



## Born to New Life

### Sister Patricia Dunham, MPF



Sister Patricia Dunham, MPF, went home to the Lord on Friday, August 29, 2025, at Morristown Medical Center in Morristown, New Jersey. She was 76 years of age.

Born in Newport News, Virginia, Sister Patricia was raised in West Orange, New Jersey. She entered the Religious Teachers Filippini in 1967. Sister Patricia received the habit in 1968 and professed her perpetual oblation in 1974. Sister Patricia attended Seton Hall University at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, earning a BS degree in Elementary Education and a MA degree in Administration and Supervision.

Throughout her 57 years of religious life, Sister Patricia offered generous service, ministering in the (arch)dioceses of Brooklyn, Metuchen, Newark, Paterson, and Pittsburgh. In these locations she either served as classroom teacher, Principal, or parish Director of Religious Education. In addition, Sister Patricia faithfully ministered as Director of Special Projects at Immaculate Conception Seminary at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey. For a number of years, Sister Patricia dealt with several health issues, yet she persevered in the mission entrusted to her, including serving as local convent Superior.

The Mass of Christian Burial for Sister Patricia was held in Saint Lucy Chapel at Villa Walsh on Thursday, September 4, 2025. Monsignor Robert F. Coleman, a retired priest of the Archdiocese of Newark, and a dear friend of Sister Patricia's was the principal celebrant. The Most Reverend Manuel A. Cruz, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Newark, presided at the Liturgy. There were eight concelebrates. Following the Liturgy, Sister Patricia's body was laid to rest in Ave Maria Cemetery at Villa Walsh.

In his homily, Monsignor Coleman remarked, *The mystery of faith deeply affects every aspect of our lives. ... It is our faith in God that makes us able to accept and understand the joys and sorrows, the wins and losses of every day. It is our faith that makes us able to find their meaning and purpose. It is our faith that helps us to accept suffering and death when it comes for those we love and eventually for ourselves. It is this same faith, this same trust, this same abiding belief, that gave Sister Patricia the ability to look life so squarely in the eye, and never to be overcome by fear, frustration or suffering.* In the book *Introduction to Catholic Theology*, by Joseph Ratzinger, the late Pope Benedict XVI, he wrote, *On the cross Jesus teaches us that our vocation is fulfilled by acceptance rather than by accomplishment.* Sister Patricia chose to have these words printed on her prayer card and Mass booklet. Monsignor Coleman continued: *Pope Benedict XVI reminded us that all our efforts to achieve and all our strivings to accomplish amount to nothing without the grace of Jesus Christ and the goodness of our heavenly Father and the nourishing light of the Holy Spirit. Let us now place Sister Patricia into the loving care of the God whom she loved so well, so that the Lord will cleanse her of her sins and bring Sister Patricia to His heavenly kingdom of peace and light where there is no more sorrow, no more pain and no more tears... Come bride of Christ, receive the crown, which the Lord has prepared for you for all eternity.*

Sister Ascenza Tizzano, General Superior, in her letter of sympathy to the Province of Saint Lucy wrote, *Sister Patricia truly loved life and fought hard with determination to maintain a balance. Even as she endured illness, rather early in her religious life, she remained resilient... Sister Patricia always carried herself with remarkable strength and courage. She seemed to know how to meet each challenge with acceptance and was faithful to her apostolate... Her passion for God's gift of nature was often fulfilled by a drive and stay at the shore area, where she experienced solace and relaxation... especially when illness competed with her work, prayer, and pleasure. It helped energize her to continue the journey. Today, we ask the Lord to receive and welcome her into eternal life, to the heavenly banquet. May the Lord reward her for all that she has given, suffered, and accepted with grace and in Jesus' name. May she find her place among the blessed who have served the Lord faithfully.*