

Vita
Sister Patricia Ann Neckel



Francis Xavier Neckel and his wife Mary Catherine (Siefker), living in Milan, Michigan, were expecting their first child's birth at their home in September 1931. Mary Catherine had had a difficult pregnancy. It was Saturday, September 19 when the doctor decided to move Mary Catherine to St. Joseph Hospital in Ann Arbor for delivery. On Sunday, September 20 a baby girl was born. Neither the mother nor the child was expected to survive. Surprisingly and miraculously both did. Patricia Ann was the name chosen for the baby and she was baptized on October 7 at Immaculate Conception Church in Milan. She would be the eldest of four children —two brothers, Francis and Joseph, and one sister, Mary Agnes.

Patricia attended school in Milan from kindergarten through the 11th grade. She wanted to take piano lessons when she was very small; however, when she was in the fourth grade her father encouraged her to take guitar lessons. Having a very good ear for music she learned to play the piano too. Pat also loved to play ball and since she and her little sister were the only girls in the neighborhood, she joined the boys in their games. She was the quarterback in football and the pitcher in baseball. At age 11 Pat was seriously injured while playing ball. She spent six and a half months in a body cast and over the next several she years she was in and out of the hospital and missed many weeks of school, still she was never behind academically. This injury would plague Pat throughout her life.

Urgings to consider religious life first stirred in Pat's heart when she was in the hospital. She became a postulant with the Sisters of St. Francis of Tiffin, Ohio when she was a senior in high school and on August 12, 1949 she received the habit and the name Sister Mary Andrew. She made her final profession on August 12, 1954.

She studied at Mary Manse College in Toledo, Ohio where she received a BA degree in education. She did her Master's work at St. Thomas University in St. Paul, Minnesota and there she received a MA degree in elementary administration. She studied music at Findlay University and at Heidelberg University, both in Ohio and completed her music and liturgy classes at St. Joseph's College in Rennselaer, Indiana.

Sister Andrew taught elementary grades in Ohio in Edgerton, Fort Jennings, Bucyrus, Peru and Landeck. She served as the music teacher at St. Joseph School in Fort Collins, Colorado. She was principal and junior high teacher in Landeck and in Oak Harbor, Ohio.

While at St. Francis High School in Tiffin she taught math and psychology and directed the school choir. She taught piano and guitar at St. Francis School of Music.

After Vatican Council II and its emphasis on Baptism as the sacrament of religious life, Sister Andrew returned to her baptismal name, Patricia Ann.

In 1988 Sister Pat returned to Milan to care for her aging mother, Mary Catherine, who died in 1994. She taught private music lessons and tutored students in reading, language arts and math. She served in a variety of volunteer efforts in the parish and as weekend organist and song leader at the Milan Prison where she taught classes in Bible and catechism. She worked with others in collecting and distributing food and clothing to needy families and for the Indians at Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota.

A special highlight for Sister Pat was the summer her sister and brother-in-law invited her to join them on a Caribbean Cruise. One of the activities aboard was the game show "Twenty Questions." After much encouragement Sister Pat joined as "The Singing Nun." When they guessed that she was a music teacher, one of the crew handed her a guitar and asked her to "do her thing." She played a country western number and then the audience asked for "How Great thou Art." She did one verse and then invited everyone to sing with her. She said, "Hearing 400-500 people singing gave me goose bumps."

Of great significance was the occasion of her various Jubilees, especially the celebration of sixty years of religious life in 2009 with the Sisters, her family and the parishioners at Immaculate Conception Church in Milan, Michigan. Another thrill for her was that her song, "Francis, Build My House," was accepted for inclusion in "Franciscan Morning and Evening Praise."

Sister Pat's physical condition continued to decline and she had repeated hip surgeries. Following one of them Pat had a near death experience. The medical staff thought they had lost her; however, through the prayers of her close friend, Rosemary (Schweighart) Kondor, Pat stabilized and recovered.

Sister Pat returned to Tiffin in 2014 and entered St. Francis Home. She served there as she was able in playing the organ and in leading song with the residents.

Sister Patricia is preceded in death by her parents, Francis Xavier and Mary Catherine (Siefker) Neckel, and her brothers, Francis Neckel and Joseph Neckel. Surviving is her sister, Mary Agnes (Neckel) Read.

She was welcomed home by Sister Death on February 25, 2019. Her life with God now continues to "be like a finely tuned instrument upon which the Master Musician, creates a melody that brings peace to all that may hear."