Justice & Peace Community
Looks to Future
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The Lord...will say: “Here I am.”
Isaiah 58:9
My dear friends of Notre Dame,

Eucharist is sign, symbol and manifestation of unity. Hearing and praying with the Word of God, and sharing blessed and consecrated bread and wine is one sacred action that strengthens all efforts for community and unity. Years ago there was a poetic litany of “Eucharistic moments” that included phrases like: “She was old, crippled and alone. I sat beside her, smiled and gave her ‘eucharist.’” I did not have the exact amount to pay for my meal. The person next to me took out enough money to complete the payment and gave me ‘eucharist.’” Every phrase lifted up a personal encounter and turned the reader’s attention to relationship.

More recently those who advocate for justice stress that justice means right relationship. In this sense all of our interpersonal exchanges and interactions are integral to maintaining and sustaining justice and promoting peace in our world. Eucharist is most definitely the inspiration for and the climax of justice and peace!

This issue of Good Works offers a variety of stories that reveal our connectedness and right relationship with each other. Each story opens a unique lens through which we see a way back to each other from illusions and prisons of independence, isolation and separateness.

With you we celebrate ‘eucharist’ and the nearness of God about whom Isaiah prophesied:

When your relationships “evolve in love,” the Lord will say, Here I am. (Isaiah, Chapter 58)

In communion with you,

Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader
SNDdeN in Ministry  SPIRITUALITY/JUSTICE AND PEACE

Justice & Peace Community Looks to Future

By Sister Maura Browne, SNDdeN

From nineteen countries on five continents, 35 enthusiastic Sisters gathered to make connections and build relationships for networking in ministries for Justice and Peace. In Namur, Belgium, from 29 April to 4 May, three Notre Dame Congregations, Amersfoort, Coesfeld and Namur Sisters who consider themselves “cousins,” met for the first joint Justice and Peace (J&P) International Conference. This historic meeting united women religious, planning for a future together grounded in a spirituality of justice and peace for their communities and ministries internationally. As successful decision-makers, the participants carried forward the goals of the conference and set directions for ongoing life and action.

Rooted in J&P Spirituality: Prayer and Pilgrimage

The opening prayer, led by Sister Teresita Weind, Congregational Leader, recalled the ancient roots of justice and peace in Christianity: “This is the justice I desire: loose the bonds of injustice - let the oppressed go free and break every yoke” (Isaiah 58:6-14). These prophetic words set the tone for the meeting. Visits to St. Julie Billart’s birthplace in Cuvilly, France and the Heritage Centre in Namur, Belgium emphasized the founding of the Sisters of Notre Dame, on holy ground rooted in justice and peace. The participants from three Congregations reflected on living out this rich heritage in today’s world. They remembered Sisters, with their students, teachers and colleagues who work

Goals for Justice and Peace

Vatican II had called all the people of God, and particularly women and men religious, to deepen a spirituality and understanding of Catholic Social Teaching and to form viable networks at all levels of Church and society. At the meeting, to put faces, places and action to this call, the Sisters documented and described progress in the three Congregations on a 50-year timeline since Vatican II.

In assembly sessions and in focus groups during the meetings, the Sisters worked together:

- to become grounded and strengthened in a spirituality of Justice and Peace.
- to report highlights on current work being done throughout countries where we serve;
- to plan and establish a worldwide J&P network of Sisters of Notre Dame, extending across five continents.
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

GoodWorks ~ June 2014

Strengthened in Spirituality: Conference Speakers

Father Donal Dorr, SPS and Sister Isabel Mary Smyth, SNDdeN contributed significantly to building a foundation of common knowledge for the participants. Fr. Dorr engendered deep thinking and brainstorming by his presentations on Pope Francis and Catholic Social Teaching, Catholic Social Teaching and Human Rights, Spirituality of Human Rights, Catholic Social Teaching on Women in Society and the Church, and Catholic Social Teaching and Ecology. Sr. Isabel presented Interfaith Dialogue as a significant key to justice and peace. She created strong interest in this critical area for peace and stimulated much interactive dialogue among the participants.

