



Wake Stories of Patricia O'Rourke, BVM
Marian Hall Chapel, Feb. 14, 2019

Sister Marge Clark, BVM

As were others, I was surprised at Patricia's death. I knew her when she was at Holy Name in Chicago. I used to take students to teach a few days in inner city schools. We used to stay at Holy Name Convent where there was a big den-type room in the lower level. The students, usually about fifteen, would bring their sleeping bags. Pat was one who loved having us and was very hospitable. She told the students which was the better liquor store for getting their wine. Now she is at peace.

Rabbi Robert Rosen, Friend

My wife Dawn and I were honored to know Sister Pat. Our friendship goes back over 30 years from my years of teaching at Holy Name Cathedral. We send our deepest sympathy to Sister Pat's family and the BVMs.

Mike O'Rourke, Nephew

Sister Pat was a tremendous aunt with a great sense of humor and a kind heart. She went out of her way and traveled long distances to attend special family events whenever she could. Patsy, as our dad called her, was a blessing to my siblings and me and to our own families.

Mary Andreoni, Niece of Sister Anne Marie Dolan, BVM

Sr. Patricia was a great friend to our family and our aunt, Anne Marie Dolan. We shared so many dinners and family gatherings over the many years they lived together at Holy Name Cathedral Convent. Smart, funny and fearless (even with her driving). I was so glad I was able to visit with her in November. God bless you, Sister Patricia, and thank you for your love, and God bless the BVMs.

Jane O'Rourke, Eldest Niece (Read by Susan O'Rourke, Niece-in-law & Bob's Wife)

When I was little in the 1950s, once a year my father and mother would pile my brother and me in the big family car for the long trip from Chicago to Dubuque to make our annual visit to see Patsy. Before we reached the convent, my mother would turn around and face us in the back seat and warned us to be quiet, well behaved, and not run around. We would meet in the living room to the left side of the front door. *(I thought that it was funny that she actually remembered where she came in.)* It had big dark furniture with delicate lace. The room is still here; Pat showed it to us during one of our recent visits. The trip was always a big deal and we were always so happy to see Patsy. My dad, Bill, was the oldest of the five O'Rourke children and Pat was the youngest. There was a special bond between the two. When their father, my grandfather, died suddenly and unexpectedly, Pat was five and Bill was sixteen. Pat told me many times how kind and good Bill was to her during that family crisis. Later, when Pat had her appendix out, she remembered waking up after surgery and seeing Bill at the foot of the bed where he had been the entire time. When my dad described another person as being "like Patsy," I knew he was giving that person the ultimate compliment. Patsy loved her family. As a young nun, her communications were limited with the outside world. It is the reason that our family visits here were such a big deal. Things loosened up over time. I remember her visiting our family after we moved to Nebraska. She also visited me in Oregon when I was a Vista volunteer after college and she came to Maine many times over the years. Pat loved us all. She was never judgmental. She might have been a little mystified over the choices we made or the lifestyles we adopted, but she never was critical. She would just nod and flash a mischievous smile. In Pat's words, we were "all just

swell.” Patsy was a great optimist. She never complained and was grateful to live in a building that had heat in the winter and was cool in the summer. She never talked about ailments. When she had both knees replaced at the same time, there were no complaints. Sister Pat was a great gift to all of us. We were blessed to have her in our lives for such a long time. I love her and will miss her very much.

Susan O’Rourke, Niece-in-law & Bob’s Wife)

