



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

PO BOX 100 OLDENBURG, IN 47036

WWW.OLDENBURGFRAUCISCANS.ORG

FACEBOOK: FRANCISCAN SISTERS OF OLDENBURG



November 18, 2019

Dear Sisters and Associates, Co-Workers, Family and Friends,

S. PATRICIA BIETSCH, OSF

Sister Pat had enjoyed some pumpkin pie on Saturday evening, showing some positive signs of progress as she underwent tests at Rehoboth Hospital in Gallup, NM. But recovery was not to be. Unexpectedly, in the early hours of November 17, Sister Pat turned over her spirit to God and entered the joys of the heavenly kingdom. There, we know she smiles on us!

Patricia Ann was born in Cincinnati, OH, to Russell and Audrey Kramer Bietsch. She shared family life with siblings Peggy and Tom. Her early years of education by Oldenburg Franciscans set the stage for her vocation as she remembered being “mesmerized” by a Sister who taught her. Pat’s relationship with Franciscans continued as she completed her high school studies at Oldenburg Academy. At age 17, she entered the Sisters of St. Francis, despite her mother’s concern that she was so young. Upon investiture, she became Sister Mary Martha—a name she retained until Church practices allowed a return to her baptismal name.

After receiving an education degree from Marian College (now, University), Pat began her ministry as a classroom teacher. Working with young children proved to be enjoyable and fulfilling to Pat as she saw her primary students blossom. An observant teacher, she witnessed the struggle to learn which characterized some students, and it caused her to pursue a master’s degree from Xavier University, Cincinnati, enabling her to address the problems of students with learning disabilities. She continued on the path of learning at Loyola University in Chicago, where a master’s degree in pastoral studies equipped her to teach theology at Roger Bacon High School, Cincinnati, and later at Oldenburg Academy. Consistently, Pat took her newfound education back to the classroom where it could have the fullest impact in helping students.

After 25 years as a teacher, Pat experienced a ministerial call to missionary service. Knowing it to be a “time for something new and different”, Pat joined other Sister-missionaries at St. Mary Mission in Tohatchi, NM. Her experience of working on the Navajo reservation spoke to Pat’s heart. She approached the Navajo by “listening, asking questions, and learning” from them, and she was quickly recognized as family by the people she served. Certainly, her admiration for their simple lifestyle, their spirit of gratitude, and their qualities of patience and good humor strengthened her bonds with them.

In 2000, Pat volunteered to serve among the Crow and Northern Cheyenne people at Prayer Lodge, the Community’s discernment house in Busby, MT. Her ministry involved the gift of presence. For any who came, Pat offered spiritual support and shared prayer. She enjoyed her work with prayer meetings and individuals searching for a stronger connection with God.

Pat’s ministry journey took her back to the Navajo people in Tohatchi and Coyote Canyon, NM in 2006. There, like the “Martha” of Biblical times, Pat proved to be a “doer” in many directions of service. Her prior training enabled her to conduct a religious education program for developmentally-disabled persons, whether Catholic or non-Catholic. She provided opportunities for friendship, sharing, and enjoyment of crafts, religious instruction, and prayer. Her work in the parish was

supplemented by her environmental involvements. As a strong advocate for solar and wind power, Pat witnessed the installation of solar panels in Tohatchi. She also was instrumental in planting an organic garden and establishing greenhouses at St. Mary's, where both young and old could be involved in planting and cultivating vegetables, herbs, and flowers. At the same time, Pat became a trusted friend to fellow missionaries and religious. Her leadership among Sisters in New Mexico attests to her sincerity and powerful witness of faith and service.

In February, 2019, doctors discovered that Pat had cancer. Her illness required that she move to the Motherhouse for immediate treatment. While she struggled to regain her health, Pat developed strong connections with the Sisters and nursing staff. Her willingness to share daily life with the Motherhouse community became a precious gift, bringing new light and energy to those around her. By August, Pat had shown such improvement that she was ready and eager to travel back to her Navajo people. She set out for what was to be a three-month return, a chance to share a little more time in the ministry she dearly loved.

With St. Paul, Pat can say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now, there is in store for me a crown of righteousness." We will always remember how beautifully Pat completed her race! At this time of loss, we extend our sympathy to Pat's sister, Peggy Schuckman, her brother Tom, and her nieces and nephews, extended family and friends, the Navajo community, and her missionary partners. Our condolences are extended, as well, to Pat's faithful classmates, all Sisters and Associates, and the nursing staff who tended and loved Pat so well. May Pat continue to inspire us to generous, loving service!

In loving remembrance,

S. Delouise

Sister Delouise Menges
for the General Council

SISTER PATRICIA BIETSCH, OSF

Birth: April 26, 1945

Entrance into Religious Life: February 2, 1963

Entrance into Eternal Life: November 17, 2019

MISSIONS AT WHICH S. PAT BIETSCH SERVED - *formerly S. Mary Martha:*

1964-1965	St. Anthony, Streator IL	1983-1984	St. Pius, Cincinnati OH
1965-1968	St. Christopher, Indianapolis IN	1984-1987	Roger Bacon High School, St. Bernard OH
1968-1969	St. Lawrence, Indianapolis IN	1987-1991	ICA (OA) Academy, Oldenburg IN
1969-1971	Holy Trinity, St. Louis MO	1991-1992	Sabbatical
1971-	St. Vincent, Vincennes IN	1992-1993	St. Anthony Mission, Naschitte NM
1972	St. Lawrence, Indianapolis IN	1993-2000	Native American Ministry, Tohatchi NM
1972-1973	Sacred Heart, Troy MO	2000-2005	Prayer Lodge, Busby MT
1973-1976	Holy Family, Oldenburg IN	2005-2006	Michaela Farm, Oldenburg IN
1976-1979	St. Joseph, Evansville IN	2006-2019	St. Mary Mission, Tohatchi NM
1979-1983	St. Joseph, Kansas City MO		

Funeral arrangements have been entrusted to Weigel Funeral Home – visit their website to view Sister's online memorial, and if desired, an online condolence may be left on the site to share with her family and the Franciscan Sisters – www.Weigelfh.com

Memorial Donations in Sister's memory may be given online at www.OldenburgFranciscans.org

