

Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ

Advocating and Educating for Social Justice on Capitol Hill and across U.S.

Stephanie Niedringhaus, Communications Coordinator for NETWORK (a national, Catholic social justice lobby), shares an inspiring story about Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ — as Catherine ended 25 years of dedicated and faithful advocacy as a staff member of NETWORK.

Committed to Social Justice

Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ, tells everyone that her father first instilled in her a passion for social justice during the Depression. From him she learned the necessity of helping others and that nobody has a right to live a life of excess when others are suffering in poverty.

She carried that lesson through decades of activism and education for justice until she arrived at NETWORK more than a quarter century ago. Over the years, Catherine lobbied Congress on many international and domestic issues — including, most recently, ♦healthcare, ♦the federal budget, ♦the safety net, and ♦globalization (international trade, investment, debt, etc.). Her position and activism on these issues were always rooted in the principles of [Catholic social teachings](#) and the lived experience of real people, especially those struggling at the economic margins.

Catherine became a legendary lobbyist in official Washington and a renowned justice educator in communities across the land. And now, we at NETWORK must bid her

a sad good-bye as she returns to her beloved Cleveland to begin a new ministry.

Awards and Star Power

It is impossible to describe the impact Catherine has had in the space of one page. A member of her religious community for 70 years, Catherine's accomplishments include the presidencies of:

- [Leadership Conference of Women Religious \(LCWR\)](#)
- National Assembly of Women Religious
- Sisters' Senate of Cleveland
- [Congregation of St. Joseph in Cleveland](#) (her religious community)



Mary Elizabeth Clark, CSJ, (former NETWORK lobbyist) and Catherine with President Obama.



Along the way, she also received an honorary doctorate from the [Elms College](#) and the 2006 Outstanding LCWR Leadership Award (see [Catherine's remarks](#)) — which called her “a Leader, Advocate, Prophet, Teacher, Sage, Sister and Friend.” Also, she was inducted into the [Ohio Women's Hall of Fame](#).

Her image and words have appeared in an enormous array of news media, starting with newspapers and magazines and culminating in Internet appearances on [YouTube](#), including her much-viewed [benediction](#) delivered at the [2008 Democratic Convention](#) in Denver. One early reporter called her “Our Lady of the Hill.” As noted by her friend and former colleague Kathleen Phelan, OP, this was “a nickname used in many a teasing moment, but whispered with great respect. ‘Our Lady's passing by.’”

In Washington, DC, Catherine earned the esteem and friendship of political greats. Her friends included the Clintons (she worked with then First Lady [Hillary Clinton](#) on healthcare reform), [Rep. Marcy Kaptur](#) (a close friend to this day),

the Kennedy family, former Senator Paul Wellstone, and a long list of other Capitol Hill and administration favorites.

Celebrating Catherine

Many Washington friends and admirers joined NETWORK staffers to honor Catherine in February 2010. Among them were Marian Wright Edelman of the Children's Defense

Fund, columnist and TV commentator E. J. Dionne, Rep. Marcy Kaptur, White House and congressional officials, leaders of numerous non-profit and advocacy organizations, and former NETWORK staff and Board members. The tributes and gifts were plentiful, with Board Member Donna Korba, IHM, presenting a lovely poem in her honor.

A Passionate Heart

We at NETWORK have been honored and blessed by Catherine's presence for more than 25 years, and we are grateful for the many powerful gifts she has shared with us. Above all, we thank God for Catherine's passionate and loving heart, which has touched us all.

Below:

Journalist EJ Dionne, Catherine, and Nancy Conway, CSJ



Below:
President Clinton
and Catherine.



Above: Catherine with friends and admirers at her party (l to r): John Kelly, Obama Administration; Cody Fischer, former NETWORK Associate, who worked with The Alliance to End Hunger; Kate Byrne, former NETWORK Associate, who worked for U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur; Catherine; U.S. Rep. Marcy Kaptur; and Obama Administration members Alexia Kelley, Mara Vanderslice, and Mark Linton.

"Catherine Pinkerton, CSJ" by Stephanie Niedringhaus.

Stephanie's testimonial was originally published in the [Second Quarter 2010 issue](#) of NETWORK Connection; modified and adapted with permission. Pictures thanks to NETWORK.