J&P Involvement in Notre Dame Ministries

The Sisters chose groups focused on five issues:

1. Human Trafficking
2. Ecology/Environment
3. Migration/Immigration
4. Peace/Reconciliation and Dialogue
5. Extractive Industries/Land Grabbing/Minning

After sharing each Sister’s experience with the issue, participants inspired and engaged one another by describing individual ministries and by synthesizing specific issues of working groups as well as service on continental levels. Each group set up its process for developing ongoing dialogue and international action when needed.

Networking: Continental Planning

The continental organizing for networking included strategies for sharing information, stories, questions, prayer, and local issues with provinces and intercontinentially through technology. The participants suggested annual meetings, using technology and/or face-to-face gatherings. They agreed to communicate relevant information to the Congregational Leadership Team, the offices of the Representatives of the United Nations Governmental Organization (NGO) and the Coordinator of Justice and Peace as well as to participate in working groups on specific issues organized by local conferences of religious.

At the final session, the concluding prayer recalled for participants the opening session with the Scripture from Isaiah 58:6-14. The newly formed Justice and Peace Community rejoiced in a commitment to loose the bonds of injustice and to network with each other and local communities of Sisters, students, teachers, parishioners and colleagues. Refreshed and renewed in their commitment to the Gospel, the Church and the Notre Dame Mission, the Sisters left Belgium re-energized in bringing a Spirituality of Justice and Peace to communities and ministries on five continents.

They heard echoed in their minds and hearts the inspired call to action of Isaiah “to set the people free” and re-echoed in his prophetic motivation:

The Lord...will say: “Here I am.”
Forty Years: Care for Diabetics in Congo
By Sr. Marguérite De Clerck, SNDdeN

Assisting people with diabetes, especially children, Sr. Marguérite De Clerck serves in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of the Congo. She is a medical doctor who coordinates a program caring for diabetics and educates nurses and doctors treating a large population with this illness.

Over 40 years ago, Sr. Marguérite De Clerck began health care for a neglected population of Congolese people who had never been diagnosed nor treated for diabetes. Having completed in Belgium her studies in medicine, Sr. Marguérite returned to Kinshasa in 1974. As a doctor, she took responsibility for the care of diabetics and the education of nurses and doctors serving a large population with this chronic illness. She made a long-term commitment to help diabetics, especially children, who were at that time an abandoned group. In this large city, Sr. Marguérite initiated a new regular regime for diabetics, either in the hospital or in their homes. Without a formal program, she started to educate nurses and taught patients faithful self-care of this chronic illness. Sr. Marguérite wrote and distributed books and documents with information for individuals and groups. She considered education essential to insure frequent contacts among the hospital team and the satellite centres in the area.

During those first years (1974-1990), the hospital sustained the program financially. Political events impacted the society and economy. City health centres became overcrowded with diabetic patients. Sr. Marguérite recognized a growing need to train more nurses, supervise them and equip the centres with indispensable materials. In the 1990s, pillaging and looting of properties, including several health centres, by rebels destabilized life in Kinshasa. In spite of this devastation, the diocesan centres took responsibility for health care, gave emergency aid and enabled these centres to survive.

From 2001 to 2005, the General Hospital in Kinshasa treated about 50 new young people. In the beginning, the hospital had given free care. In 2003, Sr. Marguérite offered free consultations at Boyambi Health Centre. About 200 received care through the program, Life for Any Child, which permitted the Centre to give insulin to young people. From 2006 to 2010, this program expanded to other regions/provinces. Sr. Marguérite organized educational workshops for doctors and nurses in an endeavor to introduce diabetic care to four different towns. In January 2010, an American team filmed young patients in Kinshasa. The film had its debut at the Town Hall in Stockholm, Sweden, after a prominent medical congress and later was shown in Denmark and other European countries.

