

## Obituary



Sister Patricia Guthrie, IHM, age 92, died Tuesday, Feb. 21, 2017, in the IHM Health Care Center, Monroe, Mich.

Sister Patricia was one of six daughters born to Hallie and Olive (Kalso) Guthrie. Born in Detroit Nov. 26, 1924, she was baptized at St. Catherine Church (Detroit). The children attended Guardian Angel Elementary School and graduated from St. Catherine High School. In 1942, Sister Patricia entered the Sisters, Servants of the Immaculate Heart of Mary in

Monroe and received the religious name, Sister Joan of Arc. Her sister Helen entered the community one year later.

After earning a bachelor's degree from Marygrove College and a master's degree from Loyola University, Chicago, Sister Pat began a career in formal education that would span 38 years. She taught in Monroe at St. Mary and St. John, where she also served as principal; in Detroit at Gesu, St. Francis de Sales and Christ the King, where she also served as principal; and as supervisor of Upper Elementary Schools, Detroit, for seven years. The next five years were spent at Lansing Catholic High School in administration and as principal. In 1976, Sister Pat was called to community leadership as provincial and co-provincial for the Northwest Province of the IHM congregation until 1982. She was elected by the community to serve on the IHM Leadership Council from 1988 to 1994.

After a well-earned sabbatical year, Sister Pat became an assistant in the Office of Christian Education, Archdiocese of Detroit. Working closely with Msgr. John Quinn and Superintendent Frances Nadolny, OP, Sister Pat enjoyed this fruitful and challenging ministry for nine years.

In 2004, Sister Pat retired to the IHM Motherhouse. She was a dedicated volunteer for works of justice, peace and undoing racism, as well as lector, Eucharistic minister and evening prayer leader. She entered the Health Care Center in 2012.

## Remembering

During one of my visits with Sister Patricia, I asked her about her favorite scripture texts. Readily, she mentioned three: 1) "Blessed is she who believes that the promises made by God to her will be fulfilled" (Magnificat); 2) "You are precious: I have called you by name" (Isiah 43); and 3) "You are my servant through whom I show my glory" (Isiah 49). She spent some time talking about what these texts meant to her and how they anchored her life. What emerged so clearly in that conversation was Sister Pat's deep-rooted and abiding faith, her well-cultivated, loving intimacy with God, and her confidence in sharing her gifts in ministry as a reflection of God's own life and love in her. Then, in her very own special way that combined a kind of insistent clarity with a certain gentleness, she told me that she wanted to be remembered and celebrated much more for who she is than for what she has done in her long years of service as an IHM Sister.

These two dimensions – her being and her doing – are of course one in her, for Sister Patricia Anne Guthrie did everything from a heart and mind deeply rooted in God's own heart, a relationship she cultivated every single day in prayer. She told me that nothing ever took over her time for daily prayer, nothing was ever more important. Knowing Sister Pat, this is quite a statement, for she had very important matters to attend to every single day of her very active, ministerial life. Over time, this steady practice of prayer rendered in her a great sense of gratitude and a profound spiritual freedom that flowered into wonderful gifts of heart and mind and spirit received from God and shared generously in so many ways and with so many people "all down the years" of her IHM life.

Patricia Anne Guthrie was born on Nov. 26, 1924, in Detroit, the eldest of six daughters of Olivia Caroline (Kalso) and Hallie Atwell Guthrie. Her mother endured a long and hard labor and an attending doctor said that Pat would probably be stillborn. But, as Pat put it, "History proved this prediction to be false," for indeed she came out of the womb fully alive! Her forbears came from adventurous Scottish and English stock on her father's side, several of whom immigrated early into the new British colonial settlements in North America. In fact, two of her great, great, great paternal grandfathers served in the American Revolutionary War and then settled later in Pennsylvania. Her mother's family came from Germany in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and found their homes in Detroit.

In her autobiography, Sister Pat speaks lovingly of this heritage. Her father's deep love for her mother led him to journey from his strong Seventh Day Adventist faith into her mother's equally firm Roman Catholic faith. They were married in St. Catherine Church on the east side of Detroit on Sept. 14, 1921 and Patricia Anne was baptized there, some three years later, on Dec. 14, 1924. The Guthrie family, gradually increasing with five more daughters born over the next nine years, were staunch and steady members of the parish. Catholic life including parish prayer and activities, IHM staffed grade and school education, and daily family prayer marked this family's faith, a way of life that sustained them firmly in the difficult days of the 1930s and 1940s in Detroit. Pat writes with appreciation of how her parents always placed the needs and well-being of their children ahead of their own. They taught their children the basic Christian values of love, respect, obedience, loyalty to friends and family, personal responsibility and also how to celebrate, simply but always with great joy, the festive holidays that marked the yearly rhythm of life: family birthdays, Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, and Easter.

Pat's life unfolded gracefully in this loving family and over time her loving God led her to take notice of a call to a second family, the IHM Sisters of Monroe, Mich. She became a postulant in Monroe on July 2, 1942, after graduating from St. Catherine High School in June. To leave such a loving family was difficult for Pat, but it was particularly hard for her mother who counted on Pat to help out with her five younger sisters and to assist the family financially, too, now that she had graduated high school and could get a full-time job. Her father supported her, though, and encouraged her to follow her call and not worry about her mother's concerns for he would attend to them. At the same time, he made sure to tell her that she could return home at any time if she felt she was not called to IHM life. Well, we know that Pat did indeed remain and became a fully committed IHM Sister whose name was Sister Joan of Arc, professing her vows on Jan. 2, 1945. In fact, her sister Helen (Sister Agnes Rita), second in the family order, also became an IHM shortly after, and their mother did indeed fully embrace and rejoice in their calls to serve the church as IHM Sisters.

