

I beg you to keep me in this silence
So that I may learn from it
The word of your peace
And the word of your mercy
And the word of your gentleness to the world;
And through me perhaps your word of peace
May make itself heard

Thomas Merton-A Book of Hours

Sister Patricia Ann
KELLY

Sister Pat, having finished her contemplative prayer on earth, went to the eternal contemplation of God in heaven on Sunday, October 7, 2007. She died at home in the monastery having listened to the Sisters' pray by her bedside:

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come!"
Let the one who hears, say, "Come!"
Let all who thirst, say, "Come!"
Let all who desire the water of life, say,
"Come Lord Jesus! Come!"

Amen (Revelation 22)

Pat did not talk or write about herself, but all you had to do was watch her life unfold to see that she has been talking to us all along. Her life embodied the insight: "preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary use words."

She was born in New Jersey on June 6, 1937 and, to hear her companion novices tell the story, decided to become a Carmelite the next day. In reality, Pat was twelve years old when she began to knock at the door of the Carmel in Morristown, NJ. She kept knocking for seven years and began her life in Carmel on September 12, 1956. She used the intervening years to develop a profound spiritual life centered on the works of St. John of the Cross and Blessed Elizabeth of the Trinity. The poetry of Our Holy Father and the spirituality of Elizabeth which saw the indwelling of the Blessed Trinity in each baptized person as the central mystery of the Christian life inspired Pat's life and contemplation. As a young Sister she meditated on Elizabeth's



insight:

'It seems to me that I have found my Heaven on earth, since Heaven is God and God is in my soul. The day I understood that, everything

became clear to me. I wish to tell this secret to those whom I love so that they also, through everything, may also cling to God...' (Letter 122).

Pat's conventional life of a cloistered contemplative nun laid the foundation for the fullness of her calling to the Carmel of Reno in 1970. She transferred to Nevada that year and it was here in Reno that her deeply contemplative spirit reached out to touch the lives of all who knew her. The outreach of her love was evident in her life and overwhelming at her death. Her family and the family of her friends was extensive and in her quiet devotion and fidelity to all who touched her life that insight of the indwelling of the Trinity was revered and preached by word and example.

Sister Pat saw our printshop, not as a small business but as an outreach of ministry. As she processed orders she acquired innumerable friends and prayer intentions, as no invoice was sent without a promise of prayers. She saw our life of contemplation as meant to be shared with the broader community and founded an Ecumenical Prayer Group in 1982 that continues to this day. After the expansion of the monastery in 2001, she began the Wednesday evenings of Contemplative Prayer. Issues of Social Justice engaged her energies fully and she was a faithful member of the Life, Peace and Justice Commission of the Diocese of Reno. She walked for peace, stood outside the Courthouse on Monday evenings as a presence for peace and walked the labyrinth at Rancho San Rafael for the victims of torture. A passionate opponent of the Death Penalty, she stood on many occasions outside the Prison in Carson with a lighted candle in protest and when asked came to an execution that the prisoner might look on someone who cared as he died. In the record of who survived her, she requested that Jay Greene be included...

“ through bonds of prayer and friendship, Sister Pat is survived by one adopted Grandson, Jay Greene. Jay is currently on Death Row in Ely, Nv and wrote movingly of the place Pat held in his life...

“No matter what my fate holds, you will be my angel looking down on me...waiting to receive me. I cry today not for my loss but for heaven's gain. I will miss you my dear grandma. God be with you today, tomorrow and forever...your grandson

Jay”

This fragment found among her papers would be her living message to us at this time:

Once given the vision of one's true place in the life stream, death is no longer complete or final, but an incident. Death is the way-the only way- life renews itself. When the person has served her purpose as a channel, the flow transfers itself to other channels, but life goes on. And in this great drama of life renewed, one sees and feels the divine Presence and feels one with God.

We have been blessed through these years, as Pat lived her vocation among us. The Gospel walked among us with an increasingly jagged gait and sometimes a walker.



sketch of Pat by Brother Joe Aspel SM at his last visit

THE CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF A ‘CONTEMPLATIVE WITHOUT BORDERS’

Affectionately written by:
Maryknoll Missioner Stephen P. Judd
October 14, 2007
Cochabamba, Bolivia

Anyone who had even a fleeting acquaintance with Carmelite Sister Pat Kelly (1937-2007) of Reno, Nevada came away with a profound sense of being transported to a sacred time and place above and beyond the ordinary. Her unique gift to the human family and the wide circle of her friends she guided and mentored, found in few individuals other than mystics, was to achieve an unmistakable and enduring identification with people across all cultures, social classes and physical distances to become the catalyst of unity in the celebration of diversity.

Pat's embrace of the human family knew no borders, limits or conditions in stretching herself out to and for "others" no matter how difficult the situation. You always knew that she understood any predicament, never too large or insignificant, in a way reminiscent of the wisdom of her great spiritual mentor, Thomas Merton. Boundary was not a word that entered into her vocabulary or conditioned the parameters of her expansive spiritual geography.

