Both of Sister Patricia Brady’s parents were born in Northern Ireland, Francis Joseph Brady in County Down and Mary Margaret Quinn in County Tyrone. The two met in Toronto, Canada, having immigrated there to seek better opportunities than existed in their homeland, and married and settled down in Montreal, Canada. It wasn’t long, however, before the young couple returned to Toronto, where their oldest child, Francis Leo, was born.

A few years later, Sister Pat’s father went to Chicago to find work, and when he got a job in the stockyards there, Mary and their son joined him in the United States. Later, he went to work for the Chicago Transit Authority as a streetcar conductor, and spent the rest of his working life in various positions with the CTA.

Within a year of their arrival in the States, the couple welcomed another baby into the family, a boy they named Kevin. Sadly, however, Kevin died of diphtheria before his second birthday. Pat was born on March 12, 1939, receiving her name because of her arrival coming just before St. Patrick’s Day. Two years later, Daniel was born, and then ten years went by before another girl, Colleen, came into the family, followed by Mary four years after that.

Because the family moved often, Sister Pat attended four grade schools around Chicago, one of them twice: St. Felicitas, St. Columbanus, St. Felicitas again, Little Flower, and finally St. Kilian. This variety of schools brought her into contact with three congregations of Sisters: IHMs, Mercy Sisters, and the Adrian Dominicans who taught at St. Kilian’s. When it came time for high school, she chose the Adrian Dominican-operated Aquinas High School, which required an hour-plus ride on city buses each way, over another school that was within walking distance of home.

Her high school years were happy ones, and inspired by the Adrian Dominican Sisters who were her teachers, Sister Pat entered the Congregation shortly after graduation in June 1957. She received the habit and her religious name, Sister Francis Kevin, that December.

Sister Pat’s first assignment was St. Joseph Parish School in Adrian, where she taught from January 1959 until June 1962. She then taught at St. John the Baptist in Ypsilanti, Michigan, for the next seven years: in the elementary school from 1962 to 1965 and in the high school from 1965 to 1969. In 1963, she completed her bachelor’s degree in English from Siena Heights College (University) in Adrian.

In 1969, she was missioned to Resurrection High School in Lansing, Michigan; at the end of that school year, Resurrection was consolidated with another school into Lansing Catholic Central High (later simply known as Lansing Catholic), and she continued to teach at the new school until June 1975, earning a master’s degree in English from Michigan State University in 1971.

Sister Pat left Lansing Catholic to become student affairs director at Tampa Catholic High School in Tampa, Florida. Two years later, in 1977, she became associate principal at Immaculate Heart of Mary School in Westchester, Illinois, and was there for the next ten years until 1987. After a year’s sabbatical, she taught high school English at Mother McAuley High School in Chicago from 1988 to 1991. In 1989, she earned her second master’s degree, this one in educational administration, from Boston College.
McAuley High was to be her last classroom ministry. She was elected Prioress of the Upper Midwest Chapter in 1991 and began her six-year term that June. It was a ministry, she wrote in her 1992-93 annals, which allowed her to experience “the soul” of the Congregation as she walked with the women of her chapter in their efforts “to make the Gospel of Jesus a reality in their own lives and in the lives of the people to whom they minister.” And when her term was up in June 1997, her last communication with the Sisters in the chapter was this poem:

“May the Spirit God/shake your life/and fire your soul/and give you the courage to do what it takes/to bring good news of justice, peace, and love/to those places/and to those people/to whom you’ve been called in your journey of life.

“And whatever road is yours,/may you always sense the grasp of your sister’s hands/and the warmth of her love/as you discern the signposts/along the journey way of your day to day life.

“And finally, may you laugh always/with a lightness and aliveness/that pours forth easily from the heart/of one who knows she is loved,/that life is meant to last forever,/and that all will be well.

“Walk gently, my sisters, and thank you.”

Sister Pat quickly found herself drawn into working with young people again, but in a far different capacity than in the classroom. Realizing that schools once completely staffed by Dominican Sisters now had few, if any, Dominicans on their faculties, she began to ponder how to bring the Dominican charism to the students and teach them the richness of Dominican history.

And so, in 1999, she invited all the Dominican high schools in the country to send faculty and student representatives to a pilot conference in Chicago that would introduce students to the Dominican charism. Out of that came the Dominican High Schools Preaching Conference. Sister Pat also became the chairperson of the first Dominican Volunteers USA board of directors and helped found what is now called the Dominican Association of Secondary Schools (DASS), becoming its first director in 2008.

A few days after Sister Pat’s death, the executive director of the Dominican Youth Movement USA, Amityville Dominican Sister Gina Fleming, OP, posted a message on Facebook, which read in part,

Yes, Pat Brady lived and breathed DOMINICAN life. It was in her blood. Recently when I visited her during the 2019 High School Preaching Conference held in Adrian, Michigan, she spent the time telling me what still needs to be done, and exactly how I was to do it!

I will miss her enthusiasm, her great sense of humor, but most of all her WISDOM! Yes, the Order has lost a great Dominican but those of us who were mentored by her will do our best to carry on her FIRE FOR THE CHARISM!

Sister Pat’s work to further the Dominican charism among young people led to her receiving the St. Dominican Award from Siena Heights in 2004.

She moved from Westchester, Illinois, where she had lived since 1997, to Metairie, Louisiana, in 2009, and as DASS director worked out of an office at St. Mary’s Dominican High School, New Orleans, for the next several years. She retired from the position in 2014 but continued to live in Metairie until 2017, when she returned to Adrian to live.
“It’s been a most rewarding life!” she wrote in her annals that year. “Thank you, God!”

After developing a severe infection, Sister Pat died unexpectedly at the University of Michigan Medical Center on August 6, 2019. She was eighty years of age and had been an Adrian Dominican Sister for sixty-one of those years.

“She lived and breathed Dominican life,” said Sister Mary Jane Lubinski, Adrian Crossroads Chapter Prioress, in her eulogy at Sister Pat’s wake service. “Catherine of Siena’s words describe her life: ‘If you are who you are meant to be, you will set the world on fire.’ The fire rages in the lives of the young Dominican preachers and students.”
Right: Sister Patricia with her sister Colleen, then 6, in 1957

Members of the 2007 Golden Jubilarian Class are: back row, from left, Sisters Joella Miller, Mary Ann Phillip, Margaret Ann McGuiness, Mary Therese Napolitan, Barbara Cervenka, Sharon Culhane, and Evelyn Montez; middle row, from left, Sisters Joanne Evans, Jude Van Baalen, Janet Traut, Dorothea Gramlich, Eunice Drazba, Frances Lombaer, and Bernitha Glombowski; and front row, from left, Sisters Helen McAllister, Susan Elaine Kresse, Katherine Kenny, Joan Kowalski, Monica Kim, Helen Diane McGuirt, and Patricia Brady. Not pictured is Sister Patricia Reno.

Left: Sister Patricia Brady, right, with Dr. Cynthia Thomas, President of St. Mary’s Dominican High School, New Orleans, on the night of Sister Pat’s award ceremony as recipient of the Siena Heights St. Dominick Award, October 2004. Right: From left, Sisters Peggy Brennan, Patricia Brady, Molly Giller, and Marcine Klemm