



Eulogy of Sister Viviana Harman, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, April 9, 2024

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Viviana Harman.

Patricia Jane Harman was born in Beverly Hills, Calif., on Nov. 8, 1930. She was the third child and only daughter of Gerald, Sr., and Vivian "Babe" (Williams) Harman. Both her parents were born in Chicago. Her mother was educated and greatly influenced by the BVMs who taught her in Chicago. She had a wonderful inner warmth and sincerity, a strong faith, and always told the truth in a tactful way. Her mother was also an excellent pianist. Patricia's father was the manager for the Standard Oil Company in northern Iowa which prompted him to relocate to Dubuque, Iowa, where he met his future wife.

The family moved to southern California when Patricia's father decided to join her grandfather and uncle in the family business – the Harman Equipment Company. Her father trained as an aeronautical engineer. He was outgoing, approachable, and scientifically creative developing new ways to service airplanes. Eventually, he became the president and board chairman of the company.

The Harman home was filled with music; their Catholic faith was the center of their lives. Patricia's oldest brother Charles answered the call to the priesthood and at one time served at St Robert Bellarmine in Burbank, Calif. Her other brother Gerald, Jr., was a legal officer in the United States Navy who rose to the rank of full commander. After retiring from active service, he became the long-time director of financial planning at the CBS Television Network. Her brothers died in 2006 and 2009, respectively.

Patricia was taught by the Holy Cross Sisters at Beverly Hills Catholic Elementary School in Beverly Hills, Calif., and by the Holy Names Sisters at St. Monica High School in Santa Monica, Calif. In 1953, she graduated from Mount Saint Mary's College, in Los Angeles with a bachelor's degree in performing arts. As a sophomore in college, she traveled by ship to Italy where she was fortunate to see Padre Pio, who was canonized in 2002. It was a memorable 21st birthday and the beginning of a lifelong devotion to Padre Pio.

Patricia met the BVMs for the first time when she accepted a job as organist and part-time music teacher at St. Robert Bellarmine and St. Bernard in Burbank, Calif., during her senior year in college. However, she did not realize which congregation ran the school until her mother saw the signature on her first paycheck and exclaimed, "I didn't know the BVMs were in California."

Patricia entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1954. She liked to point out that it was a Marian year. Sister Carolita McMahan, who was teaching music at Bellarmine-Jefferson High School in Burbank, helped Patricia through the application and preparation process. Patricia received the name Viviana at her reception on March 19, 1955; professed first vows on March 19, 1957; and lived 69 years as a BVM.

Viviana's first and favorite mission was teaching fifth grade, CCD and First Communion preparation at Incarnation in Glendale, Calif. She commented that it "exemplified the best of community living." She went on to teach music at St. Philip, St. Brigid, and St. Thomas More in San Francisco, and at St. Francis Xavier in Council Bluffs, Iowa.

In 1967, Viviana completed a master's degree in music history and literature with a minor in English from the College of the Holy Names in Oakland, Calif. Two years later, she was selected to teach a pilot school music program developed by the National Keyboard Arts Associates (NKAA) in Princeton, N.J. In this program, music reading was introduced in relation to the piano keyboard and then the students used their new knowledge in sight-singing. She later worked as a consultant for NKAA giving presentations on Keyboard Arts Reading.

St. Paul wrote, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, as in all wisdom you teach and admonish one another, singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God." (Colossians 3:16). In 1979, after spending a year caring for her mother, Viviana returned to teaching at St. Brendan in Los Angeles. Viviana commented, "Teaching was my gift. I discovered this gift as it developed. . . I took full responsibility if [the children] were struggling to learn. I reviewed how I taught until I found a better way to present the lesson." She was selected for inclusion in the *Who's Who Among America's Teachers* in 2000 and 2005, but it was the tributes from her students that meant the most.

A creative St. Brendan Student Council honored Viviana with two awards. The first read, "To Sister Viviana, You are very conscientious. You teach your lessons thoroughly and your students learn a lot! In fact, they think you're the best in the whole galaxy! You are hereby awarded the Milky Way Bar!" The second proclaimed, "This is to certify that Sister Viviana has been granted the Good & Plenty Award for providing her students with 'good' lessons and 'plenty' of them!" Yes, both awards came with the appropriate candy. In addition, a student wrote, "Sister Viviana is amazing in her knowledge! If you ask her a question, you will get an intelligent answer. She knows religion like the back of her hand, and she knows English like the front of her hand. She always has control of the class, strict but kind. She keeps us interested in the class discussions. . . She gives helpful advice for life, just like Jesus did." When Viviana retired from teaching in 2002, it marked the end of 74 years of BVM presence at St. Brendan School.

Viviana remained in Los Angeles after retirement and volunteered with hospice until moving to Mount Carmel in 2015. Though she was somewhat shy, Viviana was pleasant, a good conversationalist, and could be quite passionate about certain topics, not excluding politics. She had a charming sense of humor, a compassionate heart -- her favorite charity was St. Jude's Hospital -- and was very proud to be a BVM. Nine years after coming to Mount Carmel she herself started receiving hospice care. Several months passed, and just as Easter Sunday was slipping away the Risen Christ called her home to incredible Easter joy. Her voice now joins the angel choir in a glorious "Hallelujah!"