

Priscilla (Pat) Meier RSCJ
November 10, 1929 – November 5, 2008

Priscilla (Pat) Meier was born on November 10, 1929 to Priscilla Hope and John T. Meier in Detroit, Michigan. She graduated from the Academy of the Sacred Heart at Lawrence Avenue in Detroit in 1947 and obtained a B.A. degree in History with a minor in Education from Manhattanville College in 1951.

Pat entered the Society of the Sacred Heart at Kenwood in September, 1951 where Mother Schroen was the Mistress of Novices. She pronounced her first vows on March 8, 1954 and remained at Kenwood for the year of Juniorate until March, 1955, when she was sent to the Academy of the Sacred Heart in Grosse Pointe, Michigan. For the following four years she taught the eighth class including religion, arithmetic, and singing.

In September, 1959 she began her probation under Mother Zurstrassen at the Via Nomentana, and there, on February 8, 1960, she made her final profession.

From Rome, Pat was sent to the School in Rochester, New York to serve as Surveillante General and to teach the same classes she had taught at Grosse Pointe. This new assignment was very short-lived since she was soon summoned back to Rome to serve as the Surveillante of Probation, Secretary, and Choir director for the probanists, a position she held for seven years.

During the seven years following her return from Rome in 1967, Pat moved five times as various assignments called forth her gifts and benefited from her generosity. She served for one year as Surveillante General in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, one year as Surveillante General then three years as Superior at Kenwood, where she started the Pax Christi Community of elderly religious, another year at the Motherhouse serving the Education Commission of the UISG, a year in Washington, DC as the Executive Director of the National Children's Choir, and finally she moved to New York City to serve at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in New York, where she was to begin the longest period of service in her religious life.

For twenty-five years from 1974 until 1999, Pat served as Plant Manager and Facilities Rental Director at 91st Street. Two years after her move to New York, Pat was instrumental in founding (along with Carmen Caicedo, Paula Toner, Leontine O'Gorman, and Rosie Statt) the first RSCJ Community in East Harlem. For two years they lived in a rental house at 517 E. 118th St. and then for two more years a rental at 515 E. 118th St., a house which was subsequently purchased by the Society in 1980.

Pat was to remain at 515 E. 118th Street until her death in 2008 with the exception of three years (1999-2002) when she was called back to Kenwood to serve as the Campus Administrator, putting her in touch again with the elderly RSCJ for whom she had great admiration and affection.

Upon returning from Kenwood, Pat spent a year volunteering at the Legal Aide Society, studying Spanish intensively, and searching for a new ministry, which materialized in 2003 when she became the Religious Education Coordinator and Teacher at All Saints' Parish School in Harlem.

Then late in the summer of 2008, she was stricken with a brain aneurysm from which she struggled to recover for nearly three months until her death on November 5, 2008.

Beneath these details of nearly eighty years lies the story of a woman of generosity beyond measure, a champion of the marginalized, an organizer par excellence, a gifted musician, a lover of nature, a student of the new cosmology, and a person of boundless energy. Her loyalty to family, friends, and neighbors is legendary. She knew how to laugh at herself and she had the humility to accept criticism with gratitude.

"Sister Pat" as she was known in the neighborhood was the community organizer, the go-to person when anyone had a problem or need. She served as President of the Pleasant Avenue Block Association and, together with three other RSCJ, established a civilian foot patrol (together with walkie-talkies, police training, and bright yellow jackets) to alert the police to muggings and robberies in the neighborhood.

Through Pat's leadership, the 118th St. Community hosted an annual Christmas party for poor children of the neighborhood (complete with Santa, gifts, refreshments, and games) for more than twenty years.

As Plant Manager at 91st Street, Pat supervised the maintenance and housekeeping staff. She knew each one's family situation and problems as if they were her own. At the memorial Mass for her at 91st St., one by one they stood to tell of times when she intervened on their behalf, "She was everything to me," said one young woman whom she had mentored through hard times.

Pat is survived by her sister Mary Ann Oderman of Birmingham, Michigan and her brother Thomas Meier of Northville, Minnesota. They, together with nieces and nephews joined Pat's community and friends in the celebration of her life in the chapel at 91st Street the day before her 79th birthday party. The following day, her cremated remains were taken to her beloved Kenwood for the final liturgy and burial.