Educational Programs in Foreground
Sr. Marguérite realized early the importance of educating medical personnel and the people about diabetes. In 2011, she founded a program to educate nurses, supervise them and equip the centres with indispensable materials. Since the opening of the Education Centre on Limete Street, other centres have opened on Second Street in Kinshasa, and in Mont Amba and Binza. Congolese doctors have participated in Diabetes Education in Brazzaville, Congo, in Kenya and in Ethiopia. Two doctors have been delegates at the Congress for the International Diabetes Foundation (IDF). In 2013-2014, the Education Centre in Limete became the most important centre, with several sessions offered for medical personnel.

With a valuable team of Congolese doctors and nurses, education insures ongoing responsibility for diabetic care in the future. Actually, in Kinshasa there are about 80 health centres treating nearly 10,000 diabetics regularly, with projections for 1500 new cases each year. Success with education is now rapid and surpasses expectations. Sr. Marguérite says: “We realize soon enough that the local people and those taking care of them are insufficient. The structures for hospitalizing people are also inadequate to meet the demand. The buildings are dilapidated and there are not enough beds. Complications from infections make treatment necessary.” The means for diagnosing this illness are still primitive in the Congo: doctors test sugar in the laboratory, only after a diabetic episode. Blood testing equipment is still rare in this country. Sr. Marguérite shows patients how to become artisans of the treatment: administering medications, monitoring glucose levels and adjusting treatments to nourishment and activities. She teaches and helps adolescents and small children and distributes a new beautifully illustrated book for children: How to Live Well with Diabetes. Sr. Marguérite realizes that her efforts are minimal and merely a beginning in reaching vulnerable people in this critical area for health care.
SNDs in Ministry

JUSTICE AND PEACE

Three Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Patricia Chappell, Maureen McLaughlin and Anne-Louise Nadeau carry out with their colleagues the work envisioned by early peace pioneers. In small, consistent ways, through Pax Christi USA, they network in peace-making with individuals and groups who share similar values.

Three SNDs Engage in Peace with Justice Ministry

By Sisters Patricia Chappell and Anne Louise Nadeau, SNDdeN

We are PAX CHRISTI USA (PCUSA). We gather on college and high school campuses, in hotel conference centers, retreat centers, church halls, chancery offices, inter-faith settings, Senate office buildings, and in the streets of our cities. We meet in groups and gather with many thousands. We sign petitions, attend rallies and demonstrations, keep prayer and fasting vigils. We write letters to national leaders and elected officials, while some peace-makers are arrested and jailed. We feel anguish at the injustices done to God’s people and yet we believe and hope that the transformation of unjust systems is possible.

Our membership includes: religious communities, parishes, high school and college chapters, over 250 local groups in 105 dioceses in 41 states, 20 regions. We coordinate activities in geographic areas with many individual members, including bishops. As a well-known and respected organization, we are able to network with those who need support with peace and justice issues.

Beginnings of Pax Christi: Europe and USA

In 1945, a small group of people in France experienced an agonizing fact: French and German Catholics, who professed the same faith and celebrated the same Eucharist, had killed one another by the millions in the 20th century. That situation could hardly be the will of God, so they gathered regularly and prayed for forgiveness, reconciliation, and peace. In the United States, the dream for Pax Christi was born and took root from events of the 1960’s: President John F. Kennedy’s election, John XXIII’s Pacem in Terris, Martin Luther King and the Civil Rights Movement, along with senseless assassinations of prophetic leaders, the Cuban Missile crisis, Selma, Mississippi, and Vietnam. In the early 1970’s, a small group of prominent US Catholics, such as Thomas Merton, Dorothy Day, Thomas Gumbleton, Philip and Dan Berrigan, Gordon Zahn, and others began Pax Christi USA. Teaching and researching at the Pontifical Justice & Peace Commission in Rome in 1971, Sr. Mary Evelyn Jegen, SNDdeN, recognized the emerging value of Pax Christi. Returning to the States, she served on the National Executive Committee and became the new National Coordinator in 1978. With committed colleagues, Sr. Mary Evelyn made Pax Christi USA what it is today, a National Catholic Peace and Justice Movement, which reaches over a half-million US Catholics.

