

## Words authored and delivered by Anthony Brooklere on Sunday, July 24, 2022, at the reception honoring Pat Willingham:

It's my privilege today to present our honoree, Pat Willingham. But before I begin, I'd like to thank the Ladies Auxiliary for sponsoring this event.

Pat and Mike are founding members of our parish. They were married at Immaculate Heart of Mary in Hillview in 1968. To appreciate her contribution to the church, some of you will need a little history.

You see, in the early 1980's there were 4 Catholic Church's in just a five-mile stretch down Highway 78: St Catherine's in Pratt City, Immaculate Heart of Mary in Hillview, St. Michaels in Brookside and St. Raphael's in Graysville. The Diocese had purchased 26 Acres of land in Adamsville, (this campus) with the idea of combining all 4 of these, but never acted on it. But Father Pat Sullivan, Pastor of St. Catherine's and Immaculate Heart of Mary, a man of grit, drive and determination, started the move.

Pat Willingham, the organist for Immaculate Heart of Mary, shortly after she and Mike married and remained playing for about 15 years, till that church was closed. Eventually St. Michael and St. Raphael was closed, leaving St Catherine's as the "mother" church. A Building Board was appointed to make plans for the new church. Pat was one of those appointed to the Board.

Now Pat was not just a member and came to meetings. She traveled North Alabama looked at newer Catholic Churches to get ideas, and share with the Board. At our meetings Father Pat would bring up a particular part of the building, and it would be debated until we had a consensus. Sometimes a subject would last on the agenda for several months. I would remember one such subject, that Pat and I disagreed on, that lasted for several months. That question was: what statue would be on the wall behind the Altar. Pat being raised Protestant, chose the Resurrected Christ, while I, a Cradle Catholic, chose the Crucified Christ. Well, Pat won the debate, and it lasted after 30 years till the Church ruled it must be the Crucified Christ.

Later when we could finally afford it, we bought an Organ. Well, no one was familiar with the Organ, but Pat came to the church 2 to 3 times a week to train herself and then taught others. Pat remained as a regular organist at St. Patrick's and with Immaculate Heart for a total of 53 years.

Pat worked at Montclair and Princeton Hospitals as a nurse and taught music at St. Joseph's Parish in Ensley for 11 years.

Pat and Mike have 3 children:

- Their Son, Barry and he is married to Denise and they have one Son, Andrew

- Their Daughter, Bethany, married to Justin and they have 3 children, Brittain, Michael, and Claire
- Their Daughter, Beverly married to Brandon and they have 3 Children, Lydia, Mary Chapel and Ava.

Ladies and Gentlemen help me welcome Pat Willingham.