with gratitude to God for calling me, to my parents for supporting me in that call and to the Community for providing my spiritual and temporal needs all these years. I found the 100-fold that Jesus talked about to be a reality! It's a wonderful life! If someone is discerning a possible call to religious life, my advice is to keep asking God what He wants you to do."

Thank you, Sister Mary Charles for your example of a life well lived as a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. Thank you for your witness of accepting and bearing your physical suffering without complaint. May you enjoy your eternal reward with Our Lord and all the Angels and Saints.

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