Sister Pat's life of service in ministry got off to a fast start. While still in the second year of her novitiate, she began to teach in Sept. 1944 at St. Mary School, Monroe. Not quite 20 years old, she was assigned to teach the sixth grade under the very competent supervision of Sister Marie Winifred Kerwin. In turn, they became life-long friends who shared their passion for Christian education with

so many others. Sister Pat's gift for teaching began unfolding well at St. Mary, although she also described one challenge that emerged. "I had little or no trouble with my own sixth graders, but the exchange class I had of fifth graders were difficult to govern." This experience came with her in the next year when she moved to St. Gregory school in Detroit and was again assigned to the sixth grade. To quote her autobiography:

"I asked God to give me a sign confirming my vocation or lack thereof. If I continued to have difficulty disciplining students as I did with the fifth graders of St. Mary's, I would know that I was not suited to be a teacher, and I would leave religious life. The sixth grade class at St. Gregory's were delightful to teach. I exercised a firm hand, as needed, and throughout my entire teaching career I never again encountered problems in disciplining students. God confirmed me in my choice of vocation!"

Those of us who know Pat Guthrie can just see her praying in that convent chapel and then stepping into that sixth grade classroom with confidence! Her teaching gifts continued to grace God's people in Monroe, Detroit and Lansing for 16 years in elementary school classrooms, one year in high school, and then for 18 more years in educational leadership as a grade and high school principal.

Sister Pat's life path then took a turn toward direct service to the IHM congregation. For seven years she served as an IHM supervisor, guiding new fifth through eighth grade teachers, as she herself was once mentored in a process of refining her gifts for the ministry of Catholic education. During this time, she also contributed to that ministry at the national level. She served on many committees of the National Catholic Education Association (NCEA) concerning supervision; developing evaluative criteria; constructing and giving workshops in Washington, Detroit, Baltimore, and New Orleans; and collaborating in textbook writing and reviewing. Her loving God continued to confirm her call to the ministry of Catholic education and her response was indeed fulsome and generous, reaching so many more people and thus mirroring God's glory ever more widely.

This direct service to the IHM congregation took a new turn in 1976 when Sister Pat was elected co-provincial, along with Christine Dobrowolski, IHM, of the newly formed Northwest Province, centered in Detroit. All of Sister Pat's administrative knowledge and skills and her personal gifts of spiritual and

pastoral leadership came into play as she and Sister Christine worked together in relationships with the Sisters of the Province to build it up and to meet new challenges in shared leadership and in the call of Vatican II.

Sister Pat's direct service to the IHM congregation continued from 1988 to 1994 as vice-president of the congregation. Her set of responsibilities included effecting painstakingly and carefully, the transfer of IHM educational institutions to lay boards of trustees, a work for which there had been no precedence in the long history of IHM high schools and Marygrove College. As well, she worked as a guide to the relatively new IHM Associates program, of which she said, "It was a great joy for me to accept new members into the Associate program. They never ceased to be a source of inspiration to me ... a gift of the Spirit for our times."

At the end of this time, Sister Pat enjoyed a renewing sabbatical year, which included scriptural study in Greece, Turkey, Egypt and Israel and more leisure time to cultivate some other interests. This year, indeed, readied her for still another period of challenging and fruitful ministry. In 1995, Sister Pat began serving part-time as administrative assistant to Msgr. John Quinn and Superintendent Frances Nadolny, OP, in the Archdiocese of Detroit's Office of Christian Education, a ministry she continued until 2004. To read in Sister Pat's autobiography about the range, extent and types of educational leadership she engaged in during these nine years is simply staggering! She described these years lovingly as the "crowning achievement" of her 59 years of active ministry in the church and the IHM congregation. Simply and straightforwardly, she wrote: "I have been so blessed these past fifty-nine years to have ministered with so many outstanding persons who taught me so much and helped me grow." To this song of gratitude, I would add another verse: "How many, how many, how many and in so many different ways have you taught so much and you helped so many to grow in faith and hope and love and knowledge and wisdom "all down your years" of your IHM life!"

In June, 2004, Sister Pat retired to the IHM Motherhouse, a place she readily embraced as her home and where she continued to deepen her life in God in personal and communal liturgical prayer and in service to others in library work and in pastoral visits with sisters in the Health Care Center and in hospitals. She enjoyed, too, a steady stream of festive visits from family and long-time friends and the loving companionship of her IHM Sisters.

In these Motherhouse years, through some ups and downs, such as the sudden death of her beloved sister Helen in 2004, the deaths of her sisters Gerry, in 2009 and Janette in 2013, the deaths of many of her close IHM friends, and the experience of some gradual diminishment in her own health, Sister Pat has had many occasions to reflect on the mysterious but blessed rhythm of life and suffering and death and life again in the fullness of God's love. And gratitude continues always to be her song. "I am humbled and awed by God's overwhelming goodness to me," she said so often. She loved the hymns, "All My Days," by the St. Louis Jesuits:

You have filled me with good things and plenty  
and surrounded my table with friends.  
Their love and their laughter enrich me  
and draw us all unto You.

Till the end of my days, O Lord,  
I will bless your name,  
sing your praise, give you thanks  
all my days.

Sister Patricia Anne Guthrie's being and doing, her integrated and generous life of love, is indeed transformed now into pure love, and she continues "to show us God's glory" (Isaiah 49).

Written and delivered by Mary Ellen Sheehan, IHM  
Feb. 24, 2017