

Sister Pat Perko, BVM (Vincent de Paul)
Wake Stories/Reflections
Marian Hall Chapel, July 25, 2017

Jeanette Prodgers: Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM (Lucian)

I don't remember exactly when I first met Sister Pat. It was sometime in the 1980s in Butte, Mont. I think Pat returned to Butte to look after her father and aunt. We had an immediate connection as pronounced introverts. Sometimes we ended up riding the city bus together and we would chat. At one point, we both worked as caseworkers for the Salvation Army in Butte, a job she was well suited for – caring for the city's poorest. We met up again after I became a social worker for a local nursing home. As a devoted daughter and niece, Pat frequently visited both her dad and aunt who were in the nursing home. Her love for them was apparent. I have worked in several nursing homes and some friends and relatives shy away from their loved ones, but not Pat. She had a lot of patience and was a good advocate for them. I was not a practicing member of the faith, but I never felt judged by Pat. She was a quiet embodiment of a true Christian. I am a better person for having known her. Rest in peace, my fellow introvert.

Margaret Sullivan O'Leary: Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM

Dear sisters, please accept my sympathy at the passing of Pat Perko. She and I went to grade school and high school together in Butte, Mont. I've seen her a few times the past few years and a friend told me about her death. She wanted to be a nun since we were young. I remember the day she left for the convent and we were with her at the train depot. She was a good person and I pray that she will rest in peace.

BVM Associates Mary Kay Craig and George Waring: Read by Sister Diane Forster, BVM

We have known Patti since about 1994. She supported us, mostly in prayer, for all our social justice work. The enclosed photo shows Patti at Holy Spirit Catholic Church in the mid-1990s with several of her and our good friends. The students are Catholic men attending engineering degree programs at Montana Tech. We know that our great friend and companion Patti is blossoming even more in the Divine Presence and is still our constant and quiet teacher, guide and companion, continuing to give loving support in all we do. Thanks to all who have been so kind and attentive to Patti. She loved living at Mount Carmel again.

Mike Perko, Brother

Pat wanted to be a nun her whole life. When we were little kids, she would dress me up as a priest and she would dress up as a nun. That was very interesting. A gentleman told me one time that when you have an older sister, she is your boss when you are a little child and she never forgets it. That is very, very true! And you know what? I miss it!

Sister Marie Corr, BVM (Dona)

Like Pat, I am a native Montanan. There are so few of us that we really try to hang together. We happen to be in the same set. Several of us from the Missoula Cluster came to Mount Carmel at the same time. We kept the connection with the Missoula Cluster by using Skype. We gathered once a month and by looking at each other over Skype we would have a nice conversation over prepared materials for reflection or simply have a nice visit. Pat was a significant piece of our gathering. When I was visiting Pat at a time closer to her death, I said, "Pat, you are always so laid back and peaceful. It is so inspirational. What is it?" She said, "Well, you know, I am so into the new cosmology creation-centered spirituality. I'm going to be part of the cosmos!"

BVM Associate Francine Coombe: Read by Sister Kathleen O'Sullivan, BVM (Donall)

I have picked up the phone to call Pat every day this week. I am always saddened to realize that she will not be on the other end of the phone. I am sure it is very hard for you and Marie, Joellen, Liz and all of Pat's friends to have lost such a great mind and person. Pat and I were opposites in how we approached things. I charged ahead to get it done while Pat thought about it from all angles. She made me stop at times to think rather than do. I feel very lucky to have called her my friend. I would like to honor her in some way but am unsure of how to do that exactly. I am enclosing a check that maybe the Butte group could use to go out to dinner and share her story together. It is in the breaking of the bread at table that our bodies and spirits are fed and the story continues. Pat always liked going out for a good meal. I will trust your wisdom to do what would be appropriate. Pat is watching over all of us. You are all in my prayers. May God bless you and may you bless each other.