One did not have to make a personal appeal on behalf of a person in need to establish communication with her other than a short silent prayer uttered in a moment of urgency. Simply asking Pat to connect someone with our loving God served to create a bond that would last a lifetime. This did not mean that she was some kind of spiritual lucky charm. Far from it! In a quiet understanding compassionate way Pat could connect people with the divine presence immediately despite her seemingly introverted personality.

I once spoke with her about how Carmelite Saint and Holocaust victim

Edith Stein wrote her doctoral dissertation on the philosophical roots of the virtue of “empathy.” We marveled that the full manuscript of that classic work is barely known or exists in its entirety. Yet, Pat’s life was a living classic text on the daily practice of empathy on a global scale. It is no accident that upon profession as a Carmelite Sister Pat took the religious name of the Most Holy Trinity. Her life was a mirror of the relational interconnected elements of God’s creating power, the Son’s liberating and reconciling mission and the inspiration of the Spirit to imagination, freedom and healing.

In this and numerous other ways Pat raised the Carmelite charism to new heights, to a higher plane above and beyond what is popularly stereotyped as part of a closed and sheltered past evoked when fears of modernity creep in or as an escape from the messiness of the world outside. Once again, Pat could navigate through many different worlds and worldviews without leaving the monastery. Moreover, Pat brought the monastery into the world to be a prophetic voice to speak truth to power.

The date of her death on October 7th was symbolically bracketed by the two great Carmelite Feasts, that of Therese of Lisieux, the “Little Flower”, on October 1st and Teresa of Avila on the 15th. It goes without saying that Pat epitomized the wisdom, common sense, joy and practicality of both of these doctors of the Church and healers of the wounds of the human family. Following in the footsteps of Therese, Pat offered up her own trials and sufferings for missionaries and the people we serve.

Like Therese whose letters to a generation of nineteenth century French missionaries brought hope and encouragement, Pat parlayed the wonders of the Internet to offer a similar kind of encouragement to us. We cannot help but wonder that she calculated, planned and arranged this uncanny circumstance to be met and joined with her two Sisters in heaven. Can we not imagine Pat’s close friend from her first days in Carmel, Celeste Fadden, waiting there, brush and easel in hand to paint the scene against the backdrop of Nevada’s Mount Rose and Pyramid Lake?

Another happy coincidence is that on the day of her farewell from this suffering and wounded but hopeful planet Earth, October 12th we rejoiced in the announcement of the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Al Gore. Here in this country of Bolivia with the largest percentage of indigenous people in the Americas, representatives led by another Nobel Laureate Guatemalan Rigoberto Menchu gathered to celebrate the memory and cause of the indigenous peoples of the Americas for recognition of their rights to land, dignity and a holistic inclusive worldview.

In multiple ways Pat was gifted with the contemplative's "sixth sense" in being able to anticipate and intuit the movement of the Spirit to bring about good in the world, to make those improbable connections and bridges to compassionate action in many different venues, locally and globally. You might even say that she mastered the art of spiritual "multi-tasking" long before the practice became commonplace in our hectic 24/7 madcap schedules putting us on a collision course with reality.

Whether it was a prayerful presence with our brother Maryknoller Roy Bourgeois in his quest to close the infamous School of the Americas or praying for a young Peruvian man Victor Maque to be admitted to the doctoral program at Notre Dame, no request was too unimportant for Pat. All of this could be accomplished on her way to the Nevada State Prison in Ely to visit a man on Death Row, to stand in silent vigil in protest against the invasion of Iraq or to perform a good deed for an anonymous person in need of a listening ear. No cause was a waste of time or irritation and in her final days Pat brought into focus her partnership with a whole host of the Communion of Saints, living and dead.

While these days it is in vogue to exalt the passing fame of celebrities from the superficial world of sports, political life or movies and just as gleefully to rejoice in their collapse, people look to other forms of altruistic heroism. It shouldn't surprise us that reputable organizations and humanitarian groups patterned on Doctors

without Borders capture the imagination of young people look for authentic expressions of service, empathy and spirituality. On a striking variation on the analogy, Pat set the pace by carving out a niche for being a Contemplative without Borders, a visionary and foot soldier in the struggle to make possible what we call the “globalization of solidarity.”

Here in Latin America and elsewhere increasingly we envision the future of religious commitment and a life of discipleship as a merger of the “prophetic and mystical” vocations of all baptized Christians. These very days here in this city of Cochabamba wracked by the past and the present reality of racism, inequality and poverty, 5,000 young people from all over the country, Latin America and other parts of the world have gathered to make the prophetic and the mystical essential components of a process leading to reconciliation.

This initiative of the ecumenical Taizé movement is one that carries out the inspiration and spirit of a petite Carmelite nun who faithfully lived out her vocational journey between two unlikely places called Morristown, New Jersey and Reno, Nevada. The latter, a desert place, is where her contemplative missionary vocation blossomed and flourished. Now we rejoice in the boundless hope and the assurance that Pat Kelly, in the immortal words of Therese, “will spend her heaven doing good on earth.”