



Birth
Feb. 24, 1931

Baptism
March 8, 1931

Profession
Aug. 2, 1951

Death
Jan. 3, 2016

Burial
Sancta Maria
in Ripa Cemetery
St. Louis, Missouri

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

In Loving Memory

Sister Charleen (Joseph Dolores) Barta

The third daughter and youngest child of Mary Ann (Meek) and Joseph Barta was born in St. Louis on Feb. 24, 1931. She was baptized on March 8, 1931 at St. John Nepomuk Church and named Charleen. The little girl was named after her grandfather, Charles Meek, who died when her mother was nine years old. Charleen had two older sisters, Virginia and Dolores.

She grew up within a very religious, faith-filled family and within the Czech community in St. Louis. She attended St. John Nepomuk Grade School (the first Catholic Czech parish in America) where she was taught by the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She enrolled at Rosati-Kain High School where she also met the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet.

When Charleen was a sophomore, her sister Virginia entered the Wheaton Franciscan Sisters. During her senior year, Charleen also felt called to enter religious life but was undecided as to which community to enter. During the Immaculate Conception novena, a Redemptorist priest spoke of Mary as Mother of Perpetual Help. She came to peace with the decision to enter the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Mary was for her then and throughout her life her perpetual help.

She entered the candidature at Sancta Maria in Ripa on Sept. 1, 1948. During her second year as candidate, she taught at Little Flower, New Orleans, Louisiana. She was received into the novitiate on Aug. 1, 1950 and given the name Joseph Dolores in honor of her father and sister. She professed first vows on Aug. 2, 1951 and final vows on Aug. 2, 1957.

Sister Charleen received a bachelor's degree in sociology from the former Notre Dame College, St. Louis, Missouri in 1959 and a master's degree in theology from St. Meinrad College, St. Meinrad, Indiana in 1984.

Following profession, she taught elementary children at St. Charles Borromeo, St. Charles, Missouri; St. Mary, Cape Girardeau, Missouri; St. Raphael, St. Louis, Missouri; Sacred Heart, Fort Madison, Iowa; St. Peter Cathedral and St. Luke, Belleville, Illinois; St. Joseph, Manchester, Missouri; St. Clare, St. Clair, Missouri. She was principal at St. Luke, Belleville, Illinois; St. Clare, St. Clair, Missouri and St. Martin de Porres, Hazelwood, Missouri. She ministered as the coordinator of religious education at St. Joseph, Manchester, Missouri and the director of religious education at Immaculate Conception, Jackson, Missouri.

In 1995, Sister Charleen served in pastoral care at Villa Gesu Convent, St. Louis. When the Villa closed in 1999, Sister Charleen moved to the former St. Louis motherhouse and became a tutor in the Immigrant and Refugee Women's Program. Daily, she would go to the homes of immigrant/refugee women and teach them English, reading and citizenship. Listening to their stories of war, survival, grief and poverty drew her closer to her God. She was also a resource for other teachers and served as a liaison teacher who mentored other volunteers. Once a month, she would contact each of these volunteers, record their teaching hours, mileage, and check on their

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Charlene Barta



students' progress. She would suggest books for them to use or additional teaching materials. One of her greatest joys was to accompany a woman to the court house to be sworn in as a citizen of the United States. Over the 15 years of this ministry, she met with over 40 women from many countries including Bosnia, Mexico and Albania. She introduced them to the culture and gave them the necessary means to begin a new life in the United States as confident, independent women.

An arthritic condition caused her great pain during her adult years. After several falls and broken bones, she was missioned to Veronica House in May 2015. In November 2015, she was placed on hospice. She died peacefully on the feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 3, 2016, at Anna House at 2:20 a.m. with a sister keeping vigil with her.

The wake/vigil was held at Anna House and Theresa Center on Jan. 7, 2016. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated the following morning with Rev. Edmond Fitzgibbon presiding. Burial was in the Sancta Maria in Ripa cemetery. She is survived by her sister, Dolores Graham of Ballwin, Missouri; her nephew, Mike (Jennifer) Graham and their children. Relatives, former students, co-workers from the Immigrant/Refugee Women's Program, classmates, friends and SSNDs were present for the funeral services. She was preceded in death by her parents, her sister, Sister Virginia Mary Barta, OSF, and other relatives.

How appropriate that Sister Charleen entered into her eternal reward on the feast of the Epiphany and the beginning of the observance of National Migration week with its theme of welcoming the stranger among us. Her ministry of welcoming the immigrant and refugee women and their families was a natural outcome of her love for reaching out to those who were in special need. She was a woman of prayer with a sense of humor that helped her during difficult times in her life. Relationships were a significant part of her life and she was deeply devoted to family and friends. She was a grateful woman and her welcoming smile touched the lives of many. As she enters eternal life and goes home free of pain, may she now rejoice in her God and with family members who have gone before her!

By Sister Carol Marie Wildt, SSND

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