Bob and I lived in St. Charles for ten years, so Pat came out and spent many Christmases with us. My girls were little when my grandmother died and I had to go back to Nebraska. We had no one since we had just moved there. We called Pat and she came out to stay with them for two days. Two little girls – that’s a lot of energy! We were very grateful to have her. Sister Ann Marie Dolan came along with her too. I have two stories; I hope you enjoy them. I remember the first time Pat called and said, “Sister Anne Marie and I were thinking about making a trip out to St. Charles today. Are you around?” “This is fabulous!” I had a pot of lentil soup going. I ran and got some chips and salsa because I didn’t have much to snack on. I was very pristine about my house so my girls could not wear their shoes in the house. When Pat and Ann Marie walked in, the first thing my three-year-old, who has a little lisp, said to Anne Marie was, “Lady, take off your shoes.” I was so mortified, but they just laughed. They ate the chips and salsa; I don’t think Holy Name convent serve much chips and salsa. When the whole family was down for the First Communion of one of my daughters, it was also the Kentucky Derby weekend. Sister Anne Marie and Pat came out again. Bob’s brother and wife, Pat and Pam, had made a big pitcher of mint juleps. I said, “We’ve got coffee, water, tea, bear, wine, mint juleps.” No one was drinking the mint juleps. They both said, “I’ll have a mint julep.” They enjoyed being with us for the Kentucky Derby and the mint juleps. Pat was very special; she was very good to my family, never judgmental. We will miss her. Thank you for taking such good care of her through all these years.

Bob O’Rourke, Nephew

I’m Pat’s youngest nephew. I had a lot of years to see Pat. It’s funny how with Pat you learn a lot of things, but you didn’t really know she was teaching you. She would come for Thanksgiving when I was young. She would bring her bags with books and papers. On Friday, she would start working at the dining room table. I said, “Pat, it’s vacation; it’s a holiday. Why are you working?” She said, “Oh, no, these are the days to work because I can get caught up and still have a weekend.” As a ten-year-old, that made no sense to me at all. Funny how ten years later, in college and my work life, I started thinking that that made a lot of sense. She taught me, but I didn’t really appreciate it at the time. She also would come out in the summers. One summer she was off for a few days. Along with my next-door neighbor and friend, Tom, I was tasked to wax the tile floors in the basement by my father. We had no idea how to do it. We rented the wax machine and got the supplies. Pat was there so she came down. Tom was amazed how Pat knew exactly how to run the machine and showed us what to do. He always talked about Pat running the machine. We worked hard at it for most of the day and thought the floors looked fantastic. A few hours later, Pat came downstairs to see how we were doing. She said, “Oh, they look pretty good. A couple more times and they’ll look just as good as the floors at Holy Name.” They were good, but not quite good enough. I was in Chicago when Pat had two knees replaced so I stopped by after work. I was really concerned how she, being in her 70s, was doing with two knees replacements. I walked in the room. Pat is sitting up and looking out the window at the lake with a 7Up in her hand. I said, “Pat, you look fine.” She said, “Well, I never had it so good.” I’m sure it was painful, hard, very difficult, but you would never know it from Pat. She never took the time to complain about anything. We moved to the East Coast and Pat moved to Dubuque so we didn’t see each other as much. I always tried to keep in touch and call on the weekends. I always enjoyed the calls. Pat was very direct and we wouldn’t have long conversations. As time went on, I noticed that her memory wasn’t quite as good. About a month ago, I called Pat to tell her that my daughter had a baby, Mary Duggan. Pat said, “Oh, that’s wonderful.” I said, “I’ll send you pictures.” “You told me that last week, but I haven’t seen them yet.” Her memory was pretty sharp that day. I did send an envelope full of big color photos. I will miss those calls. They weren’t long but we always got caught up. I think she appreciated them; I sure appreciated talking to her. We appreciate all the friendships and the great care she got here. Thank you very much.

Sister Mary Alma Sullivan, BVM

I got to know Pat over several summers when I was going to graduate studies. Pat was at Holy Name; she was a staple there. I found out later that she would pick out one of the BVM sisters who was staying with them for summer school, saying something like, "Tomorrow, if you would like to get together after solemn silence, go to the kitchen and in the refrigerator, there will be some snack items. I thought that when she said that to me that it was a one shot deal. I found out many years later that it was a regular thing. She would always pick a visitor from the five or six sisters staying there for the summer. She had a hidden life.

Sister Kathleen McGrath, BVM

I lived with Pat at Our Lady of Angels Academy in Clinton, although she taught at St. Irenaeus. At OLA, we had green grass outside the back door. When someone was leaving, we would all go out on the grass and wave our handkerchiefs as the car turned down 22nd street. The Directress of Schools was leaving so we were all waving our handkerchiefs. Pat's famous line was, "One down and one to go." The one to go was Sister Ramona O'Neill, the provincial. She turned to Pat and, with a big smile on her face, said, "I think I'm the one to go."

