



SISTERS OF ST. FRANCIS

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WWW.OLDENBURGFRAUCISCANS.ORG



Sister Noreen McLaughlin

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

On the evening of the first day of December, as snow began to fall outside her window, Sister Noreen McLaughlin completed her Advent journey and was embraced by Loving Emmanuel for all eternity. We rejoice that Noreen is now completely free from suffering and is reunited with her parents, siblings, and classmates who have gone before her.

Mary Patricia (Pat) was born in New Albany, Indiana on October 18, 1928, the eldest child of Thomas and Agnes (Huber) McLaughlin. Four more children would round out the family of seven: Betty Ann, Thomas, James and Robert. Noreen describes her German mother and Irish father as “wonderful, loving, and faith-filled parents.” On her 60th jubilee she mused in a letter to a grade school classmate, “where would I be without all the faith and wisdom I absorbed from my parents?”

Noreen attended St. Mary’s grade school in New Albany, where she first met Oldenburg Franciscans. Although she desired to continue her schooling at the Academy in Oldenburg, her parents preferred that she remain closer to home, so she graduated from New Albany High School. Noreen always valued the life lessons she learned from these high school years, including the opportunity to learn seven different musical instruments, including piano and organ. Noreen also had an aunt who was an Oldenburg Franciscan, and she quietly encouraged her vocational call.

As a teenager, Noreen was attracted to nursing and thoroughly loved giving hundreds of volunteer hours to tasks like rolling bandages with the Girl Scouts during WWII. But nevertheless, here she was - called to a teaching community. Yet by her own admission, “I didn’t ever have a teaching bone in my body! Teaching for me was always a chore and never came naturally to me, never did well, but taught 30 years. Nursing was what I loved and got back to it only after PNG. *But I always loved the children I taught.*” Surely the love that Noreen had for all the children she taught in those 30 years made a powerful impression on their lives!

Responding to the invitation of Mother Cephas, Noreen was one of four Oldenburg Franciscans who arrived at the Mission of Mendi, Southern Highlands, Papua New Guinea in October 1960. She served in PNG for over twenty-eight years and played a key role in laying a solid foundation for the Mission. In 1989, the Bishop of Mendi summarized Noreen’s ministry in PNG, “Sister Noreen has a wide range of exceptional talents, and is very energetic. She gives the impression of doing the work of two or three. She would be a special asset in any wholesome community.”

It is so fitting that less than twelve hours after Noreen’s passing, our community received the first expression of condolences from the Franciscan Sisters of Mary in PNG, via Sr. Agnes Ipai. “We are saddened by the passing of our beloved mother Sister Noreen. We love her so much and we love you as our founding mothers. Sister Noreen is one of the first ones who came to Mendi. She was loved by so many people from Papua New Guinea, especially by Mendi people whom she worked and served with all her mind and strength. We are passing the message around and many of them are so sad and we all are sad. Sister Noreen's dedication as a founding

missionary in Mendi, PNG, from 1960 to 1989 really touched the hearts of many people here. Her work in education and pastoral ministry was truly inspirational. I am particularly grateful for her vital role in the formation of the Franciscan Sisters of Mary (FSM). Her guidance and support helped shape countless lives and build a sustainable local community. Her legacy of faith and selfless service continues with us today.”

Leaving Papua New Guinea in 1989 was bittersweet, but Noreen felt blessed to be able to return to New Albany and spend the next thirteen years caring for her aging parents. While in New Albany, she volunteered for several years at the Interfaith Community Council before she was offered a staff position where she served for the next eight years. The Executive Director described Noreen as “having a wealth of compassion for people...for Sister, it was not just the work but it was the beat of her heart...she has a profound wisdom and a mature understanding of people...her love for God is manifested through her actions.” After Noreen’s parents passed, these same ministerial gifts were shared with the good people in Campton, Kentucky where she served for seven years with the special mountain people of Eastern Kentucky and Appalachia.

Near the end of Noreen’s ministry years in Campton, she shared with a friend, “I love these mountain people as I loved so much the mountain people of Papua New Guinea. There has been and is just so much to learn from them. God is so much present through and in them...most of all I just love being with and listening to these simple mountain folks’ stories. It is all such a privilege. The mountains here and in PNG bring one so close to God. He is just so near in all of his creation.”

We are grateful for the gentle, kind, and loving presence Noreen shared with all. We offer condolences to her family and friends, her Sisters and Associates in Community, and to her caregivers in St. Clare Hall who offered kindness and understanding as they cared for Noreen.

In loving memory,

S. Susan Marie Pleiss, OSF

Sister Susan Marie Pleiss
For the Leadership Team

Sister Noreen (Mary Patricia) McLaughlin

Birth: October 18, 1928

Entered Religious Life: September 8, 1946

Death: December 1, 2025

MISSIONS WHERE SISTER NOREEN SERVED:

1949-1952	St. Francis de Sales, Indianapolis, IN	1984-1989	Kagua, Papua New Guinea
1952-1955	Holy Rosary, Indianapolis, IN	1989-2000	Family Home Care, New Albany, IN
1955-1960	St. Agnes, Evansville, IN	2001-2007	Good Shepherd Church, Campton, KY
1960-1984	Mendi, Papua New Guinea	2007-2025	Motherhouse, Oldenburg, IN

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