

2026 Walks of Life Honoree

Sr. Nancy Conway, CSJ



Sr. Nancy Conway celebrates her sixtieth year in religious life in 2026. Her life's journey has gradually expanded her sense of community to encompass family, congregation, religious life more broadly, and our shared humanity across the world.

Her childhood experience of family was as a small, tightly knit unit. She was an only child, and the two daughters of her father's only sister accounted for all her first cousins in Cleveland. Her mother's family lived in New York, where her parents, William Conway and Rita McGivney, met during World War II.

School, particularly St. Joseph Academy, widened her circle to include friends, some who became lifelong. She entered the Congregation of St. Joseph after high school graduation, when her family was living in Ascension Parish. The convent offered a larger community, bound together by prayer, service, and the daily realities of living and working together.

Her initial service took place in the field of education; for eight years, she taught at St. Rose elementary school and at St. Joseph Academy. But she was summoned to other responsibilities, becoming the coordinator of research and development for her Cleveland congregation. She took the initiative to expand her own scope of action by obtaining a master's degree in social work, which led her to positions of advocacy for women as the interim of director of Woman Space and at Metro Health Medical Center's Maternity and Infant Care Program.

When the Cleveland Congregation of St. Joseph reorganized its leadership from a single leader model to a team structure, Sr. Nancy was chosen to serve on the first leadership team, from 1984-1989. She pursued a PhD in Organizational Development, which led her, with Jean Alvarez, to co-found Organizational Leadership Inc., a consulting firm that reached 130 congregations of women religious over a twenty-seven-year period. She brought her thinking about how to help communities of women religious to sustain themselves to the process of discussing the union of seven Congregations of St. Joseph across the United States and in Japan. She served on the new unified congregation's first leadership team from 2007-2018.

She helped to guide the entire CSJ congregation's evaluation of its current and future facility needs. Locally these efforts focused on the jointly occupied school and congregational campus in Cleveland's West Park neighborhood, which led to both constructing new buildings and repurposing existing ones. Hoffman Planning, Design & Construction, Inc., the firm that helped to shepherd the CSJ facility process, has a practice focused on meeting the facility needs of religious congregations. Sr. Nancy is now working as an engagement specialist with the northeast Ohio office of the Wisconsin-based firm, helping religious congregations across the country to plan their own futures.

In her service on the Boards of Providence House, Seeds of Literacy, the Catholic Commission for Community Action, and St. Joseph Academy, she brings a profound faith perspective to advancing the CSJ mission of love of neighbor.

2026 Walks of Life Award of the Irish American Archives Society, Cleveland OH