



Eulogy of Sister Patricia Ann Taylor, BVM (Wilbur)

Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, May 26, 2023

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

Patricia Ann entered this world on January 11, 1930, as the youngest and only daughter of four children born to Reuben and Agatha (Keffeler) Taylor of Dubuque, Iowa. Upon her arrival, she joined brothers Donald, Robert, and Nick who were more than a decade older. A few years later, her parents took in Bob Keffeler, Pat's orphaned cousin, and raised him as their own child. Pat commented, "Our family was always an extended one including, from time to time, relatives, friends, as well as a girl from Catholic Charities. Some lived with us for years, some seasonally, some just during tough times. . . My life was, in a sense, always communal. . . Caring for people was a way of life."

Pat was born with rickets and was often seriously ill during the first five years of her life. During this time, her mother instilled in her that death was not to be feared, and to run with life as if it is tomorrow's gift. In other words, to live in the now. Her father was a federal investigator who taught her that all people are simply people and freed Pat from prejudice. Her mother also taught her about thrift. "In eighth grade I got a quarter [allowance]. . . and had to give a nickel to the Church. I went to Mom, armed with my new knowledge in math and Bible history that said I only had to give a 10% of my income to the Church. It did not work, and God still got my nickel. It is a wonder God got my life!

Pat had a deep love for her brothers as they did for their little sister. Don would hold her on his lap while he listened to the Hit Parade. In winter, Nick would give Pat rides by tying a sled to his waist and skating on the ice. Pat was especially close to Robert who later became a Jesuit priest. He often sat by her crib when she was ill. When she was well, he would tie the sled to their Doberman Pinscher and run alongside the dog, taking her for some exciting snow rides. "I am sure I love snow and winter because of my brothers."

Pat attended St. John Grade School and graduated from St. Joseph Academy, both in Des Moines, Iowa. She entered the congregation on September 8, 1948, and received the name Wilbur upon her reception on March 19, 1949. She was professed on March 19, 1951, and lived 74 years as a BVM. Pat's close childhood friend, Nancy Wilson (SM Honora), entered in February 1949 and the two remained lifelong friends until Honora's death in 2013.

Pat was an elementary school teacher for 29 years. She was missioned at Our Lady of Lourdes and Holy Cross in Chicago; St. Francis in Chattanooga, Tennessee.; St. Charles in North Hollywood, California; and Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Tempe, Arizona. About her missions Pat commented, "Every place I've been I've loved the students. . . I have no favorite [mission], only favorite memories of each."

Many of Pat's students reconnected with her through the years. Just last summer, one of Pat's former students from St. Charles reached out. She wrote, "I think of Sister Pat often. I have many fond memories of my time with her at school. Of all the teachers I've ever had, she was able to teach me the most. I was an out-spoken stubborn child with an above-average IQ. Most teachers didn't know how to handle me, and I would revolt . . . But Sister Pat treated me with respect, so I just melted and behaved myself, and I hung on her every word. Please tell her how much she means to me."

Pat moved to Mount Carmel in Dubuque, Iowa, in 1980. Using her computer, she created an expansive world from her room in Marian Hall. "One very special part of my life was my association with the [Texas Instrument] community. . . I had user meetings [at Mount Carmel] and people came from Cedar Rapids, Dyersville, and Manchester, Iowa, [as well as] Chicago, and Calumet, Illinois. Would you believe that I am on the computer with people and over time we have become such close friends that even though I never met them I know [them]." When not in meetings, Pat worked on her family's genealogy. Her mother was one of 14 children. That side of the family alone kept her busy for a very long time!

Pat also shared, "As a people person, I enjoy being available for friendship, listening, other's needs, other's support, and for sharing helpful input as well as facilitating the common good with creative ideas and doing the little things that make a difference. . . Sharing spiritual riches [in the form of CDs, DVDs, books], and everyday things [like] tomatoes and parties are to me a vital part of community. I enjoy any limited service I can give helping people with my computer skills. I want to make a positive, compassionate difference in people's lives."

Pat was a very practical person with a great sense of humor. She would often say, "What it is, it is" and then laugh. She rarely left her room in Marian Hall, but her move to Gables somehow lessened her concerns. She allowed the staff to take her to meals. She would go to the beauty salon to have her hair done and participated in life enrichment activities. She even went outside last summer when weather conditions allowed.

"In my forty plus years [in Dubuque], I could never say thank you enough to all who touched my life. . . My special thanks are in prayers for all involved in every way. . . I just hope that my life has made a difference and that the importance of God in my life would be significant to many people."

When asked what makes her happy, Pat replied, "Happiness is catching the moonbeams of love that come from people, doing for people, receiving from people. Happiness is knowing that God loves me and being content with the way I am. . . . God's love is like no-fault insurance. The premium is paid, we're covered. That's happiness."

"I believe the promise of 1 Corinthians 2:9. . . 'Eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has it entered into our heart or imagination all that has been prepared for those who love God.' I will continue in the ongoing transformation as all creation continues to evolve into something new. As I experienced, over and over with thankfulness, unexpected discovery, and happiness, I know it is enough to have lived and enjoyed all the unimagined newness life has given me plus the added joy knowing that, as I join the multitude of the past, I am a part of the future that will become."

May the joy that Pat knows in her new life far surpass her greatest hope. Rest in God's love, dear Pat.