



2009

Patricia (Folkersma) Alpers



A life centered on Christ and devoted to the loving service of those in need has been at the core of the life of Patricia (Folkersma) Alpers. Pat was a product of Catholic education and graduated from Grand Rapids Catholic Central High School. She credits the Notre Dame Sisters with being a powerful influence in her life and even considered a vocation as a nun. However, God led her in another direction when she married Jim Alpers in 1958 at St. Adalbert's and moved to Traverse City. In the span of ten years, they had seven children and began a family business, Alpers Excavating.

Pat instilled the Catholic faith in their children and grandchildren. All of their children are graduates of St. Francis High School and seventeen of their grandchildren are either past graduates or current students. One of Pat's granddaughters remarked, "Being self sufficient and independent as a woman today is a lesson Grandma has stressed. She encourages all of us to let nothing stand in the way of completing our education and fulfilling our dreams."

St. Therese, the Little Flower, who showed God's love by doing ordinary things with extraordinary love, has served as a model for Pat in how she lives her life. Pat has a gift of loving others in the simplest of ways from a cheerful smile, to a note of encouragement, to a random act of kindness. She treats all people with respect and dignity in any situation. While working with Catholic Social Services, Pat welcomed four unwed mothers into her family's home until their babies were born and adopted. She was the founder and past president of the Carmelite Society, which cared for the Carmelite Sisters. As a busy young mother, Pat would work early morning bake sales at St. Francis Church by gathering her friends at 4 a.m. and telling them, "It's time to work

for Jesus." Over the years, she involved her daughters in the early morning process of rolling the dough and filling rolls with jelly and pudding.

Her dedication to local parishes continued when St. Patrick Church was established in 1984. Pat's family was one of the founding families of this parish. The first priest, Father Francis Murphy, lived in Pat's family cottage until a rectory was built. She took on the responsibility of helping to make recommendations for the original kitchen in the family center at St. Patrick and outfitted the majority of the kitchen by going to auctions. Pat was active in the building committee, pastoral council, and founder of the Women's Guild and was honored as "Woman of the Year" by that organization.

Pat is passionate about supporting Catholic education. She was an integral member of the parent group that fought to keep St. Francis High School open during a difficult time in the 1970s. She was active in the first Gladhandler fundraiser and remains active today by donating time, talent, and treasure to the cause. From helping to support the staff Christmas party, supporting the scholarship fund, removing the snow hills from the parking lot, to providing a dump truck load of bark for the Holy Angels playground, Pat's quiet and humble acts of kindness are valued by all.

Pat Alpers is a person who puts Jesus first, others second, and herself last. She has built a life centered on Christ and devoted to the loving service of others in need. Living her faith is more than words, gathering for Mass, and supporting worthwhile causes. It is the way Pat Alpers lives her life, works in her family business, and treats others that truly reflects her Catholic faith.