**Sermon for the Funeral Mass of Patricia Robinson**

**Fr Richard Conrad, OP, said:**

I’m honoured that Patricia wanted me to preach at her funeral. She was an interna­ti­­o­nal­ly renowned mem­ber of the Dominican Family. Like most friars, sisters and Lay Do­mi­nicans she exercised several interlocking ministries, practising what she urged Lay Domini­cans to do: preach, be active in the Church, study Scrip­ture, help the poor, promote jus­tice. Christopher Douglas will speak about her mi­n­i­stry to her natural family, to whom, on the Friars’ behalf, I extend our sympathy over the loss of their mother and grandmother. But before I conti­nue, I ask Margaret Grant, Patri­cia’s successor-but-one as Provincial President, to speak about her Dominican ministry.

**Margaret Grant said:**

When I was first introduced to the Lay Dominicans Patricia was Provincial President and on the Council of the local Fraternity. It was not long before we discovered we had much in common, including the fact that we had both lost sons much too early in their lives, which seemed to cement our friendship.

In due time Patricia nominated me as Secretary of our local fraternity, then later as President. During those years we worked together and I accompanied her on many of her trips to various Dominican events both at home and abroad. On these jour­neys we usually travelled together and often shared accommodation. We became close friends. I found her lively wit and sense of humour absolutely addictive, and she never missed an opportunity to find some humour in most situations. Conse­quent­ly, as we moved between various meetings, and even countries, I would often not dare to catch her eye or we would both end up stifling the giggles…. often at most inconvenient times.

Patricia was a great traveller and a good companion. At most Congresses or Conven­tions there would be an evening of entertainment and Patricia was always involved and participated in sketches or mini pantomimes… Cinderella being one which went viral and is still remembered with laughter, evidenced in the last weeks in mails from all over the world.

For all this, Patricia was a seriously dedicated Dominican. It was no guild or hobby but literally a way of life. She worked tirelessly for months on the Constitution, the Rule, the Lay Dominican Handbook, & latterly on the memorable book of Formation for seeking and members, getting various full members to write on chosen subjects. Patricia would never accept anything less than the best that each of us could give. If it was for the glory of God and the good of the Order, only the best would do.

Nothing could divert or persuade her to postpone or relinquish a project once she had decided something should be done. She got herself to Europe for a meeting she insisted she must attend a couple of days after breaking her leg. Crutches, taxis, etc., were all summoned in order that she would be there. She was largely responsible for the forming of the European Council of Lay Dominican Fraternities and was easily elected its President. She also represented Europe on the International Council of Lay Dominicans. Involved in a road accident in Rome and hospitalised, she still managed to get the business completed before travelling home.

We attended a Convention in Leeds on another such occasion when she could not even dress or feed herself, but not many were even aware of it, or knew the pain she was in. Luckily we shared the driving so I was able to take over when Patricia was accident prone!

We also worked together for sixteen years on the Lone Lay Dominican Fraternity, keeping members no longer able to attend meetings in touch with their Dominican brothers and sisters in the Order.

When I followed her as Provincial President of the English Province she was always just behind me, helping, advising and cheering me on, although I knew I could never fill her shoes.

Patricia was a dear friend and I miss her, but I fancy I can hear her Lord and ours saying: “Welcome to your place in my house, oh good and faithful servant”. May she rest in peace and in His love.

**Fr Richard Conrad, OP, continued:**

For the formation programme Mar­ga­ret mentioned, Patricia wrote about “The Sen­ses of Scripture.” She pointed out that scientific study of Scripture helps us enter the thought-world of the human authors, who expected sacred texts to contain many meanings. Patricia urged us to be sensitive to the ways Scripture speaks, and, as we journey in time, to let it help us “think eternally.” She wrote: “in the Song of Songs, which could well be a collection of love-songs at the *literal* level, we can also hear Christ the Bridegroom saying, ‘Come, my bride, my beloved’ to the Church and to the faithful soul.” We hope and pray that Jesus has said this to Patricia; and, if her journey into the purity of God’s love is not quite over, that he will soon say it again. She de­lighted in Scripture, knowing that it me­di­ates to us *God’s own knowledge*. We hope and pray that she now delights, or will soon delight, in possessing that knowledge *unmediated*, in the direct vision of God.

Patricia also wrote about the Eucharist. I quote, “It is through our bodies that we… make ourselves present to other people.” *God* “dwelt bodily in our world… To meet Jesus in the flesh was… to be invited into a personal en­counter with the life-giving God… Encounter with Jesus… *still is* the Sacrament of… en­coun­ter with God.” She explained that Jesus still invites us to a Ban­quet which evokes Isaiah’s picture of God making for all peoples a great feast. “He will swallow up death for ever…” so that we can say, “This is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord … let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation.”

Patricia pointed out that Jesus still calls *everyone*, including the disreputable. As she put it, his invitation can *still* “trigger repentance and re-creation.” For “the unquench­able… Spirit remains with us… in fulfilment of Jesus’ promise at the Last Supper.” She explained what the Spirit empowers: “At Mass… in solidarity with Christ’s Body we offer our body – all our life, time, health, energy, talents, abili­ty... In solidarity with Christ’s Blood we offer our humiliations, failures, sickness, limi­ta­tions due to old age. We offer our whole selves..... by offering ourselves… to the needy and suffer­ing, to our families, our neigh­bours, the marginalized… No one should ever think their life is useless, for we are born to be a living sacrifice… with Jesus.” So Patricia wrote, and so she sought to live.

The Eucharist empowered Patricia to hand on the fruits of her contemplation, and to live out what she preached. She has now completed the stage of her journey that the Sacraments empower. So we offer this Mass for her that her hope be fulfilled, and Jesus who fed her with his own Self will feed her with the clear knowledge of her Father. We do so in the hope of the final resurrection, the hope of en­countering Jesus in the flesh and reflecting his joy and glory to each other.