Current Initiatives

Today, Sr. Patricia Chappell, SNDdeN, carries forward the work of our early peace pioneers. With her leadership, we play an active role in inter-faith and inter-Church endeavors on such critical issues as torture, racism, trafficking, armed drone usage, gun violence, mass incarceration, migrants and refugees, environmental degradation, etc. Collaborating with membership and our National Council, we have created the Pax Christi Anti-Racism Team. We have also named four initiatives which are pivotal to our Mission.

We are committed:

- to develop a spirituality of non-violence and peacemaking;
- to disarmament, demilitarization and reconciliation with justice;
- to economic and inter-racial justice in the United States;
- to human rights and global restoration.

These are the core foundations of Pax Christi USA.

Continued
Currently, through grant funding, we are leading workshops for adult ‘Catholics of Color’ in 6 major cities: St. Louis, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Miami, Houston, and Baltimore/DC. African-American and Hispanic, Latino/Latina theologians facilitate the workshops and present the Corrective History of these US communities of color. Our PCUSA staff gives an overview of Catholic Social Teachings, explains our four Initiatives and invites participants to address issues in their neighborhoods, which carry forward the aims of Pax Christi USA. The faith commitment of our Catholic women and men of color, expressed in rich dialogue, shows an unwavering fidelity to the Gospel and the life of Jesus.

We partner with many organizations including Pax Christi International, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Conference of Major Superiors of Men, US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Franciscan Action Network, Center of Concern, the Network Lobby, National Religious Coalition against Torture, Maryknoll, New Ways Ministry, School of the Americas Watch, Sojourners, Sisters of Mercy Witness for Peace, the Catholic Worker, Voices for Creative Non-Violence and more.

Our logo, a red rose growing out of barbed wire is a powerful symbol of grace and elegance. As a symbol of confinement, manufactured menace and inflicted pain, the logo is a stark reminder of the words of Jesus: “My peace is my gift to you.” Pax Christi USA maintains the sure hope that all efforts of our members and partnering organizations, however large or small, are helping to create the beloved community envisioned by a good and loving God.

“How do we keep vibrant St. Julie Billiart’s charism, vision of Catholic education and care for the poor, since we have fewer Sisters engaged in ministries?”

As Sisters and lay colleagues grapple with this question, many new directions are moving ahead to integrate the Notre Dame Mission into schools, colleges, universities and centers. Sisters and their lay colleagues in California Province created seven Hallmarks of a Notre Dame Learning Community (Hallmarks) which are guidelines or characteristics for insuring that the Notre Dame Mission continues and is integrated in Notre Dame sponsored institutions. Previously, Sr. Maryalyce Gilfeather, in her doctoral research, developed Five Notre Dame Mission Tenants (Tenants) which became the inspiration in the formulation of the Hallmarks. Sisters in the Boston and Ipswich Provinces had formed a Sponsorship Committee to discuss the integration of the Tenants in formal education, health care and direct service to those living in poverty. These provinces invited Sisters and lay colleagues to assist in developing Guidelines for Sponsorship in order to assess how congregational values are alive in Notre Dame ministry. Also, at a convocation in 2008, after years among Sisters and colleagues, the Hallmarks were presented to Notre Dame educators in five California Notre Dame Learning Communities. Again in 2012, educators gathered to share numerous age-appropriate activities with staff and students, from pre-school through university in order to integrate the Hallmarks into educational communities.

