

## **Funeral + Sister Mary Patrick Salm**

**December 10, 2020 by Fr. Phil Horrigan**

For the people of Jesus time and culture there were three sacred places, - **the temple** where they gathered to worship, **the home** where they prayed and honored their family, and **the land** that brought them both joy and nourishment. In each of those places they found communion with their God.

**Jesus often turned** to the familiar images of temple, household and land to uncover the meanings of his teachings. In more than one gospel text he points to the cycle of nature, the planting, growing and harvesting, to explore the more profound mystery of death and resurrection. In the seasons of nature, we can see that “teaching” unfold around us: the seeds planted in fields and gardens bring forth a harvest of color, texture and nourishment.

**Having grown up on a farm** Mary Pat never forgot her roots (she would have looked at me as though to say, did you just say that?). Almost every weekday morning at mass she would offer an intercession for farmers and for good crops.

**Jesus tells us that the word of God** is the seed that is planted in each of us and throughout our life we bring that word to fruitfulness, by our choices, our actions, our respective vocations and our relationships. We are the sacred ground in which the word of God takes root, and Jesus is the gardener who gently tends to our growing pains as we shape a life of discipleship. Even in the winters of our life when we encounter pain, suffering and grief. In the first reading Woman Wisdom tells us that we are the gold of God’s own hand, worthy, blessed and holy.

**Sister Mary Patrick was part of the sacred ground of God’s creative love.** She was a willing and fertile recipient of the word of God so loving placed within her heart. **And she had a heart of gold**, filled with a love that could not be contained; or I should say, she chose not to contain it, but to share it so generously, and with a delightfulness that was contagious.

**And she didn’t give in** to the limitations of the later years of her life. She would never shrink from a challenge, especially with health issues. She did not despair over limitations. I think she would have pulled off a good promotion for the use of

power wheel chairs, - a bit reckless perhaps, but she was not deterred from exercising her freedom.

**Her other sacred place**, in the years that I knew her would be this chapel, and I suspect that was true wherever she served all the years of her life. I think she made the Stations of the Cross every single day, winding her way through the aisles in her red power chair. When we rearranged the seating into its current formation I asked her where she wanted me to put her chair and she said wherever you like, I'll be just fine there. And that's how she got to right there; I miss seeing her. Her name is still on her chair, maybe we'll put a plaque there.

**Today we as we gather** in a variety of sacred places we celebrate how we are in communion with each other because of the love we have known **for and from** Mary Pat.

**The hospitality of God is set before us**, made visible in the work of human hands, - the signs and promise of the bountiful harvest of God's love. But there is another place prepared for us, as Jesus assures us, an eternal banquet at the end of our earthly journey, - to that place we are invited, because grace and mercy await the ones whom god has chosen. In the words of Woman Wisdom, they are the elect.

**The life of Mary Pat life was truly a blessing** for all those who loved her and who will miss her presence. God **has called her** to that place that has been prepared, to take her place at the banquet of eternal life and love. And if St. Peter asks about a menu preference she'll remind him, with the inimitable twinkle in her eye, to skip the mushrooms!

**My dear friends**, on this day we commend our sister and our friend Mary Patrick to the risen Christ, the one whom she loved and served with dignity and grace.

*Phil Horrigan*