

Sister Gail Donahue, CSJ

“The Sisters of St. Joseph reach out to the needs of others. This has enabled me to reach out to all kinds of people who would have been otherwise unknown to me at so many different times in my life.”



Sister Gail Donahue was raised in Somerville, MA, the oldest of three children born to devout Catholic parents, her father being a firefighter. Attending public school until sixth grade, she first encountered Catholic Sisters at Immaculate Conception School in North Cambridge, which was staffed by the Daughters of Charity. She went on to attend Matignon High School, where she first met the Sisters of St. Joseph. Her father regularly drove the Little Sisters of the Poor wherever they needed to go. Gail came to know many sisters from these several orders as she was growing up. She came to know the second-grade teacher, Sister Catherine Gilmore (Sister Margaret Edward), at her younger sister Jeannie’s school. She often visited her throughout her high school years. She felt that Sister Catherine saw joy and radiated life. She became an inspiration for Sister Gail’s call to religious life as a Sister of St. Joseph. She was ultimately a lifelong friend and has remained an inspiration to Sister Gail for her entire religious life.

Sister Gail knew she had a passion for teaching, and after graduating high school, she chose to enter the Sisters of St. Joseph. Following her novitiate, she was assigned to St. Matthew School in Dorchester, where she taught 56 fifth graders (all in one room!). Next assigned to teach mathematics at St. Brigid School in Framingham, she began attending Framingham State College to study for her Master's Degree in Mathematics. A professor suggested that there was a great need for guidance counselors in Catholic schools. Sister Gail was inspired to earn her Masters in Counseling, and her next ministry was as a guidance counselor to students at Marian High School in Framingham. Following this, she was selected to become the principal at St. Anne School in Neponset, and after 8 years, she embraced the same position at St. Catherine of Siena School in Norwood.



“In my ministry, I have received more from the people with whom I have ministered than God has enabled me to give to them.”

During a brief respite from her teaching duties, she was able, by the grace of God, to stay with her sister in San Diego, CA, to help her go peacefully to God and be a comfort to her niece and nephew. Upon her return to Boston, Sister was assigned to North Cambridge Catholic High School as a receptionist and was then invited to come to St. Angela School in Mattapan, where she served as principal for 19 years. Following this, Pope John Paul II Catholic Academy asked her to be their Director of Guidance, where she remained for five years, at which point the Congregation selected her to be part of the leadership team as an Area Councilor. She said about this experience, “the sisters graced me with their lives and gave me the privilege and honor to minister to them.”

Sister Gail is currently working part-time at St. John Paul II Catholic Academy in Dorchester as Campus Minister. This involves working with the Guidance Counselors, providing religious reflections for faculty and staff at the Academy professional days, and visiting students and faculty in their classroom.