



2024 Walks of Life Honoree

Sr. Catherine Walsh, CSA

Sister Catherine Walsh's passion is to provide those in need with as much love and comfort as she can. Her desire to provide a better life for the needy is seen in the more than the 60 years of work she has undertaken to serve others.

As one of eight children, she grew up helping out on a farm in Tourmakeady, a small village in County Mayo, Ireland. Her faith in God drew her to thoughts of a religious life, but at the age of 18, she decided to come to Cleveland to visit her aunt, Mary O'Neill.

While in Cleveland, she became acquainted with the Sisters of Charity of St. Augustine in Richfield. A year later, she and her cousin Peggy both joined the order.

Following her novitiate, Sister Catherine taught at Parmadale Children's Village. She later was assigned to minister in Cleveland's Hough and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods where she and other Sisters of Charity served after the Hough riots of the 1960s.

She studied special education at Xavier University and pastoral ministry at John Carroll University. She learned to speak Spanish, which greatly helped her during the six years she spent in El Salvador during that country's civil war. She later made more trips to that country and to Honduras, serving as an interpreter on medical missions.

Sister Catherine spent more than two decades living among Akron's poor, serving as a pastoral minister for the Hispanic community at St. Bernard Church and helping establish the Peter Maurin Center, a Catholic Worker home and outreach ministry in South Akron. Many of the needy she helped were immigrants from Mexico and Central America.

Five years ago, her work serving the poor caught the attention of local filmmaker Joshua Gippin, who decided to focus on her charitable deeds in a documentary that was simply titled, "Sister, The Life Ministry of Sister Catherine Walsh." It describes the nun as a Catholic worker who devoted her life to helping those in need.

Now, at age 85, she lives on Cleveland's near West Side, volunteering at Joseph and Mary's Home, a medical respite facility that offers shelter and medical care to those lacking permanent housing. A ministry of the Sisters of Charity Health System, Joseph and Mary's Home is the first and only medical respite home in northeast Ohio.

"I love my vocation and am very grateful," Sister Catherine said. "If we love God, we love our neighbors. It's that simple."