



## **Eulogy of Sister Patricia (Pat) Potok, BVM (Liberata)**

Marian Hall Chapel, March 23, 2018

Good morning and welcome to the celebration of life of our Sister Patricia Marie Potok.

Patricia Gladys, the first child of Robert and Sophie Sum Potok, was born on May 25, 1934, in Chicago. Younger sister Phyllis completed the family. Her father was born in Poland and worked as a foreman. Her mother was a native Chicagoan of Polish descent. The Potoks were parishioners at St. Cornelius where Pat completed her elementary education. She earned her high school diploma at The Immaculata.

Pat entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1953. Being the shortest postulant, she was first in the lineup, which earned her the nickname “mother of the set” and she was proud of the title. Pat received the name Liberata upon her reception on March 19, 1954, and professed first vows on March 19, 1956. She lived 64 years as a BVM.

Pat was a very confident, well-organized teacher who taught first and second grades for 14 years. She was missioned in Iowa at St. Mary in Clinton and St. Patrick in Cedar Rapids and in Chicago at Holy Cross and Blessed Sacrament. Twice she served at Immaculate Conception, an extremely poor school in Clarksdale, Miss. To help raise money, Pat and her first graders would meet on Saturday to make donuts that she would sell on Sunday morning after church services.

In 1970, BVM President Roberta Kuhn issued a request for sisters interested in nursing to come to Mount Carmel. Pat was one of six BVMs who answered the call. She joined the Marian Hall staff and discovered that she enjoyed the work. In order to “serve these dear and deserving sisters . . . more effectively,” she completed her training as a licensed practical nurse (LPN) in 1974.

As a nurse supervisor at Mount Carmel, Pat ran a tight ship; nonetheless, the aides liked and respected her. She was all business when caring for the sisters as well, and had little time for small talk. She had her own way of responding to their needs. Yet they appreciated her work because of her intense concern. Pat was practical, focused, and determined in her work, which brings to mind the words of Mary Frances Clarke: “If our divine Lord and His sweet mother and St. Joseph know us and are pleased, no matter for the world.”

Pat truly was committed and conscientious and ministered to the sisters with great fidelity. She frequently served as a sister companion during medical appointments and alleviated fears by explaining what to expect prior to the visit. With Holy Week almost upon us, how can we listen to the Gospel of Jesus washing the apostles’ feet and not think of Pat? Foot care was perhaps her greatest and most generous service. To quote one sister: “She kindly, gently, and efficiently took care of our feet, which was a blessing to us.”

How true the words she wrote on her application for admission: “[I] feel I have a vocation to your particular order.” Living out her religious vocation as a nurse for our community, she showed her dedication to her BVM sisters, bringing freedom from physical pain to hundreds during her 46 years of tender care.

As a problem solver, when Pat saw a need, she did her best to find a creative solution, and was always on the lookout for the latest useful gadget. Blessed with a green thumb, she planted and maintained a large garden behind the grotto for a number of years. She was also a good cook, and one with a sweet tooth. Watching TV, especially sports, was a

favorite pastime. She knew all the players and readily analyzed their performances. She enjoyed gambling and, apparently, she was quite lucky. However, she would only reveal the amount she won, not the amount she gambled. Pat demonstrated a bit of an adventurous spirit by grabbing the opportunity to go for a ride in a hot air balloon, and she has the certificate to prove it.

Pat's favorite place to be was at Two Spiders Lodge in Hayward, Wis. She loved it and spent many hours fishing there. For 14 years, she graciously served as the facility manager, scheduling reservations and overseeing repairs to ensure their completion in the most economical and timely manner. It helped that she enjoyed and was skilled at working with tools. Pat related well with the local Hayward folks. With their assistance and BVM volunteers, she spent a generous amount of time and great energy making the leisure property warm, cozy, waterproof, and animal-free. To keep it in tiptop shape, she left so many notes with directions and reminders that some called The Spiders a "note-worthy experience."

Unfortunately, the last years of Pat's life were filled with significant pain. We all were deeply concerned about our sister and those closest to her were at a loss as to how to help. Our prayers and simple, quiet presence were our final gifts. However, Jesus offered what Pat desired most. "Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy burdened, and I will give you rest (Mt 11:28)." Last Sunday morning, Pat answered His beckoning call and found freedom from her struggle. She now knows an Easter joy beyond all we can imagine.