Jubilee Journey in Nigeria

“Give and gifts will be given to you...and overflowing...” Luke 6:38

See article page 4

“Give and gifts will be given to you...and overflowing...” Luke 6:38
My dear friends of Notre Dame,

Interpreting the living words of Sacred Scripture is a lifelong evolution. As we live and grow, our capacity expands for grasping more aspects of the mystery, the Word of God-among-us. How has your understanding grown in response to the following passage from the Gospel?

Give and gifts will be given unto you; a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you. Luke 6:38

Who are your inspirational examples or models for giving? What experiences of giving and receiving gifts inscribed indelible marks on your life? Patricia Hempl, a published story teller, reminds us that we do not simply have experiences. We are entrusted with experiences out of which we are called to do or make something for others. Patricia tells us that stories are the way to witness to the experiences in our lives.

In this issue of Good Works you will read stories about our Sisters’ experiences of faithful, selfless giving and efforts to thank God through a variety of ministries. The Mission of Notre Dame is our conscious effort to make something good for others and witness to the daily experiences of receiving God’s goodness and generosity. In our Mission we attempt to express gratitude for the abundance we receive: “the good measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing.”

Thank you for sharing in and supporting the Mission of Notre Dame from the “good measure poured into your lap.”

With gratitude,
Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader

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Jubilee Journey in Nigeria

50 years after the arrival of the first Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) into Apapa Harbour, we are celebrating the legacy and life of our Nigeria Province.

On a year-long Jubilee pilgrimage, Sisters in Nigeria have been visiting, remembering, and rejoicing. We have been walking with friends, grandchildren of our first pupils, young parents and hundreds of students, villagers and townsfolk. We are thanking God for our founding mothers and the phenomenal growth of our Notre Dame Mission.

We celebrate our Sisters

To a great welcome from the people along the quayside, three Sisters of the British Province arrived in January 1963. These pioneers, Sisters Joan Mary Brown, Ellen Gielty and Mary Dolores Grealey began a girls’ secondary boarding school in Oro. They brought St. Julie Billiart’s spirit and mission and discovered our “good God” in the culture and the people. Within a few years, four more Sisters arrived, eventually replacing the pioneers in this flourishing mission. The Bishop of Benin City, attracted by the Sisters’ vibrant service, asked for more Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Sisters Margaret Howes and Marie Nugent brought new life to a rural school, St. Angela’s Girls’ Grammar School. Sr. Annette Sullivan taught science there until she went to St. Mary’s Eme-Ora. Later, Sr. Margaret Howes became the first principal of St. Anthony School, an urban day co-educational school in Ilorin. Sr. Bernadette Gannon, a nurse, took over a small abandoned government health post which expanded, with the assistance of the local community, into a nationally famous hospital.

We celebrate new life in Notre Dame

In 1980, our family rejoiced as young women entered Notre Dame to share St. Julie’s charism and to be gifts to the whole Church. We experienced the “first fruits of God... richly blessing us,” (Psalm 67:6), when our first Nigerian, Sr. Virginia Egwuuchukwu was accepted into our novitiate – a time of great rejoicing. Sr. Margaret Birkett established a strong formation programme for our first three Nigerians: Sisters Virginia, Appolonia Ibekwe and Rosemary Uzochukwu. Living and sharing in mutual learning were enriching and encouraging. With assistance from the Congregation, we were able to build a postulate and postulate.

“Give and gifts will be given to you...and overflowing...” Luke 6:38

Continued
novitiate for our new life! More generous young women offered their lives to God as Sisters. The province grew and blossomed with vibrancy and joy. Sisters from other provinces came and gradually international, multi-ethnic communities sprang up in our Nigeria Province.

We celebrate our Ministries

Education
From the early years, we have been educating young girls and boys in 6 different Nursery/Primary Schools. Sisters now also serve in 4 secondary schools: 2 managed by Notre Dame for the diocesan Church in Abeokuta and Kontagora, 2 owned, managed by Notre Dame and offering boarding facilities in Awkunanaw and Amoyo. The Nursery/Primary School and Notre Dame Academy share the same site in Awkunanaw and enjoy electrical power from the Power of the Sun solar project (see article on pp. 8-9). Staff and pupils are able to use computers and electrical appliances. The first class will graduate from this Secondary School during our Jubilee Year. Situated in a rural area, the Academy in Amoyo is an all girls’ day and boarding school. A third Secondary School, being built in Kuje, will soon welcome girls to secondary education with the Sisters of Notre Dame.

Health Care
Health ministry has always been part of our holistic work. Currently, Sisters are working in two diocesan hospitals in Abeokuta and in Makurdi where the administrator is a SNDdeN. Makurdi has the highest incidence of HIV/AIDS in the country. The Sisters and staff give paramount importance to education and care for people suffering from this disease, with special priority given to vulnerable children and women. A small clinic in Lagos, recently transferred to us, is already developing into a small hospital. The Sisters minister in obstetrics, pediatrics and maternity care as well as offer family planning for young couples. In Amoyo, a compact health post on the school compound serves villagers and the student population.

