

Name: Sister Xaveria Wittmann  
Date of Birth: June 4, 1933  
Place of Birth: Madison, Wisconsin  
Parents: Alois Hans and Hedwig Magdalen (Weiss) Wittmann  
Religious Profession: August 15, 1952  
Date of Death: June 14, 2024  
Age: 92  
Years Professed: 72



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

Barbara Ann Wittmann was born in Madison, Wisconsin on June 4, 1933 to Alois Hans and Hedwig Magdalen (Weiss) Wittmann. She was baptized at Holy Redeemer Catholic Church in Madison on June 25, 1933. When she received the Sacrament of Confirmation there on April 13, 1947, Barbara took the name Cecilia.

Barbara had an older brother, Anthony, a younger brother, Ralph, and an older sister, whom she never knew. Irene Cecilia died the year before Barbara was born. Anthony, Barbara and Ralph attended Holy Redeemer School and were taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. One of her classmates from Second grade and throughout elementary school was Kathleen Ryan, whom we know, as Sister Clarita. During the school year, Barbara lived with her parents in Madison. Once school was out, she went to her grandmother's farm to help her grandmother any way she could. Both homes were thoroughly Catholic and it is where she learned the German work ethic.

After completing grade school, June 15, 1947, Barbara attended Madison Central High School. During her Freshman year, Barbara thought about the Sisters she got to know, while in her elementary schooling. She was drawn to their way of life and her desire to become a Sister grew. Barbara had become familiar with the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity through her friend, Kathleen, who entered the Convent after eighth grade. Knowing how happy Kathleen was in the Convent, Barbara believed that God was also calling her to enter the Convent.

With a trusting heart, Barbara wrote the following letter, dated March 2, 1948 to Mother Perpetua:

*Dear Mother Superior,*

*I don't exactly know how to ask you this, but I will try my best. I have just received a letter from Kathleen Ryan. I had written her to secure information about your Convent. I would like a registration blank and other questionnaires necessary to be filled out. I also would be pleased, if you would send me the list of clothing essentials, so I could buy some of the things from time to time.*

*Another thing I would like to know is, will I be with Kathleen Ryan? She has been up there in Manitowoc since September 1947. I will have completed one year of High School in June. The thing that*

*makes me wonder whether or not I would be with her is that she has taken Latin this year and I have not. Maybe there would be a way to make that up and still be with her.*

*Also, I maybe should tell you, that I am planning on coming up to the Convent when Kathleen returns from her summer vacation in August.*

*Mother Superior, will you keep me in your prayers? I'm sure that it is prayer that has granted me this desire. May God Bless you and Thank You!*

*I remain,  
Barbara Wittmann*

Barbara wrote a follow-up letter to the Convent dated June 8, 1948:

*Dear Sister Mary Ellen,*

*I am sorry for all the delay caused in the returning of my application blanks. I bet you thought I had a broken arm or something and could not write. It seems that somehow or other, it must have gotten mixed up or lost in the mail. Anyhow, it ended up at my house again today. I am again mailing it to you and this time hope it arrives at its destination.*

*I have two half days of school left. The first part of my vacation I am going to spend out on the farm with my grandmother. This will take care of my vacation up until about July 4<sup>th</sup>. The remainder of my time, I am going to spend here in Madison.*

*I will close for now, and help with dishes, after I get my letter in the mail. I hope the blanks prove satisfactory and find myself able to join your Order in the latter part of August.*

*Yours sincerely,  
Barbara Wittmann*

Barbara's Pastor hesitated giving her a recommendation stating, 'Loyalty should be to the Notre Dame's." God thought differently and the following letter of recommendation was written August 3, 1948:

*To whom it may concern:*

*This is to certify that Miss Barbara Ann Wittmann, a young lady of Holy Redeemer Parish, Madison, Wisconsin, is entitled to every consideration in entering a Religious Community, due to her fine Christian character.*

*Signed;  
Rev. Joseph H. Gabriels, Pastor*

On August 25, 1948, Barbara, at the age of 15, got off the bus, by the Convent gates, at the top of the hill. She was met there and walked down the hill to enter Holy Family Convent to begin her formation as a Postulant. Barbara completed her High School education at Holy Family Academy, graduating in June 1951. On June 13, 1951, Barbara was received into the Novitiate and received the name, Sister Xaveria.

Sister Xaveria continued her education at Holy Family College, graduating on July 26, 1959, earning a Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Biology and a Minor in English. To refresh her teaching skills, Sister Xaveria earned additional Summer School credits in 1961 at the University of Colorado, Boulder, Colorado; in 1962 at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater, OK and in 1966 at St. Mary's College, Winona, MN. She attended Marquette University earning a Master of Arts Degree in 1970, with a Major

in Bio-Chemistry and a Minor in General Science. In 1987 Sister Xaveria earned a Master of Arts Degree from the University of San Francisco in Private School Administration.

Sister Xaveria enjoyed teaching every grade from First through College, however, First Grade was her favorite grade! In between teaching assignments, Sister Xaveria served as Academic Vice-Principal at Catholic Memorial in Waukesha, WI. Sister Xaveria received several Outstanding Awards for Teaching over the years she was in the classroom.

An award received outside of academics was the "Elizabeth Seton Award." This was the highest award a Catholic Girl Scout Leader could attain. Sister Xaveria was a Girl Scout Leader for twenty-three years. During that time, she was able to spend eight weeks working in a camp for children of military and embassy people in Germany. Sister Xaveria's father had come from Germany, so this gave her a chance to meet all of her cousins. Among her hobbies, Sister Xaveria enjoyed reading, crossword puzzles, knitting, crocheting and needlepoint.

In her Jubilee reflection, Sister Xaveria wrote, "Life has been good to me. Rather, I should say, God has been very good to me! He has thrown me a few curve balls over the years with my health issues, however, He has always given me the strength to catch them and rebound! The Community has been very kind to me. I have received the education that enables me to tutor in almost all areas of the curriculum. It is a great privilege for me to have been able to tutor the International Sister Students who lived with us in Community, while they attended our Silver Lake College of the Holy Family. They can be very proud of their achievements. I am grateful to have been a part of their lives."

Sister Xaveria has resided in St. Rita Health Center since 2009. She was very grateful for the many ways both her personal family, her Sisters in Community and the healthcare staff, touched her life with love and care. She is especially grateful to her Spouse, Jesus Christ for being very faithful in showing her the way to be a committed and dedicated Religious. Sister Xaveria's reflection continues, "Whatever God asks of me, may I say 'YES.' Whatever God sends to me, may I accept with open arms. Whatever God gives to me, may I give back to Him one hundred-fold. When God calls me home to Him, may I be ready to go with those same open arms. May I always continue to give my all."

Thank you, Sister Xaveria, for answering God's call to be a Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity. Thank you for the witness you have given, by lovingly accepting your sufferings and limitations to participate in Christ's work of redemption.

May you be granted eternal life with God. May you rest in peace. Amen!