

Pamela (Joseph David) Kobasic, IHM
April 24, 1947 - Aug. 20, 2023

We begin Pam's story with her first breath at 6 a.m. on April 24, 1947. Pamela Suzanne Kobasic came screaming into this world ... literally. Pam always used the story of her vocal objection to an early morning arrival to support her belief that "Life before 10 a.m. is crazy." How ironic she returned to God just before 2 a.m.

Instead of being named after her grandmothers like her father wanted, Pam was named by her mother after a character in a novel; thus began a lifelong love for books, something she shared with her mother and many others over the years. Later, she learned that *Pamela*, also titled *Virtue Rewarded*, was the first American novel.

Pam was born into a position of privilege as the first child, granddaughter and niece. She admitted she was "a bit spoiled," even though David joined the ranks when she was one year old, followed by Marty, Christine, Ed, Rick, Bob and Dena.

The family moved when she was about five years old and Pam has fond memories of that house as the neighborhood gathering place for kickball games and how the volunteer firefighter siren would clear out the dads from the neighborhood picnics. As Pam got older, her chores at home became more regular, as did caring for her younger siblings. Although she often tried to talk her mom out of some of them, she noted, "It never worked."

Some of Pam's special memories from childhood included being a flower girl for her godmother, Aunt Evelyn's, wedding; being frustrated in not being the priest when they played Mass because she wasn't a boy; sitting on the side of the house making up stories and writing them down; Uncle Pete's outrageous stories and custom rules for Monopoly; and bubble lights on the often "Charlie Brown style" family Christmas tree.

The Kobasic family had many strong traditions and rituals around food, family and faith. One story that survived the test of time was the seriousness with which Pam took the request to bless the basketball hoop Joey received for his First Communion. Pam agreed with and cherished most of the traditions. The practices she disagreed with "had an element of gender bias or unequal voice as part of them."

It was at St. Mary that her love for reading took root. In the early 2000s, she wrote, "It was/is my passion in life." Pam also had an affinity for differences and once wrote, "I loved everything about school. I've always been fascinated by differences and school provided me with many differences." That held true for Pam throughout her life; she liked the attention that came from pushing boundaries in thought and practice. When I



emptied her “Hopes & Dreams” jar after her passing, one slip of paper simply read, “Accept differences as just that – differences.”

Pam found high school “dull” except for English class with Sister Alexandra. “She was an actress at heart, really knew her stuff and could make the deepest material come alive.” Pam, in turn, became known for “really knowing her stuff” when she taught as well. Over the years, Pam ministered in Catholic schools in Westchester, Chicago, Joliet and South Holland in Illinois; Marine City, Detroit, Allen Park and Monroe in Michigan; as well as Gary, Indiana. Her cousin, Mary Frances, always enjoyed sharing “teacher stories” with Pam and often entertained the family as they recounted the escapades of their students.

Her love for music blossomed during high school as part of the choir: “Music filled an empty space in me.” This remained true for Pam throughout her life. Her music repertoire was vast and diverse ... classical, country, blues, rock and folk. She was the only family member to ever ask Sara, who worked on Madonna’s staff, for tickets to a concert. Sara recalled, “I was kind of worried about that. I warned her that dancers dressed as nuns were in the show, but she just laughed and said she was fine with that.” Whether playing, singing or listening to a recording, music fueled Pam’s spirit and touched her soul. During her hospitalization in June and afterward, we often picked and listened to an “artist of the day.” The final refrains she actually whispered the words to were recordings of *Let It Be* and *El Shaddai*.

When Sister Mary Lambert (Rita Critser) told Pam she thought she had a vocation, Pam recalls saying, “Not in this lifetime – God’s not calling me.” Sister Mary Lambert calmly countered Pam’s objections and ended with, “God calls all kinds of people.” Pam eventually caved and joined in on a trip to the Motherhouse. “The place, mystery, ritual and happy people” drew her in ... and “the fact that it was all female didn’t hurt either.” Given that everyone looked and talked alike, Pam doubted that she could cut it. Oh, her love of differences strikes again.

During a school vocation retreat in December of her senior year, Pam reflected on her visit to the Motherhouse as an experience of “women externally happy, dedicated to a higher purpose and sharing similar values.” On that retreat, something that was said helped Pam name the felt sense that the IHMs loved each other and she wanted that. After Christmas, Pam voiced her desire and mapped out a plan with Sister Mary Lambert. Once accepted, Pam still wasn’t convinced about the choice but thought she would “give it a try and when it didn’t work, she would come home, figure something else out and get on with her life.”

A new chapter began on Sept. 6, 1965, as the Kobasic family drove from Lorain, Ohio, to Monroe, Michigan. Pam was happy, as she put it, “to be getting out of Dodge” and looked forward to fulfilling her dream of becoming a teacher and discovering what the future held despite the “serviceable boring attire required to begin this venture.” At the reception to novitiate, she was given the name Joseph David.

In addition to teaching and administration, Pam shared her passion for music, literature, and theater with many over the years. Dena has great memories of Shakespeare at Stratford with Pam or learning to play guitar because of her influence. Pam played for liturgies at the Motherhouse, the Lord's Barn and her places of ministry. If music was involved, you could pretty much count Pam in.

Over the years, it was also not uncommon to find Pam cooking for a retreat at Crawfton, pinch-hitting at the scorer's or admissions table for a high school game, or connecting people who had similar experiences, like living with cancer so that they could support each other.

Pam was also known to have a stubborn streak. As a result, change was not something that came easy. Two of her favorite sayings as principal were "When pigs fly" and "Noted." Both indicated a less-than-favorable chance for change. However, there were times when she eventually came around. Her co-workers through the years also remember her wicked sense of humor, competitiveness in games or contests, support of extra-curricular activities for students, and willingness to debate just about anything.

Pam was relatively private about her relationship with God. She claimed to "Fight with God like no one else." which says quite a bit about how they duked it out regularly. Despite this privacy, her spirituality was visible in the lyrics of one of her favorite country songs. "You got to sing like you don't need the money. Love like you'll never get hurt. You got to dance like nobody's watching. It's got to come from the heart if you want it to work." Although Pam would never have described her spirituality as particularly Marian in nature, her favorite song to play on guitar and two of her favorites to sing were all versions of the *Magnificat*. I believe this is a clue to Pam's sense of connection between answering and remaining faithful to God's call over time.

As decades passed, Pam relished in the generational expansion of the "Kobasic Crew." She cherished the stories, pictures and updates throughout her life. It is important for all of you to know that even though she did not reach out in recent years, Pam continued to cherish and love each of you and was always happy when you sent photos. Her "Aunt Pam" blanket was one of her favorites and symbolically wrapped her in love regularly, including her last days with us.

The final chapters of Pamela's novel were marked with struggle. Despite opportunities to choose differently and the tools and support, Pam's challenges were stronger than all the logic, love, and resources we could surround her with. So today, as we sadly mark the end of her life on Earth, we also recognize the birth of freedom in her new life as she is welcomed home by loved ones and the multitude of IHMs dwelling in light yet ever near. Today, we celebrate Pam being embraced by God's transformative love and tender mercy, the God who called her by name and faithfully loved her from the time of that first breath.

As the song that accompanied Pam's final breaths states,

“Go in peace, God be with you,
Go in peace, be at rest.
With the saints and the angels
Now you are free
Go in peace.”

Written and delivered by Kathy Onderbeke, IHM
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