



## Camilla Jordan Parham

July 12, 1924 - January 12, 2012

CAMILLA MARIE JORDAN PARHAM was born on July 12, 1924 in Baltimore, Maryland. She was the first of three daughters born to Jerome Carter Jordan and Marie Stevens Jordan. She and her sisters, Helena J. Johnson and Irene J. Spears (deceased) grew up in a devout Catholic home under the loving but firm hand of no-nonsense parents. She received her primary education under the tutelage of the Oblate Sisters of Providence (the first religious community of women of color in the United States). She attended St. Barnabus School, St. Catherine Academy and St. Pius V School. She was allowed to drive the family car to high school, St. Frances Academy on East Chase Street, and graduated from there in 1942.

Greatly influenced by the Oblates, Camilla seriously considered becoming a nun. However after high school, she continued her education at Coppin State Teachers College (now Coppin State University). There she earned her B.S. Degree in elementary education. At that time, no state college in Maryland admitted African Americans to an advanced degree program, so the State of Maryland paid for Camilla to receive her M.S. Degree in education from New York University. She traveled by train to classes for two years, including summers. Several years ago, NYU mistakenly sent correspondence to "Dr." Camilla Parham. Camilla laughed and laughed every time she told the story.

One of her most cherished childhood memories was being selected as St.

Pius' May Queen. It was a coveted honor for Camilla to crown the statue of the Blessed Mother and read a prayer as the culminating event of the May Procession (a solemn procession throughout the neighborhood). This may have solidified her lifelong devotion to the Virgin Mary.

Conscientious even as a youth, Camilla earned money to help with the household expenses. She worked as a waitress at H. L. Green Five & Dime on Eutaw Street, as a candy striper at City Hospital (now called "Bayview Hospital") and an elevator operator at Stewart's Department Store on Howard Street. Her natural talent for drawing landed her a job one summer as an arts and crafts camp coordinator. Her colored pencil rendition of Rembrandt's famous painting, "Blue Boy" earned her the nickname "Rembrandt." She nurtured her love and talent in the visual arts throughout her life: designing jewelry and leather crafts, crocheting items for family and friends, and sewing. She was also an avid reader who especially liked mysteries. Camilla's other activities included: teaching Sunday School, leading Vacation Bible School and serving as a Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts leader.

The Jordan girls and Camilla's lifelong friend, Pauline Gross, spent many enjoyable hours at the YWCA on Madison Avenue. Camilla joined two clubs there, the Young Adult Group (YAGs) which was for women only and Club Malekola the co-ed group that sponsored Friday night dances. She met Joe Parham at a Malekola event. His girlfriend, who lived across the street from the YWCA, invited him to that function. But Camilla was tall, friendly and outgoing. In no time at all, he was walking the three Jordan girls home from these functions... but his eye was on Camilla. Later, he bought an engagement ring and asked her if she would like to be his wife or if she still wanted to be a nun. She chose Joe.

They were married on June 12, 1954 at St Pius V Church on Schroeder Street. An accomplished seamstress, Camilla made her gown, a stunning,

white eyelet gown that featured the rage of the times, buttons from the neckline to the floor. Three months later, Joe left to study Spanish at the National University of Mexico. Camilla continued living at home with her parents until he returned in 1956. Camilla traveled to Mexico as often as possible during those two years. On one of those visits, she conceived their first child, Joseph Jr. The Lord blessed them with two more sons, Antonio Miguel and David Alexander. Camilla also miscarried a girl, a heartache that never fully healed.

A very sensitive soul, Camilla was a very attentive and fun mother. She exposed the boys to the visual and musical arts that meant so much to her and was a stickler for proper English. For many years, the family's annual vacation was a seven-day stay in various campgrounds in Western Maryland. The family also traveled with Joe (an avid tennis player) to his tennis tournaments from Boston to Ft. Lauderdale, FL. Camilla was also an active member of "Beta Wives," an affiliate organization for the spouses of Joe's Beta Sigma Tau Fraternity.

