



**Eulogy of Sister Pat (Frederick Mary) Nolan, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, Aug. 19, 2025**

Good morning. It is good to be together to celebrate the life of our Sister Pat Nolan.

Patricia Clare Nolan was born June 30, 1937, in St. Paul, Minn. She grew up in a family rooted in love and faith. Her parents, Fred and Dorothy (Johnston) Nolan, along with her siblings Timothy, Mary and Margaret, known to us as Peggy, played an influential role in her life journey. As the eldest, her childhood was happy even as she learned responsibility early on. Her siblings always looked up to her and she showed them the way. She enjoyed living in the country with space to roam and nature to enjoy, especially the changing seasons. She was a bookworm, never happier than with a book under her arm.

Pat attended St. Luke ES and Our Lady of Peace HS, both in St. Paul. She was proud to be in the first graduating class of OLP. She remembers the impact the BVMs had on her. "I was drawn to them. Their professional and fun-loving ways and spirit of joy that permeated their teaching were contagious."

Pat entered the congregation on Sept. 8, 1955, and took the name Frederick Mary in honor of her father. She professed first vows on Feb. 3, 1958, and would have celebrated her Diamond (70th) Jubilee next month.

Religious vocation was a family affair for the Nolans. Her sisters Mary (Patricia Mary) and Peggy (Timothy Maura) entered the BVM congregation in 1958 and 1961, respectively. In a *SALT* article about sister-sisters, the Nolans collectively commented, "As things went in the family, we agree that if our brother Tim had been a girl there probably would have been four [Nolan BVMs.]" Instead, Tim was ordained a priest with the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Surprisingly, when Pat entered, she did not realize that BVMs primarily served as teachers. "I couldn't imagine. . . that I would or *could* become a teacher! The Holy Spirit certainly guided me over those years. . . I grew into the idea and studied hard to make it happen." While studying at Mundelein College in Chicago, Pat discovered her passion for English. She earned a bachelor's degree in English with minors in history and secondary education. She later completed a master's degree in English with an education minor at the University of Iowa.

Pat ministered as a high school English teacher for 21 years, serving at The Immaculata in Chicago; Columbus HS in Waterloo, Iowa; and Wahlert HS in Dubuque, Iowa. "I loved teaching English to [freshmen]," Pat commented. "I had no desire to teach college." Then in 1980, her longtime friend, Sister Barbara Kutchera, BVM, English professor at Clarke College, decided to take a sabbatical and encouraged Pat to try something new. Pat agreed to teach an evening writing course in addition to her teaching load at Wahlert. "Well, of course, I absolutely loved it," she shared.

At the end of the semester, Pat was offered a fulltime position in the Clarke English Department. "My favorite classes to teach are fiction and poetry, particularly literary criticism. . . Every one of my students is significant to me. I have learned an enormous amount from them all." In 1991, Pat received the Meneve Dunham Award for Excellence in Teaching. "Sister Pat Nolan is an enthusiastic, exciting and inspiring educator," stated Clarke College

president Sister Catherine Dunn, BVM. "Students know her as patient, a tough grader and a dear friend. I am honored to present this award to such a superb and dedicated teacher."

Pat retired in 2009 after ministering at Clarke for 29 years, including nine years as department chair, and being named professor emeritus. A colleague commented, "I admire Pat's passion and interest in students and education. . . I admire her generosity of time, energy and spirit which she shares with all." Another shared, "Pat breathes life into all her relationships – those with friends, colleagues and students. She embodies 'spirtus,' the Latin word for the breath of life." A third added, "I once read Pat's teaching philosophy. It was the word 'Love.' She believes she should try to love all her students. I have never forgotten that."

After a total of 49 years of teaching, Pat spent the first nine years of her retirement as a volunteer instructor of literature and poetry at the Roberta Kuhn Center at Mount Carmel. The adults who took her classes loved being there and became a "circle of friends." Pat always had a good time in the classroom and so did her students!

Pat's congregational work included serving as a Senator for Region 11 and as a member of several committees including The Hunger Fund. She wrote articles for the BVM magazine *SALT*. She was a member of the BVM Heritage Society for many years and served as its second chairperson. She wrote a reflection about how changes to religious life that occurred in the mid- to late-1960s touched her personally.

I wish I could recall that . . . I was passionate about seeking permission to become involved in war protests. I was teaching high school seniors who were already drafted and would, in just a few months, be fighting in Viet Nam. Although I cared deeply about them, it never occurred to me to do anything more than pray about their futures!

For me, the turbulence [of that time] . . . had mostly to do with lists [that] appeared on the convent bulletin boards . . . naming BVMs who had withdrawn from the congregation. I remember feeling devastated, standing in front of those boards, scanning the lists for people I knew.

Pat experienced many health challenges in these last years. Yet, when reflecting upon her years as a BVM, she expressed her gratitude. "I couldn't have been led to a better life. In some ways it was pure gift and always I found graced moments in every day."

St. Paul wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord, always. I shall say it again: rejoice! Your kindness should be known to all." (Philippians 4:4-5). Pat did indeed "rejoice in the Lord." She will always be remembered as a woman of kindness, a woman of faithfulness, a woman of courage, and above all, a woman of love.