Sister C Jean Hayen, BVM

Pat was principal at St. Patrick in Cedar Rapids. My mother was her secretary at the school. They had a wonderful, special relationship. Mom always appreciated Pat's manner with the students, both the good and the bad of them. Later, when Pat was here, I would tell her she was Mom's favorite principal. Pat would grin from ear to ear and say, "Really?"

Sister Mary Angela Buser, BVM

I remember Pat when I was celebrating my golden jubilee. I, too, entered in February, but four years before she did. She was at the Cathedral and I was at Holy Family. I wanted my celebration on February 2. The weather was somewhat like what we have been experiencing in the past weeks. It was only 18 degrees below zero. Dear Pat brought Anne Marie and several others from the Cathedral in that terrible weather to my jubilee. Four years later, she reminded me that she had decided that day not to celebrate in February. Several times, I was the recipient of her wonderful kindness traveling from one place to another. I remember going to a meeting at St. Eugene. She came from the Cathedral to pick me up and off we went. She was always very generous. Here at Mount Carmel, too, she was always helpful and ready to take you wherever you wanted to go or do whatever you needed. I thank you, Pat, for your goodness, your friendship and your love.

Sister Eileen Healey, BVM

Pat and Rosemary Shaughnessy used to come to San Francisco. I think Rosemary's brother was at the Columban house out there at the time. My father who is from Ireland drove them around and showed them different places in San Francisco. One time Pat was telling me about all the places my father had taken them – base of the Golden Gate Bridge, Coit Tower – all these places that I had never seen and I grew up there! The next time I was home, my mother asked me, "What do you want to do?" I said, "I want to see all the places that Dad shows all the other sisters." So we had a tour of San Francisco that I never had in the seventeen years I lived there as a kid. Pat and Rosemary always sent Christmas cards to my parents. They really appreciated how my dad drove them around. My Irish dad really loved driving around a Shaughnessy and an O'Rourke!

Sister Veronica Higgins, BVM

I had the privilege of living with Pat and Ann Marie Dolan on my first mission. The theory that was given to us in our novitiate days needed to be translated into how does one live on a mission. Holy Name was a high school and grade school combination community. The few of us who were in the grade school hung out together. I have always remembered Pat's quiet attentiveness and kindness. Ann Marie Dolan was our postulant mistress. She had said, "You never know when we will be living on a mission together." I had rolled my eyes and thought, "In your lifetime, but not mine." Sure enough, there was Anne Marie. Their kindness helping a fledgling young sister relate to the veterans of the mission, especially when it came time for a funeral. I felt like a deer in headlights, "How does this go?" There was a death – SM Hilaire Jackman. Getting the casket into the parlor was difficult; the funeral

director couldn't get the casket to turn into the parlor. I observed them standing the casket on end and "walking" this sister, who never had a hair out of place, into the room. I thought, "If she doesn't roll over in her grave now, it would be amazing." To both Pat and Anne Marie Dolan, their kindness certainly helped my perseverance through the years.

Sister Bernadette McManigal, BVM

I also was at Holy Name at the time when Pat received all those promotional gifts at the hair salon. I always regret that we didn't take photos because one hairdo was more extreme than the last. One of those times, Pat went home with me to a family party. My nieces and nephews thoroughly enjoyed Pat in this very extreme hairstyle. Pat, thanks for the good times and the laughter that we shared.

Sister Joan Stritesky, BVM

I met Pat on a bus going from Clinton to Clarke College. We were going to play baseball on the hilly side behind Clarke. The street was very steep so we had to chase the ball all the way down the hill to the street. We got to know one another because it took a while to get to Clarke. For a couple of years, we met on the same bus going there. Pat was the type of person who listened a great deal and was very perceptive. She remembered details of what you said and would bring them up. She was so quiet, but very open. It was a joy that we got to know each other. Bus rides are the way to go. I hope there's a bus up there.