Sister Vicki Smurlo, BVM (Marie Stephen)

There are four of us here who lived with Pat in San Francisco. Pat was a generous person. When she came to St. Michael in San Francisco, she drove in with a two-tone, long Impala. It seemed like it was the width of this chapel. We knew it was an older model because of the light and dark green colors. When we needed to use a car, we would have to sign one out. I was always reticent to sign out Pat's car because it was so long. When driving over the hills in San Francisco, you didn't know if you would see the lay below. Oh my goodness, parking on those hills with this long car! She was generous; it was a car for all of us. However, I don't think I will ever not associate Pat with that car.

Sister Kathleen O'Sullivan, BVM

Although I wasn't born in Butte, it is really my home. When Pat died, I couldn't help but think of a scene in Glacier National Park. The two of us drove up to watch the eagles feed on the river. We had to walk a path from the road to the river. The park officials were counting the eagles coming down to fish. As we wound our way up and back, there was one eagle sitting high in a tree. It was very obvious. We decided that while the rangers were counting us, that eagle was counting the people. This reminded me of Pat. She seemed to be aloft, but knew everything that was happening, and knew you. She was wiser than I ever thought while living with her. The past two years here have been a blessing for me. I have gotten to know her a bit and to suspect her depth. Several people have mentioned to me how they wished they had talked with her about God and who Jesus is. It stuck me that people who did not have much contact with Pat would say such profound things. I am sort of at a loss for words. I regret that I was unaware of the importance of her presence among us.

Elaine Perko, Sister-in-law

My first words will be a prayer: Patricia, help me out here. When our children, Mike, Ann and Joe, were little people, Pat would take them for a walk to the park. They enjoyed it tremendously. Our oldest remembers that Pat was a wordsmith; she advocated the practice of being succinct. She said, "Say what you mean in as few words as possible." She planted a love of the English language in all three of their little minds. It has grown since. Our oldest occasionally writes short stories; he's very good at it. Our daughter has been teaching first grade for 12 or 13 years. She loves every minute of it, loves the little people and they love her in return. One of Ann's favorite stories is when she was traveling from Casper, Wyo., to an area outside Missoula, Mont., to pick up a little dog. She stopped in Butte, Mont., at Pork Chop John's, which is a favorite place with wonderful sandwiches. She called Pat from there, surprising her, and said, "Would you like me to bring you a Pork Chop John's sandwich?" thereby informing Pat that she was right there. She picked up Pat, traveled to Missoula, spent the night in an apartment that one of the sisters rented. From there they went to pick up the dog. The dog's name was Patsy so Pat was

immediately delighted with that little puppy. They later changed the name to Daisy. Pat was a little disappointed and always teased Ann about that. I wasn't able to contact Joe for some of his memories, but I wanted to share these with you. We will never forget Patricia. We've learn so much about her since we've been here. We didn't realize her depth either. We are so grateful for all we have learned about her. Now when we pray, we pray to Saint Sister Patricia Ann Perko.

Marcia Bogen, Niece

I'm Patsy's other favorite niece. I would like to share one of my favorite memories. When we were kids, we wouldn't get the traditional Christmas or birthday card from Aunt Patsy. We would get St. Patrick's Day or St. Valentine's Day, just a little bit off, and she would always give us a dollar. All of us kids would get a dollar. When we learned that Patsy wasn't feeling well, my brother Sean, a couple of other brothers and I and some nieces and nephew bought a card, put a dollar in it, and sent it to Aunt Patsy. She said she was going to use it as bail money because she couldn't get out since she wasn't feeling well. Well, that didn't work, but she did get a "Get Out of Jail Free" card that day. Charlie and I came up last month and took her out to dinner and had a really good day. We were just a lucky family.

Sister Eileen Healy, BVM (Patrick Ellen)

As someone who was visiting Pat and saw that card, she loved it, absolutely loved it! She showed everyone that she was getting out of jail free. About the same time, the nurse said she could walk down to the kitchenette, but the nurse did not take the dollar from her.

Sister Bertha Fox, BVM (Dolorose)

When I retired from Clarke in 2000, I spent a semester with Joan Newhart, BVM going around the community as computer tutors. One of our stops was Butte, Mont. That's when I got to know Pat in a new way. Several people have mentioned how intelligent she was. For me, one of the great signs of her intelligence was that she studied what kind of computer she should get and she got a Macintosh.