

## IN MEMORIAM



# Sr. Kathleen Kelly

BORN: April 1924

ENTERED CONGREGATION: July 16, 1943

DIED: November 26, 2021

**S**ister Kathleen Kelly's blend of personality, her beliefs about community and her longtime ministries of teaching and social work are best summed up in her favorite motto which is: "Where there is hatred, let me sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is darkness, light; where there is despair, hope; and where there is sadness, joy." Sister Kathleen was granted 97 years of life to sow love, pardon, light, hope and joy.

In April 1924, Kathleen was born Mary Lucille Kelly to Frank and Blanche Kelly in Cincinnati, Ohio, the middle child of two other siblings. She grew up being called Lucille by her parents and her teachers and Lucy by her friends. At a young age, Lucy attended a Fourth of July celebration and recalls "thinking how wonderful it was to be American, Irish and Catholic."

It was not until her annual school retreat during her senior year at Regina High School that "suddenly and inexplicably I felt God was calling me to serve Him in religious life." She writes, "The call was strong and never really left me. It is a good thing that I was so convinced of my vocation, because that was the only thing that helped me to overcome the unexpected opposition of my parents, relatives and friends." Sister Kathleen's family and friends felt that she was too lively and cheerful to be happy in what they perceived as a restrictive lifestyle.

In the end, Kathleen was able to convince her family that being a Sister was her true calling. Approximately one

year after her high school graduation, on July 16, 1943, she entered the Sisters of the Precious Blood as a postulant. Prior to her investment day, Mary Lucille requested three name choices: Kathleen, Kathleen and Kathleen. When she received her new name, this pleased Kathleen's family because all of her young life she asked her parents why they hadn't named her Kathleen instead of Mary Lucille. She professed her final vows on August 15, 1949.

After novitiate, Sister Kathleen enjoyed a 40-year ministry in education, first teaching primary education, then secondary education and, finally, teaching computer courses and job training for disadvantaged adults in community colleges. Kathleen spent her teaching years in various places, first at San Luis Rey in California, then Christ the King in Denver, and in Lafayette, Indiana, and Ottawa, Cleveland and Cincinnati, Ohio.

The next chapter of Sister Kathleen's ministerial life is perhaps the most iconic part of her life. At the end of teaching disadvantaged adults, Kathleen methodically searched for a social work position, finding the right fit for her as the human services coordinator for Tender Mercies in Cincinnati's Over the Rhine district, which was crime-ridden at that time. Tender Mercies provides permanent housing for mentally ill homeless men and women. Sister Kathleen wrote, "I am a born social worker and wanted to do this kind of work all my life. It was only in later years that I felt free to give up teaching (which I also enjoyed) and go into this kind of work. I looked long and hard to find just the right job — one which is a happy medium between

administration and direct service."

Sister Kathleen would eventually retire from full-time ministry at Tender Mercies but still continue on as a volunteer until 2014. Her ministry at Tender Mercies has been well publicized over the years as she received numerous accolades and awards. In 2012, she notably received the first award from Tender Mercies that bears her name, the Sister Kathleen Kelly Lifetime Achievement Award, and in 2014 she received the Outstanding Ohio Nonprofit Volunteer Award.

In 2015, Kathleen would leave her beloved Cincinnati and further retire here to Salem Heights. At Salem, she would once again experience the companionship of her Sisters in community as well as in her most recent years at the Maria Joseph Center.

Finally, Sister Kathleen once used two verses from the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Luke to describe God's love for the mentally ill who are residents at Tender Mercies. They go like this: "...in the tender mercy of our God the dawn will break upon those who sit in darkness of the shadow of death. And our feet will be led into the path of peace."

Kathleen, you have faithfully served the community and God's people all your life. Your dawn has broken. You are free from your final years of physical diminishment and forever in the light with God. May you rest in eternal peace.

Amen.

— Sister Marla Gipson