



## 2013 Walks of Life Honoree

# Sister Susan Durkin

During her five decades, Sister Susan Durkin has always held the belief that “God leads you to the right places when you need to be there.”

She grew up in Cleveland, the third of four children of Edward and Barbara Durkin. Proud of their Irish roots in County Mayo, the family settled in Cleveland’s West Park neighborhood. She attended St. Mark elementary school and St. Joseph Academy.

After receiving her bachelor’s degree in psychology and elementary education from Ursuline College in 1985, she took a teaching position at St. Clare School in Lyndhurst and later at Urban Community School in Cleveland. It was while at the latter that she answered the call to religious life, joining the Ursuline congregation in 1987.

She later taught at Immaculate Conception, St. Patrick in West Park and Ascension schools. Along the way, she obtained a master’s degree in Pastoral Ministry from the College of Mount St. Joseph and a certificate in Non-profit Management from Case Western Reserve University.

In 2000, Sister Susan became Director of the Children and Family Program in the Ursulines’ HIV/AIDS ministry in Youngstown, working mainly with poor, intercity children. Under her leadership, the program grew to serving more than 60 children infected or affected with HIV/AIDS. She also established an annual fundraiser to support programs for these children. For her outstanding service she was named the Youngstown Difference Makers’ 2005 Person of the Year.

Though she loved working with the children and became like a mother to them, she responded to her order’s request to return to Cleveland in 2006 to become the congregation’s development director. Challenged with the task of raising money for the order, she and her staff introduced new and innovative fundraising initiatives including “Ursuline Derby Day,” organized around a Kentucky Derby theme, and a “Retirement Rally,” a raffle to support retired nuns.

Last June, she was named president of the Ursuline Sisters of Cleveland. In that position, she not only provides leadership for the religious order, but also oversees the spiritual lives of 177 nuns.

Sister Susan serves on the boards of Ursuline College, Beaumont School and Urban Community School.