



Eulogy of Patricia Ann (Marjorie) Donahoe, BVM
Mary Frances Clarke Chapel, , Feb. 19, 2026

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

Patricia Ann was born on Sept. 14, 1931, in Des Moines, Iowa, to Anthony and Marjorie (LaValle) Donahoe. Her older brother Anthony John died shortly after birth in 1929. Brothers John "Jack" Boniface, Anthony Jude, and Dennis Raphael followed. Sadly, Jack was only nine years old when he contracted polio and died.

Pat's great-grandfather was Michael Donahoe for whom the Cutler-Donahoe Bridge, one of the famous bridges of Madison County, was named. His lineage includes two additional BVMs. Michael's granddaughter was SM Francis of Assisi Donahoe, BVM and his daughter-in-law was the aunt of SM Emmelia Hunt, BVM. They died in 1976 and 1996 respectively.

Pat attended St. Peter ES in Des Moines and graduated from St. Joseph's Academy. A BVM sister at St. Joseph was very supportive when Pat was worried about a school project. She recalled, "I remember saying to myself, 'I wish I could be that kind,' and a voice said, 'Couldn't you?' I told myself, 'I could never be a nun.' and the voice asked, 'Why not?'"

That is how, during an ice storm, Pat found herself boarding a train in Des Moines heading for Dubuque and Mount Carmel. Her parents cried at the train station; it was the first time Pat had seen her father cry. Yet, as painful as it was to leave home, Pat knew she was going toward her calling. "It's where God wants me to be." she said. "This is where I belong." Pat entered the congregation on Feb. 2, 1950, and received the name Marjorie during her reception on Aug. 15, 1950. She professed first vows on Aug. 15, 1952, and lived 76 years as a BVM.

Pat taught in the primary grades for 31 years. She was missioned at Mount Carmel Academy in Wichita, Kans.; St. Patrick in Lincoln, Ill.; Presentation in Chicago; St. Therese in Kansas City, Mo.; and Holy Family in Mason City, Iowa. After her father died, her mother needed Pat at home in Des Moines. She taught and served as media services librarian at Brooks ES, a public school not far from mother's home so she could stay with her mother and walk to work. Some of her students would walk home with her, which helped students whose way home was fraught with bullies.

Pat completed a bachelor's degree in history from Clarke College in 1966, and a master's degree in elementary guidance from Drake University in 1974 while living in Des Moines. After her mother died, she returned to school and earned a master's degree in library science from the University of Iowa.

Pat accepted a position as a media services librarian at Mundelein College in 1983. The next year she was named librarian and library director. She completed a one-year library internship at Notre Dame of Maryland and Loyola University-Maryland in 1992. She returned to Chicago to serve five years as librarian at Loyola University. After retiring, she contributed many hours as a library volunteer.

Pat moved to Mount Carmel in 2003 and, in short order, she became the librarian for the Mount Carmel Library. In 2015, she found a software program to store information about the book collection on line. She personally scanned 4000 books to the cloud. It was difficult for Pat to leave the library when the time came. She did find one new activity to fill some of the time. During the construction of Mount Carmel Bluffs, Pat served as "Snoopervisor" of the construction crew. With her binoculars, she kept a close watch on the progress from the third floor Motherhouse turret.

Pat saw herself as a helper who enriched daily community living by doing little tasks like tidying up indoor and outdoor spaces. A self-described introvert, she shared, "What surprised me my whole life is that I was taking a stand against things that were wrong, and I said so, even though my stomach was churning." Pat learned that even when in a tough spot and wondering how things could possibly work out, God is with you all the way.

With awe and appreciation, Pat shared, "I cannot pass on from this wonderful world without leaving a public testimony of my gratitude to my courageous and self-sacrificing ancestors who risked their very lives to provide a better life for the generations who were to follow. The lessons I've learned by searching for family history have not only thrilled me with discoveries of unknown personalities, but the implications of their experiences have touched my heart and placed on me the responsibility of recognizing the great debt that I and my generations owe them. They believed that America was the land of opportunity and they struggled through primitive voyages on sea and land to begin a new life in America's Midwest where they could practice the Catholic faith for which they were persecuted in their former lands."

"God has made everything appropriate to its time, and has put the timeless into their hearts, without their ever discovering, from beginning to end, the work God has done." (Ecclesiastes 3:11). Reflecting upon the end of life, Pat wrote, "While I believe in the reality of death, I also firmly believe that we begin our eternal lives as we develop our spiritual lives. The concept of 'passing' as used in some cultures aptly describes for me the transition to new life in God. St. Augustine's reflection, 'we have here no lasting home' has framed my present life as a passing-through, in my search for a lasting home."

Pat desired that her funeral liturgy "truly celebrates the beginning of new life." She wrote, "The selections that I have chosen . . . represent the experiences in which I have found joy, and I pass them on as a final lesson facilitated by a lifelong teacher, an American Catholic, the descendent of Irish and Hessian immigrants, called to serve God's people, in the way revealed to another Irish immigrant, Mary Frances Clarke."

We rejoice with and for Pat as she passes into her new life surrounded by her ancestors of family and faith.