Camilla's professional career started in 1947 as a second grade teacher at PS #139 (now Sojourner/Douglass College on Central Avenue). She learned to play the piano to be certified to teach kindergarten through second grade for the next thirty-two years. She blended her artistic skills with her love of learning and her love for children. Looking to make learning exciting and memorable for her students and herself, she orchestrated many 'enrichment' assemblies for multiple grades that incorporated her love of drama and puppetry into exciting ways to present various subjects. On special occasions, her melodic voice and dramatic flair totally captivated an auditorium full of children: just her... sitting in a chair onstage... reading from a book.

Over the years, Camilla had several serious bouts with illness. In 1999, she

insisted on a grand celebration for her and Joe's forty-fifth wedding anniversary because she didn't expect to live to see her fiftieth. But in God's great providence, Camilla and Joe had fifty-seven years to cherish each other and nurture their family. Her final illness began in October, 2011.

Throughout several hospitalizations and stints at rehabilitation centers, Camilla made the most of each day. This past November, she was able to spend Thanksgiving Day at home with her family. She thoroughly enjoyed one of her favorite desserts, a vanilla ice cream cone. Soon after that, she was able to come home, this time for about two weeks, until she had to be rushed to the hospital again — for the last time. We watched the Lord extend His gracious mercies to Camilla during those last weeks. She looked beautiful, her appetite returned and she was excited about David's wedding in July. The Lord gently called her home on Thursday, January 12, 2012.

She is survived by her husband; three sons, Joseph Jr. and wife Freda, Antonio and wife Lynda and David and fiancée, Benita; sister, Helena; "brother," Harold Haliburton; adopted sister, Eloise Thompson; cousin, Robert Parham and wife Mildred; nine grandchildren, Nicole, Melvina, Christopher and wife Jahné, Robert, Judith, Ivan, Cree, Michael and Jessica; six great-grandchildren, Emijah, Damani, Isaiah, Amaya, Aiyanna and Analeigh; and a host of other relatives and friends

# Cemetery Details

## Garrison Forest Veterans

11501 Garrison Forest Road  
Owings Mills, MD

# Previous Events

## Public Viewing

JAN 17. 8:30 AM - 8:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - West Baltimore  
4300 Wabash Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21215  
(410) 542-2400  
info@marchfh.com

## Family Hour

JAN 17. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

March Funeral Homes - West Baltimore  
4300 Wabash Avenue  
Baltimore, MD 21215  
(410) 542-2400  
info@marchfh.com

## Wake

JAN 18. 10:00 AM - 10:30 AM (ET)

St. Cecelia Cath. Ch.

## Service

JAN 18. 10:30 AM (ET)

St. Cecelia Cath. Ch.

# Tribute Wall



“ *Camilla Jordan Parham*

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October 13, 2022 at 08:33 AM



“ *Mr. Joseph Parham and Family,  
I was so very sorry to hear of your wife's passing. May God's love  
and the love and support of family and friends comfort you and give  
you strength at this time. I will add you and your family to my daily  
prayers.*

*Yvonne Edwards*

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**Yvonne A. Edwards** - January 18, 2012 at 08:42 AM



“ *I'm so sorry for your loss and would like to offer my condolences to  
your family. Death is such a terrible thing for a family to go through, I  
actually lost my mom 3yrs ago. I'm truly grateful that I have the truth  
about death and look forward to the future when there will be a  
resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous.”—ACTS  
24:15. I'm sure you would love to see your dead loved one again in  
the coming Paradise here on earth! Again so sorry for your loss!!*

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**Ms Springer** - January 18, 2012 at 04:43 AM



“ We the March Family and Staff wish to extend our deepest and heartfelt sympathy in the passing of your loved one. Our prayers go out to you and your family in your time of loss. We know and understand that you have received many expressions of love and we will continue to lift you up in prayer. May the memories you cherish of brighter and happier days help to ease your sorrow and comfort you always.

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**March Funeral Homes** - January 17, 2012 at 07:53 AM