

WORDS OF REMEMBRANCE - SR MARIE PATRICIA TOOMEY SM

23/IX/1926—29/III/2024



Over 75 years ago – on 8th September 1947 – Marie Pat made her First Profession in the Congregation of Mary, echoing Mary’s “Yes” of the Annunciation – the Feast of which our Church is actually celebrating today. Throughout her long life Marie Pat daily reiterated her “Yes” in union with Mary. It was Good Friday night when she made her final surrender to God. Uniting with Jesus in His last words, “It is accomplished”, she answered God’s final call and died peacefully after a lengthy period of suffering, which she had endured with great patience.

Marie Patricia Toomey was born on 23rd September 1926 in Sandgate, Brisbane, the third child of Arthur and Margaret. She was a proud Queenslander and maintained strong and loving relationships with her older brothers, Jim and John (now deceased), her sister-in-law Mary, niece Pat, her husband Alan, and their family. Born of Irish heritage, Marie Pat delighted in her Irish roots, and kept in touch with cousins in Ireland, whom she had the joy of meeting when spending time overseas. While beginning her schooling in Sandgate, Queensland, Marie Pat completed her education in Mittagong, NSW, having been enrolled at Marist Sisters’ Woolwich, and evacuated with the Woolwich students due to the war. Upon leaving School Marie Pat spent time as a Telephonist before entering our Marist Novitiate in Merrylands.

Marie Pat was Professed with the name “Benigna”, which she later changed in favour of her Baptismal name of Marie Patricia. She was a gifted musician and spent the early years of her ministry as a Music Teacher. She greatly appreciated classical music and introduced many students to the joy of playing Piano in Woolwich, in Mittagong, and throughout her time of education ministry in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Marie Pat spent around 28 years in New Zealand, including a significant period on the Maori mission in Waitaruke. Though always a dinky-di Aussie, we were very aware that she’d left part of her heart in the *Land of the Long White Cloud*. As a Primary School Teacher, Marie Pat also had the opportunity of teaching for a short time in Fiji. In 1983 she undertook studies at the



Mater Hospital in Rockhampton to qualify as an Enrolled Nurse. Though she did not work for very long in this field of ministry, her care and compassion for the sick was at the forefront of her community living.

In 1992 Marie Pat had the privilege of assisting at the Shrine of Our Lady of Walsingham in England. At that time the Marist Fathers took care of the Shrine and were helped by the Marist Sisters in their ministry to pilgrims. Upon hearing of Marie Pat's death, we received a message of condolence from a person who had been with Marie Pat in Walsingham. He spoke of his very good memories of working with her, saying that she brought a great presence to the Shrine in a truly Marist way. Upon her return to Sydney, Marie Pat continued the ministry she had begun a little earlier, taking up Library work at Cerdon College in Merrylands. Her ministry at Cerdon spanned 11 years, and Marie Pat formed strong bonds of friendship there, especially with Denise Hoeflake and her husband, Ralph, who remained close to her till the end of her life.

From 2007 until 2018, Marie Pat was an active member of the Marian House community, offering support in many practical and varied ways. She had always been a hard-worker with a great generosity of spirit, and this was very evident at Marian House despite her increasing age. Marie Pat was a homemaker and always on the lookout to provide whatever the Sisters might need. She loved shopping, and was alert to a bargain, particularly in regard to clothing. I think most Sisters have been the recipient of a skirt, a blouse, or a jacket that Marie Pat could not resist picking up when the quality was good and the price was low!



She was the first to take a cup of tea to a frail Sister in bed, to get the supper ready for special gatherings, or to check that the chef had prepared the evening soup to her satisfaction. Having been a cook in her day, she was keen to ensure that food served to older Sisters met the standards she was convinced were appropriate for the elderly. There were days, however, when she was met with disappointment and found it necessary to express her strong disapproval!

Marie Pat did speak her mind and it would be true to say that she was not the most patient of people! She was an organizer who always thought ahead, and with the needs of others at the forefront of her mind, it was Marie Pat who kept us on track, reminding us to book the appointments for the Hairdresser, the Podiatrist, or indeed the Car Services.

Marie Pat continued to look out for the needs of others when she moved to St Joseph's Aged Care. Her kindness and compassion was always evident. Marie Pat had a quick wit and good sense of humor. She had a twinkle in the eye and often made us laugh with a funny turn of phrase or an entertaining story. She loved nature, especially the birds – particularly the magpies – whose markings, movements and foraging she enjoyed watching.



Being a woman of deep faith, Marie Pat greatly appreciated the pastoral ministry of the Marist Fathers, who attended to the spiritual needs of the residents at Marian House and St. Joseph's. As her health declined, she was comforted through the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick, most recently administered to her by Fr. Brian, whose friendship she valued. As Marie Pat's care needs increased, the Staff at St. Joseph's remained vigilant in their attention to her. We are most grateful for the professional and compassionate care provided by them and by Dr. Grace Kong. Marie Pat was a prayerful woman, who lived the Gospel in the spirit of Mary. She responded to God's transforming grace, living the last months of her life patiently waiting, and accepting her total dependence with peaceful resignation. God looked upon her lovingly and welcomed her to Paradise on Good Friday night, 29th March. We know she will continue to pray for us, interceding for our needs. Marie Pat, we will miss you. May you rest in peace.

(Julie Brand SM – 8th April 2024)