Today, the Hallmarks Committee in California meets regularly to develop new ways of integrating these “hallmarks;” they even gather in an over-night staff retreat. Directors of Sponsorship and/or Mission Integration in California, Ipswich and Ohio Provinces provide resources, on-site assistance and presentations to faculties and staffs. Recently the US Mission Integration Committee asked the Leadership of Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States to appoint a Director of Mission Integration. In September 2013, Sr. Rita Sturwold began this ministry as the first US Director. Since October, she has visited 24 ministries, primarily those with which the Congregation has a formal sponsorship agreement. She has met with administrators and staff to learn how St. Julie’s spirit is alive in each ministry and to offer service where requested. Sr. Rita has presented to these schools and centers a Resource for Mission Integration kit, created with the assistance of many Sisters and including the Hallmarks, Guidelines for Sponsorship, Characteristics of Notre Dame Mission Spirituality, and an extensive bibliography. Regional Directors in California, Massachusetts and Ohio Provinces accompanied her on the visits in their regions.

Experience and Observations of Director

“I wish every SNDdeN and co-worker could see how St. Julie’s beliefs and values are ALIVE in ministries across the US. We are educating for life students of varied cultures and socio-economic backgrounds, in cities and suburbs, from pre-school through university and in adult education centers.” ~ Sr. Rita

The Sisters, lay colleagues and ND Mission Volunteers serve many people with great financial need. Through an array of service projects and mission trips that benefit SND ministries nationally and internationally, Notre Dame students are truly developing
“hearts as wide as the world.” In some ministries there are not any Sisters, yet the Hallmarks and the Tenants make a great impact, especially on younger colleagues who are hungry for spirituality and for the roots that our Notre Dame spirit and traditions provide. They appreciate February 2nd, Founder’s Day (or Week) celebrations, prayer services and liturgies. They love hearing the Sisters’ personal stories.

**Hallmarks in Action**

In visiting ministries in South Boston, MA where Sisters are giving direct service to people living in poverty, Sr. Rita saw Sisters working with infants and little children in the morning and providing basic education, job training, and other services to struggling adults in the afternoon and evening. She discovered new energy in meeting with Sr. Katherine Corr, SNDdeN and her staff at Notre Dame Mission Volunteers AmeriCorps (NDMV) near Baltimore, MD. She noted that the Volunteers are living the Hallmarks and fulfill the Sisters’ dream of service to people living in poverty.

They have already served 550,000 people during the past years! Sr. Katherine’s staff, most having been ND volunteers, find inspiration today from the Sisters who believe in the power of education and who have a strong commitment to serve impoverished people.

Everywhere that Sr. Rita went, she experienced St. Julie’s spirit in the interactions among Sisters, lay colleagues and the people whom they serve. She commented on the images of our foundress and other Congregational artifacts in all the ministries.

Most of all, Sr. Rita discovered that the **Notre Dame Mission is alive... from coast to coast!**

The challenge now for integrating the Mission with and among Sisters and laity is to build greater connections in educating for life and in proclaiming God’s goodness.
Archives: The Living Richness of Notre Dame

By Marie Felten, General Archivist of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

The work of archivists appears to be a hidden ministry. Alone, archivists choose, sort, file and inventory documents, in the obscurity of their offices, to ensure that documents are preserved in the best possible way. Archivists, indispensable persons in the transmission of documents and artifacts, are able to situate and bring the past into the present. They forge a future with others by contributing to the life of the Congregation.

At the first International Meeting of Archivists in 1996, Sr. Ellen Gielty, General Moderator, noted the importance of Archives in the early written tradition of the Congregation:

- St. Julie Billiart encouraged the novices to write her instructions to recall what she had said, while practicing their spelling.
- After Julie’s death, Mother St. Joseph asked the Sisters to send to Namur all Julie’s letters from the secondary houses; she saved them and had them copied. Father Joseph Varin asked Mother St. Joseph to write her Memoirs which became the first biography of St. Julie, a work of love, undertaken for the Sisters who did not know St. Julie and “for the Congregation in the future.”

Through the years, important documents have been preserved in the Motherhouse at Namur, Belgium. In 1980, Sr. Marie-Chantal Schweitzer, the first General Archivist, organized the deposit into oldest and recent Archives.

