Sister Patricia Cecile Slattery, OP
1928-2016

Sister Patricia Cecile Slattery was born on August 26, 1928, in St. Joseph, Michigan. Baptized Patricia Jean, she was the youngest of three children born to Clifford and Opal (Taylor) Slattery. Her father was born in Stevensville, Michigan, and worked as an electrician. Her mother was born in Lafayette, Indiana. Opal was a convert and worked in a factory so their children could attend Catholic school. Patricia her brother John Thomas and sister Mary Catherine attended St. Joseph School from grades one through twelve. In her autobiography, Sister Patricia wrote,

I grew to know many of the Sisters from spending time with them after school. I was very attracted by their friendliness and happiness. I appreciated their work ethic. I loved being with them and soon found myself wanting to join them.

After graduating from St. Joseph High School in June 1946 she entered the postulate at the age of seventeen. Following first profession in December 1947, she remained in Adrian for four months and then was assigned to teach second grade at St. Patrick School in St. Charles, Illinois. In her autobiography she shared the following memories about her first mission.

I lived with some wonderful women like Sister Rose Miriam. She was my mentor helping me with lesson plans and etc. I remained at St. Patrick until June 1955. During my years there I completed requirements [and received my] Bachelor of Philosophy Degree from Siena Heights College in 1954.

[On May 10, 1955] my father died of a heart attack and although I was able to get home for the funeral, I was not permitted to attend the wake because it was in the evening and we couldn't be out after eight o'clock.

In August 1955 she was assigned to teach first grade at St. Mary School in Georgetown, South Carolina. Sister Pat was one of the three Sisters at the school. She remembered “wonderful times of supper and prayers at the ocean.”

After five years at St. Mary, Sister Pat was missioned to teach first grade at St. Mary Help of Christians School in Aiken, South Carolina. This was a much larger school, with a larger enrollment and larger classes. By January, Sister Pat was feeling the strain and was changed to St. Thomas Aquinas School in East Lansing, Michigan. This was a smaller community, and Sister Pat continued to teach first grade there for the next five and a half years. In 1967 she was changed to St. Leo School in Flint, Michigan, to teach for one year.
In 1968, Sister Pat returned to Detroit to teach first grade at St. Scholastica School. She remained there for the next thirty-eight years. She wrote,

*In the thirty-eight years I lived at St. Scholastica I witnessed a neighborhood changing from white to African American. I loved teaching the black children. They had so much life and energy. I especially loved teaching religion and taking them to church. It was the school policy that we teach religion to everyone. Even though most families were not Catholic they did not object. In fact, most were very supportive. The children loved the experience of planning the liturgy, choosing their own songs for Mass. We encouraged the children to come to Mass on Sunday with their aunt or grandmother if their parents were not available. We also took the children to visit the elderly in the Little Sisters of the Poor Nursing Care Facility which was across the street from the school. The people loved having the children visit and receiving cards from them.*

*I had the distinction of being the last Adrian Dominican teaching in the school.*

In 1994, Sister Pat retired from teaching but continued to serve as the librarian for the children in the primary grades. She also taught catechism, worked in the supply store, and collected clothing for the poor.

When the St. Scholastica Convent closed in 2006, Sister Pat moved to St. Alphonsus Convent in Dearborn until it closed in 2010. Then she returned to Adrian and volunteered in a number of services on the Motherhouse campus until 2012, when she suffered a serious stroke that affected the left side of her body. In her autobiography, she wrote:

*I recall getting out of bed in the early hours [of the morning] to use the bathroom. I felt a bit wobbly on my feet so I was using the desk to keep my balance. During that time I lost consciousness and fell. I was not discovered until late the next day when Sister Marie Joannes O'Donnell alerted Sister Peg O'Flynn that I had not been seen all day. A wonderful speech therapist came to work with me along with our own therapist. During this time I also had to have surgery on my left hip which was somehow injured during the stroke.*

*My present ministries include distributing mail once again on 2South, sitting with [Sisters who are] dying and exercising “prayer and presence.”*

*As I look back at my life as an Adrian Dominican Sister, I am grateful to God for the gift of my vocation. God has always given me the graces I needed to adjust to change, especially those that came after Vatican II. But, on the other hand, the changes in our approach to ministry have enabled us to get to know those with whom we minister better and allow us to visit the homes of friends and parishioners. In addition, we have freedom to spend more time with our families.*
Sister Patricia Cecile Slattery died on Sunday, April 17, 2016, at the age of eighty-seven and in the sixty-ninth year of her religious profession.

Sister Helen Sohn, Co-Chapter Prioress of the Adrian Dominican Holy Rosary Chapter said,

We open the Remembrance Ritual with the lighting of the Christ candle; a reminder to all of us of Christ’s presence with us and at the Easter Season, reminding all of us that just as Christ rose from the dead, so too has Sister Pat.

An attitude of gratitude permeated Pat’s whole being. “Thank You” sprung from her lips echoing her heart’s sentiment. Over and over, in her Annals, she expressed gratitude for the sisters with whom she lived, for the members of her Mission Group, the Weber Neighborhood, and most recently the sisters and staff of 2South Maria. Gratefulness for what she called her blessings took precedence over “wants” and filled Pat with a joy that was felt by all who came into her presence.

Sister Marie Sheila Beatty shared this remembrance with Sister Helen Sohn.

Pat was a God-send to all the Sisters living at St. Alphonsus. She was always cheerful, kind, helpful and generous with her time, responding to our many needs. She also became involved in ministry at St. Alphonsus Parish.

Pat Hallman, one of Pat’s teaching partners at St. Scholastica School, sent this message.

Sister Pat was the most easy-going partner and certainly the most agreeable partner that I have ever worked with in my forty-five years of teaching. She would always say to me, “Whatever you decide I will go along with it.” No matter what we did, we always did it together. It was as if we had one big first grade classroom with two fun-loving teachers.

Frances Gagne, who also worked with Sister Pat at St. Scholastica School, sent this message:

I deeply regret being unable to physically attend this memorial service. There is so much to be said about Sister Pat. I’ll just begin by saying thank you for sixty-nine years of friendship which began in 1947 when you so graciously cared for my brothers and sisters on visiting day, allowing me time to visit privately with my parents.

Our lives took us in different directions only to end up working together at St. Scholastica School for twenty years prior to retirement. Thank you for your help,
but most of all thank you for your prayerful example of a true daughter of Dominic. You will always be in my heart and in my prayers.

Sister Ellen Murphy spoke about the first time she met Sister Pat and how they shared mutual interests and experiences. “We were neighbors in Maria and often visited about many things.” Sister Ellen especially remembered Sister Pat asking her to teach her how to maneuver her powered wheelchair around corners, especially when entering or leaving a room. “I thought I was teaching her,” she said, “but in the end she was really teaching me much more.”

The first reading from Revelations¹ about the image of a great multitude from every nation, race, people and tongue was used by Sister Marcine Klemm in her homily to show how it parallels Sister Pat’s life in many ways: “her fidelity to prayer and faithfulness during times of stress were mentioned by many during the remembrance service. Now Pat is home and stands before God to worship Him day and night.”

¹ Revelations 7:9-10, 14-17
Right: Sister Patricia with her family, July 1959.
Sister Patricia with her Diamond Jubilee Crowd, 2006. Sister Patricia is in the second row from the top, fifth from the left, wearing a white jacket and black and white blouse.