



Birth
October 8, 1936

Baptism
November 1, 1936

Profession
July 17, 1956

Death
April 6, 2017

Burial
Good Counsel Cemetery
Mankato, Minnesota

*Precious and blessed is
the death of the faithful
before God... for
they die in union with
their dear Jesus, in the
grace of God, in peace.*

Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger
Foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame
Letter 11, September 10, 1831

In Loving Memory

Sister Patricia (Mary Claude) McCusker, SSND

Sister Patricia (Mary Claude) McCusker, 80, died Thursday, April 6, 2017, in Notre Dame Health Care, Mankato, Minnesota. She suffered a massive stroke on March 17, and was hospitalized. After a short stay in the hospital she returned to Good Counsel and entered hospice.

Sister Pat, the second of five children and first daughter, was born October 8, 1936, in Red Wing, Minnesota. She later described how she was named Patricia: "While I was still in the hospital, I was given the glorious Apostle of Ireland as a patron, and received the name Patricia for the one-half Irish in me. This name happened to be the favorite name of Mother's favorite German nurse.. Sister Pat commented about her baptism on All Saints Day, November 1, in St. Joseph Church, Red Wing: "To make my Irish name more interesting and to add to the other half of me which happened to be German, Gladys Susan completed my name. Her brother Alvin was 10 years older, and she was followed by Colleen, Faith and Michael.

In 1942, Pat enrolled in St. Joseph School in Red Wing, where her teachers for eight grades were School Sisters of Notre Dame. She attended Red Wing High School and graduated in 1954. She told her vocation story in her autobiography: "During the last half of my senior year I began to think quite seriously about my future, which then consisted of my plans to enter the convent. I told no one, except the assistant pastor. During the summer I had the chance to accompany a sister to Good Counsel in Mankato for retreat. I decided that it would be a good time to make known my plans. I broke the news very gently that I would like to see Mother Superior, because I felt it would be absolutely necessary if I wanted to enter. After those with me recovered, I spoke to her. Only after I returned home did I tell my parents the news. On September 1, 1954, she became an SSND candidate.

After a year of study and preparation in the candidature, she was received as a novice on July 16, 1955, and given the name Sister Mary Claude, with Blessed Claude de la Columbiere as her patron. (She later returned to her baptismal name.) She professed first vows July 17, 1956 "for three years," as she wrote, "but in my heart, and with His grace, I sealed them for life.

Another year of study followed, and then in 1957, Sister Mary Claude began her 52-year ministry as an educator. First a primary teacher at St. Peter, Canby (1957-61) and at St. Mathias, Hampton (1961-65), she then moved to junior high grades at St. Dominic, Northfield (1965-66); Immaculate Conception, Lonsdale (1966-68); and Epiphany, Coon Rapids (1968-69). In 1969, she became principal at Epiphany, a position she held until 1978. The next year she taught elementary grades at Colegio San Lucas in San Lucas Toliman, Guatemala. Returning to the US in 1979, she resumed her junior high teaching ministry at St. Dominic, Northfield (1979-82); Fitzgerald Middle School, Mankato (1982-84); and New Ulm Catholic Schools (1984-89). Then followed two more experiences in elementary administration: St. Thomas the Apostle, Minneapolis (1989-92) and St. Mary, Bird Island (1992-2008). She earned a BA degree in history from Mount Mary in 1966.

continued

In Loving Memory



Sister Patricia McCusker



Throughout her years of teaching and administration, she was known as an excellent teacher and an administrator who was able to bring the best out of both staff and students. She emphasized the faith community aspect of Catholic schools through daily prayer and service. A 2008 article in the New Ulm diocesan paper, *The Prairie Catholic*, stated: “Sister Pat is well thought of among her peers in education. She has always prided herself in working to establish good relations with the public schools in the communities where she worked. She has a tremendous love for Catholic schools and her commitment to them is evidence of that love and dedication.

In 2009, following a sabbatical year, Sister Pat moved to Waconia where she served as a parish visitor at the Church of St. Joseph. She came to Good Counsel in 2012. In her first year, she helped out in various ways, and in 2013, settled into a ministry that fit her outgoing personality and channeled her organizational skills. Her official title was “Coordinator of Liturgical Ministries,” and it involved scheduling both priests and sisters for the various liturgical roles on the Hill. As an avid reader who sometimes read several books at once, she volunteered for the library committee and enjoyed giving service in this way. She also joined the chapel choir and was a cantor. In 2015 her Extended Assembly elected her as their delegate to the Provincial Assembly, a position she carried out with her usual commitment and determination.

Sister Pat had an eye for beauty, loved poetry, was always ready with her Irish wit, and was very creative in whatever she did, including parties. She also appreciated prayer time and conversations with her Bethany Community members and others. She was close to her family and looked forward to visits with them. A favorite place to spend time was the North Shore.

Sister Pat’s favorite hymn, “Beyond the Moon and Stars,” contains this line in the refrain, “So may we come to rest where angels sing. May Sister Pat not only rest where the angels sing – may she sing full-voice *with* them in praise of the God she loved for over 80 years.

The Funeral Liturgy, with Father Eugene Stenzel as presider, was held Tuesday, April 11, in Our Lady of Good Counsel Chapel, and followed by cremation with burial in the Good Counsel Cemetery at a later date. A prayer service of remembrance was held at 9:00 a.m. Tuesday. She is survived by her sisters Colleen McCusker and Faith Minder and her brother Michael and his wife Char, nieces and nephews and her sisters in community, the School Sisters of Notre Dame. She was preceded in death by her parents Myron and Martha (Barr) McCusker and a brother, Alvin.

By Sister Mary Kay Ash, SSND

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