Oldest Archives include the foundation and history of the Congregation. Unfortunately, a large part of these Archives were burned during the bombings in World War II. The fire destroyed hundreds of St. Julie’s original letters. Only three letters have been saved: one conserved preciously today in Namur and two others, sent to Cincinnati, Ohio in 1840 with the first Belgian missionaries to America. Recent General and Province Archives include documents from the Congregational Leadership Team in Rome, sent to Namur every six years. Copies of all publications about the Sisters of Notre Dame and the theses written by SNDs everywhere in the world reside in the General Archives. Since 1921, the Sisters began to keep Archives in their own Provinces: Vow registers/notebooks, history of the foundations and the Annals of communities. Each Province has its own Archives and must have archivists: some with formal education in history and Archives, and some still needing education for the work of maintaining Archives.

The challenges are very different from one province to another. Difficulties from climate change cause rapid deterioration of documents and photos. Lack of money, electricity, qualified persons, space for storage, and difficulty in converting or conserving materials are major challenges.

Archivists’ Meeting in Namur

In March 2014, at the invitation of the Congregational Leadership and the direction of the General Archivist, archivists from 14 provinces in the Congregation gathered in Namur, Belgium to share experiences and ideas for improving the preservation of Notre Dame’s patrimony. Rooted in history and tradition, Sisters journeyed as pilgrims to St. Julie’s village of birth in Cuvilly, France. Then they visited the Heritage Centre in Namur, opened in 2012. They appreciated the exposition of St. Julie memorabilia, such as her medal of Our Lady of Guadalupe, received in 1804 at the time of her consecration. They delighted in documents and photos, conserved and shared by archivists in Provinces from around the world. In animated discussions, they agreed on a plan of action, centered on the revitalization and reinforcement of relationships among ND archivists.

Living and Transmitting Julie’s Message

Archivists, inspired by the spirituality of St. Julie, bring enthusiasm and experience to events and celebrations, especially at Province Jubilees. For the Golden Jubilee of the Nigeria Foundation in 2013, the archivist helped the Sisters with several publications. Also, the British archivist organized a beautiful exposition on the beginnings of the Nigeria Mission. At this fifth meeting, archivists planned specific actions:

- to put into writing the testimonies of Sisters,
- to give priority to directives for saving documents;
- to make the Archives accessible by creating an internet site, participating in prayer services, and welcoming researchers and students;
- to revitalize the Archivist’s icon on the SNDdeN Intranet, First Class.

The Archives of the Congregation are essential to ongoing life in providing a way to discover history and tradition and to forge new ways into the future. In a beautiful way, through technology, individuals, groups, schools, colleges, parishes, etc. discover the charm of St. Julie Billart and the Notre Dame Mission. One archivist has prepared a virtual tour of the Heritage Centre. Visit the Web site at www.snddenheritagecentre.org.
GoodWorks
Worldwide Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

St. Julie’s characteristic phrase:
“How good is the good God!”
expressed her special gift of unique trust in God. Today Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur on five continents make known God’s goodness.

SNDdeN Mission
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, women with hearts as wide as the world, make known God’s goodness and love of the poor through a Gospel way of life, community and prayer.

Continuing a strong educational tradition, we take our stand with poor people, especially women and children, in the most abandoned places.

Each of us commits her one and only life to work with others to create justice and peace for all.

Africa
Democratic Republic of Congo
Congo
Brazzaville
Kenya
Nigeria
South Africa
South Sudan
Zimbabwe

Asia
Japan

Europe
Belgium
France
Italy
United Kingdom

Latin America
Brazil
Nicaragua
Peru

North America
Haiti
United States
(27 states and the District of Columbia)

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have gone social...
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- Read our stories
- Share in our hope
- Rejoice in God’s goodness

Visit international Web sites of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur at:
www.sndden.org ~ www.notredameonline.org ~ www.ndvs.org