



Eulogy of Sister Patricia Robinson, BVM (Danella)

Marian Hall Chapel, Aug. 12, 2019

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Patricia Robinson.

Patricia Robinson was born on April 5, 1932, in Chicago, the third of the six children of Daniel and Mary Burg Robinson. She joined sisters Mary Ellen and Jean and was followed by Elizabeth, Daniel and Grace.

Pat attended Our Lady Help of Christians ES and graduated from Immaculata HS in 1950. She was one of 13 from her class to enter the congregation on Sept. 8, 1950. Pat received the name Danella at her reception on March 19, 1951, professed first vows on March 19, 1953, and lived 68 years as a BVM.

Pat was missioned as an elementary teacher, with a specialty in history, at St. Ambrose in Des Moines; St. Gertrude in Chicago; and St. John and Immaculate Conception in Butte, Mont. She was a secondary teacher at Pius X in Lincoln, Nebr., and Carmel in Mundelein, Ill. She also did substitute teaching at South Bend Community Schools in Indiana. She was a teacher and research assistant at the University of Notre Dame while working on her advanced degrees, completing her master's in sociology in 1973 and her doctorate in 1977.

Pat joined the Sociology Department of St. Joseph College in Rensselaer, Ind., becoming one of the college's most dedicated teachers. She started as an assistant professor in 1977, was promoted to associate professor in 1982 and professor in 1990, marking the first time in the history of the college that a woman was promoted to full professor. She served many years as the Sociology Department chair and was named Professor Emerita in 2010. She continued to serve the college community after retiring until she moved to the Chicago area in 2015.

Pat worked tirelessly to improve the quality of higher education as it adjusted to changes in funding, rapid growth and decline, and the increase of non-traditional students. Her words from 1990 still hold true. "Quality of education is a major concern of American society today, but how to achieve it is of greater concern . . . We have witnessed these changes, yet we work on maintaining our identity . . . and our purpose of the education of college students toward a full life."

Pat was passionate about education for women and their advancement in college. Putting her words into action, she welcomed into her home religious sisters from Tanzania, who were students at St. Joseph. The African community was desperate to educate its sisters in the fields of education and health. The bishop from the Catholic Diocese of Moshe-Tanzania wrote, "You have been helping through financial support and encouragement [and tutoring] to enable [their] studies . . . I owe you sincere gratitude for the good you have done . . . Without your love and concern [they] would not be where [they] are now."

Pat's ministry extended beyond the classroom. She served on the board of trustees at Mundelein College and Loyola University in Chicago, participated in the National Endowment for the Humanities seminars, and was a consultant to the Northern Indiana Health Systems Agency and the South Bend Community School Corporation. She was a member of the steering committee engaged in a lengthy study and planning process for the Diocese of Lafayette. She volunteered with several community organizations, including the board of directors of Action, Inc.,

a grant allocation program for Christian human development, and Little Flower parish council where she was elected council chair.

In her SALT article "Teaching Moral Values," Pat wrote, "As a teacher of sociology [which includes] the principles and applications of the church's social teaching, I have the opportunity of being challenged by students, and challenging them to consider their relationships with God, others and the environment. I am particularly blessed as a BVM to be a member of a community of religious women [that] takes local, national and global relationships seriously."

Relationships were extremely important to Pat. She was very involved in the life of her large and loving family, caring deeply about each member; and this love was mutual. As a BVM, she was sensitive to the struggles of the younger sisters in the congregation during the turbulent sixties and her thoughtfulness gave them comfort. On a professional level, she had the ability to engage others with varied interests and needs and work with them toward a common goal. Her former students kept in touch – many to thank her, but some to seek her advice in their professional decisions. Pat had friendships that lasted for 70 years. Primary among these was her long friendship with Sister Catherine Fay, BVM, who also worked at St. Joseph College. They lived together for 32 years until Catherine's failing health brought her to Dubuque, where she died in 2004.

Pat was a fun-loving person who delighted in life. Even during times of sadness and illness, she was upbeat, filled with hope and joy. She was so approachable that conversations with her were easy and delightful. She had a way with words that could make people laugh, no matter how difficult the day.

As in the *Book of Wisdom*, Pat, led by God's word, turned her ear to wisdom, inclined her heart to understanding, called for intelligence and raised her voice. "Wisdom entered [her] heart, knowledge [was] at home in [her] soul," and she "understood what was right and just," dedicating her life to make it so.

Pat, we – your sisters, family, and friends – are grateful for your gentle presence in our lives. We know that your spirit remains with us and we look forward to seeing you again. Until then, be at peace.