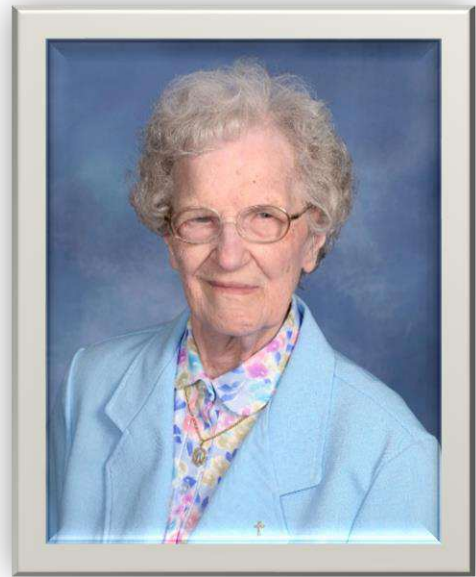


Remembering Charlotte Walby, IHM
Dec. 6, 1916 – March 24, 2023

Sister Charlotte Walby was dearly loved and greatly respected by her IHM Sisters. Her kindness and goodness to others, her prayerfulness and reflective spirit revealed to those of us who knew her that she followed Jesus Christ with a single-hearted love and total trust in the power of the Holy Spirit to help her live a life totally dedicated to God and the service of others.

Charlotte was born on Dec. 6, 1916. She was the sixth of seven children of Andrew Walby and Catherine Nieset Walby. Like her four brothers (Wilfred, Raymond, Leo and Clemens) and two sisters (Anna and Irma), Charlotte was born at home on the family farm in Millersville, Ohio. She was baptized at the parish church and given the name Coletta Barbara. Significantly, even before she was born, her mother consecrated her to Mary, the Mother of Jesus.



St. Mary's parish church and school bordered one of the Walby's fields and were always in view. Charlotte attended the two-room elementary school staffed by the Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin, Ohio. "Since daily Mass began each school day," she wrote, "I grew in a deep relationship with Jesus. From age 11, Jesus placed a great longing in my soul to follow him in religious life."

After finishing the eighth grade, Charlotte was faced with a decision. The nearest Catholic high school was 10 miles away and had no bus service. She could attend a nearby public school or drop out of school. After pondering the significance of the two choices, Charlotte chose the latter. This kind of decisiveness, based on her own faith values, characterized her throughout her life.

Reflecting many years later on her experience during those early teen years reveals that she never regretted her decision. She wrote in her autobiography:

I remained at home working on the farm, assisting with the animals, orchards, the fields and gardens and housekeeping. I loved the mysteries of spring as I contemplated the unfolding of new life. The canopy of the sky and clouds, as well as the beauty of flowers and trees, spoke to me of the presence of God.

During those years, she also continued attending daily Mass.

The Walbys were a very fervent Catholic family and it was her parents who taught her to pray. "My first prayer was at my Mother's knee in German, my tiny hands clasped in hers." The translation of that first prayer reads: "I am small. My heart is yours. I love you. Stay with me always." At bedtime, the children would say in German, "Praise be to

Jesus Christ. Good night." And their mother would respond: "Now and forever. Good night." The family prayed the rosary in German after supper, especially in May. During a storm, Mrs. Walby would burn blessed palms and go throughout the house, sprinkling everyone with holy water and praying for the protection of both crops and buildings. As Charlotte wrote later: "In this atmosphere of openness to Divine Providence, it is no wonder that I had a longing for more."

Even though she had relatives in other religious communities and had witnessed receptions and professions, Charlotte did not feel drawn to any of those communities and, as she said, "simply waited for God's move." On Aug. 15, 1932, Mr. Walby's sister, who was the mother of our Sister Marcella Logsdon, stopped by the farm to say that she was on her way to Monroe for her daughter's reception and invited the Walbys to attend. "This was so sudden," Charlotte wrote:

Do we have gas? What is the condition of the car for 70 miles? Do we know how to get there? The decision was "yes" we would go. Arriving at the front door, I looked in, saw the statue of Mary in the foyer, turned to my mother and said: "This is the place!" I had never heard of the IHMs before this. God is so full of surprises! The mystery remains as to how I contacted Sister Vigilia. All I know is that we corresponded for a year.

In July 1933, at 16 years of age, she became a postulant, was received into the novitiate on Aug. 15, 1934, and made first profession in 1936. "No greater happiness was mine than when a personal consecration to Jesus was sealed with my Mother's ring in 1939."

When her father died of a heart attack in 1941, Charlotte's mother told her about consecrating her to Mary at the [Sorrowful Mother] Shrine in Bellevue, Ohio, before she was born. "She had kept this secret so as not to influence me in any way. It was then that I realized why I became a Sister, Servant of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. And Oh what a glorious journey! I am grateful to the Community for my education which prepared me for many ministries in six different dioceses."

For 40 years, Charlotte taught young children in the classroom and also in religious education classes. In 1980, her ministry suddenly changed to being a caregiver to the sick and elderly in their homes, nursing homes and hospitals. This came about when her family called her to see what she could do for her bachelor brother Ray, who had cared for Mrs. Walby until her death in 1960. During the intervening years, Ray had met some "so-called friends" who stole his Social Security checks and many of his possessions. "With no funds, Ray had to walk a mile to my sister's house for something to eat." Charlotte asked permission to help her brother and began a new ministry. She wasted no time seeking legal advice, hired an attorney and went to court. In August 1980, the court appointed Charlotte to be her brother's legal guardian. Two years later, Charlotte secured a place for him in a Catholic nursing home. "He loved the chapel, his religious books and the planned activities. At last, he was safe," she wrote. From the sale of Ray's house, she was able to prearrange for Ray's funeral service.

During those years, Charlotte's family helped all they could. However, Charlotte needed to find a residence and a job. She asked five different convents if she could live with

them. At that time, not one of those religious communities allowed other Sisters to live with them. She finally found residence with an elderly couple who let her use their car to get to a full-time job. However, due to family needs, she had to move four times. Even though she did not live with the Mercy Sisters of Fremont, Ohio, during those years they were a gracious and prayerful support to her. Reflecting back on those challenging years, she wrote: "From 1980-1985, I related to six attorneys, two judges, the court, the police and detectives, and to a real estate agent — just to mention a few. But my Good Shepherd carried His little lamb through it all."

After a sabbatical year in 1986, Charlotte took up ministry at St. Mary Center for three years and then gave five years of service as a chaplain assistant at Mercy Memorial Hospital in Monroe. "How I loved to see God at work with the sick, with the dying and with their families." In speaking of her hospital ministry some years ago, Charlotte told me that each time she went to meet a patient or a family, she prayed that the Holy Spirit would fill her whole being so that she would know how to support and comfort them.

Charlotte retired to the Motherhouse in 1994, the year of her diamond jubilee. She continued her ministry to the sick in our own Health Care Center, helping in a very special way Mildred Bach and Sister Mary Ivan Bach. The last words Charlotte wrote in her autobiography were addressed to us:

"I am filled with gratitude for each of you whom I love and who have loved me into life in difficult times and in times of celebration. To me, your spiritual beauty of soul has always proclaimed the abiding presence of God."

In these last years of Charlotte's life, she continued to be interested in the IHM Community and involved as much as her health permitted her. She strove to be independent (at times called 'noncompliant' for not asking for help.) She truly lived her 106 years of life to the fullest. We can only rejoice with her now that she knows the fullness of life.

Originally written by Mary Jo Maher, IHM (deceased)
Delivered by Annette St. Amour, IHM
March 30, 2023