

Sister Patricia Chaffee, OP



Born to Earthly Life on December 26, 1937

First Profession on August 15, 1957

Entered Eternal Life on August 6, 2026

PATRICIA ANN CHAFFEE was born December 26, 1937 to Henry and Marie Chaffee in Racine, Wisconsin. She had three brothers, and the Chaffee house was full of faith and activity. Pat loved horseback riding, swimming, sledding and ice skating and rode her bike to school every day, stopping to say hello to the milkman and feed the milk wagon horse a sugar cube each morning. She showed care for others and curiosity about the world around her from a young age.

She was taught by Racine Dominicans at her parish school and when she decided to follow the call to religious life, there was nowhere else she wanted to be. She professed her first vows in 1957 and her final vows in 1963, taking the name S. Henry Marie. In 1968, she returned to using her baptismal name, Patricia.

S. Pat received a Bachelor's in Education from Dominican College in Racine, and a Master's Degree and a Ph.D. from Indiana University in Bloomington. She spent her first years of ministry as a teacher, educating students at the elementary school, high school and college levels. She taught at several schools in Wisconsin, including SS. Peter & Paul in Green Bay, St. Mary in Janesville; St. Bernard in Madison; St. Catherine's High School in Racine; St. John in Little Chute; Gateway Technical Institute in Racine; MATC – South Campus in Oak Creek and Carthage College in Kenosha.

S. Pat left the Community in June of 1976 and was recommitted in May of 1983. Her ministry then took her in many different directions, including technical writing, community service and social justice. She was an advocate for peace and justice for all and joined several efforts to serve the poor and those targeted by oppressive governments. She spent time in Nicaragua, working on a remote plantation and learning from missionaries about their work and about the human rights violations happening every day. She went to El Salvador and worked with people who had lost everything in an earthquake, helping them as they rebuilt. She took several trips to Gaza and Pakistan to help with humanitarian aid. All of these experiences gave her a unique perspective on the suffering of people, a perspective that she brought back to the U.S. with her. She turned her experiences into action and advocacy - writing letters, educating others, speaking out against injustice and working tirelessly to bring attention to the struggles of people who were marginalized and oppressed around the world.

Over her lifetime, she served in 24 different roles in ten states and four countries, a testament to her willingness to embrace change and go where she was needed most.

She lived at Siena and most recently was working on the Community history writing project. She was also a prolific writer of poetry all her life.

We are grateful for S. Pat – for her faithful witness as a Dominican and her tireless work of advocacy and justice around the world. May her life remind us to stand with those who are marginalized, speak out against injustice and work for a more just world for all.

