



Eulogy of Sister Patricia O'Rourke, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, Feb. 14, 2019

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister, Patricia O'Rourke.

Patricia Noel O'Rourke entered this world on Christmas Day, 1928, in Chicago. She was the sixth child of William James and Agnes Bradley O'Rourke of Maywood, Ill. She joined brothers, William, James, and Charles, and sisters, Agnes and Margaret. Tragedy struck twice during Patricia's early years. Her sister Margaret died when Patricia was only one, and her father, when she was just five. Patricia's mother struggled to support her family as a salesperson and a cook.

It was a challenging beginning for a young girl, but as St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "You will receive the power through the Holy Spirit for your hidden self to grow strong, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith." (Ephesians 3:16-17). As Patricia grew stronger, so did the call to religious life.

Patricia was taught by BVMs at St. Eulalia elementary school, graduated from Proviso Township high school, worked as a switchboard operator, and then entered the congregation on Feb. 2, 1950 and received the name Patricia upon her reception on Aug. 15, 1950. She professed her first vows on Aug. 15, 1952, and live 69 years as a BVM. She was a distant cousin to early members, SM Calista and SM DeChantel O'Regan.

Patricia ministered in elementary education for 41 years. In Iowa, she served as principal and teacher at St. Irenaeus in Clinton and St. Patrick in Cedar Rapids. In Chicago, she taught at St. Tarcissus, St. Eugene and Holy Name, where she remained for 25 years. While at Holy Name, she spent several summers teaching mathematics at Archbishop Quigley Preparatory Seminary. She also taught inmates at a federal prison through the Adult Learning Skills Program sponsored by the City Colleges of Chicago.

Patricia wrote, "I thoroughly enjoyed my ministry in education. When I was assigned to teach junior high, I felt sorry to leave the primary grades. However, I grew to like that work as well. Teaching adults was another very good experience, especially [the] years I was assigned to a federal prison. That was very enriching for me."

Patricia called living at Holy Name convent in the heart of the Chicago a "real delight" and continued to live and volunteer there after retiring. She served as an usher at parish masses and tutored a woman from Taiwan from whom she learned a great deal about Chinese culture. Patricia's willingness to drive long distances to attend wakes and funerals regardless of the weather or inconvenience was a special ministry. Along with a car full of BVMs, she comforted grieving families and friends through her compassion and concern.

After moving to Dubuque in 2006, Patricia volunteered in the Treasurer's office - it was the perfect fit. Pat was always very businesslike – prompt and meticulous; it was her approach to life. However, being very self-aware, she also knew the limitations of her declining health and gracefully bowed out voluntarily at the appropriate time.

Watching *Wheel of Fortune* and reading the *Chicago Tribute* were two of Patricia's favorite activities. Swimming was another. She took full advantage of free access to a hotel pool near the Holy Name convent and, while on staff, the Quigley pool. She enjoyed touring the eastern United States, an extended stay in Kentucky, and time at

Two Spiders lodge. Ice cream was another delight. Pat would have three scoops as an appetizer, eat her meal, and then have more ice cream for dessert. She also had a lucky streak. Several times, she won a free haircut and styling. Each time, she exited the salon with a fancy hairdo quite out of step with her shy, reserved character.

Patricia was a person of simplicity – quiet, conscientious, pleasant, kind – a lovely, gracious presence. She spoke very lovingly of her siblings, especially Agnes. In recent years, there was a change in Patricia as her health diminished and she struggled with the deaths of her close friends, Sisters Ann Marie Dolan and Rosemary Shaughnessy. A sadness and loneliness overshadowed her.

Happiness returned briefly last Christmas when Patricia celebrated her 90th birthday. Family and friends showered her with gifts and cards while she enjoyed recalling her connection with each person.

Then last Monday, in her typical quiet manner, Patricia slipped from this world into the heavenly presence of God. Now, reunited with her friends, her parents and all her siblings, the celebration continues and she is happy again – forever.