Justice, Peace (J&P) and Social Action
In Auchi diocese, we work here with prisoners, as one Sister does in Abuja. In the Ilorin diocese, Sisters are involved in J&P work by combating micro-credit finance schemes. In Enugu, two Sisters organise programmes for the alleviation of poverty, injustices and inequality, and promote good governance. One Sister is secretary to the Ecclesiastical J&P Network; another is programme officer, directing a Catholic Social Teaching programme for the laity of the diocese at the Catholic Institute for Development of Justice and Peace.

We celebrate the growth of the Church and Notre Dame Communities
Within two decades after the arrival of the first three Sisters, we were ministering in 3 dioceses. The Nigerian Church is flourishing. With more Sisters, we are now serving in ten dioceses. Having chosen ministry for all peoples in Nigeria, we are living in 8 communities in growing urban areas and 8 communities in small towns and villages. In Nigeria, Kenya and USA, Sisters are studying to upgrade qualifications and be better prepared for ministries. Two Nigerian Sisters are now serving in South Africa.

The Nigeria Province rejoices in all graced moments of our history. In times of joy and suffering, our Sisters journey in fidelity to the Gospel, the Church and our Congregation. In St. Julie’s time, Notre Dame sprouted, blossomed and spread to other countries and continents. As we, 92 Sisters, participate in the Golden Jubilee Journey of renewal, we rejoice in our re-founding moment in 16 communities, and with our Sisters answering the call to service beyond the borders of Nigeria.

In Oro we have planted 50 young trees. May the newly planted trees grow, bloom and produce good fruit, as seeds of God’s goodness!
Vision Becomes Reality
By Sister Leonore Coan, SNDdeN

Ten years ago in a discussion for developing reliable communication options for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in remote sections of Africa, Mr. Louis Casey, an electrical engineer, encouraged Sr. Lorraine Connell, our General Treasurer, to pursue the possibility of an African Photovoltaic Project (APP). To provide a reliable and consistent source of electricity and clean water would alter significantly the lives of men, women and children living in poverty. Louis advised Sr. Lorraine to use resources for expanding the communications infrastructure in order to address life needs for our Sisters and their ministries. During this anniversary year, we celebrate the success of this project and certain milestones.

We marvel at the wonder of light, water and communications for the people. We remember some crisis moments with transportation delays at sea ports and obstacles on the roads. However, we dream of what can happen when vision and resources join in bringing hope for a better life.

Tenth Anniversary
Conceived from Sr. Lorraine’s vision of connecting our Sisters in Africa to places beyond their isolated villages, the APP began to take shape in 2003. Today, the dream has become a reality in Fugar and Awkunanaw, Nigeria and in Kitenda, Lemfu, Ngidinga and Pelende, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), with wonderful life changes and options. Convents, schools and clinics/hospitals in two countries are now experiencing life with electricity for lighting, refrigeration, water purification and communication. Rooms set up with basic technology equipment in these ministries provide access to the Internet for teachers, primary and secondary classes as well as health care personnel. The Congo compounds organized these facilities by using available materials. Now, the wider community also benefits from technology at these four sites.

Sr. Lucie’s Experience
In Kitenda, Sr. Lucie Kima walked from the school, where she teaches accounting and bookkeeping, to the Cyber-café on the compound of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. She sighed: These three years have been amazing! In her mind and heart, she marveled that her recent experience of teaching has changed from using chalk on black painted-walls in school to logging onto YouTube for instruction material! She mused too that it seemed like yesterday when Sr. Claudine Dumbi and she traveled in 2010 to the United Nations (UN) in New York to present, at a session of a UN Commission, the story of the African Photovoltaic Project. Her thoughts then focused on the people in Kitenda whose lives have been improved through the gift of electricity in her village. She recognized how the solar panels, water purification system, Cyber connection with computers, copiers and an amazing connector to charge cell phones have brought the modern world into this remote village. The Sisters and staff in Kitenda, have organized adult technology classes during afternoon hours. This space is available also for education and healthcare personnel, and also as a resource center for surrounding schools and health facilities. Now the Sisters welcome men and women from the community to learn software programming for email and Skype and to connect with the world beyond their village limits.

The Power of the Sun
Overwhelming changes have taken place in this village. Sr. Lucie thought: Our lives here have changed through Sr. Lorraine Connell’s vision and from the generosity of wonderful donors, caring about people living in poverty, on another continent across oceans. Sr. Lucie’s experience with The Power of the Sun began only three years ago. Yet the APP’s...
Hearts Wide as the World in Florida
Sisters Ann Kendrick and Maureen White, SNDdeN

The wish, “Let your hearts be as wide as the world” painted on the rotunda ceiling, expresses how it feels to be a part of Hope CommUnity Center (HCC) in Apopka, Florida. At the entrance, a community-created mosaic, from floor to roof, portrays the journey, struggles and dreams of immigrants along the road. Representing hundreds who have made personal contributions, the mosaic story is breathtakingly beautiful. Also, a mural describes with paint the response of the Center to the life, needs and imagination of the local community. Black and white photos, created by high school students, display the stories of “Who am I?” and “Farmworkers: a Photojournalist Story,” depicting local realities and creative talents of our community. An image of Our Lady of Guadalupe and a statue of St. Julie Billiart grace the lobby. In this Center, founded by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, everything demonstrates that “education liberates, empowers and enables choices” for all peoples and ages. In the early 1970s, Sisters Catherine Gorman, Gail Grimes and Ann Kendrick arrived in Apopka for ministry with farm workers and the working poor. After more than 40 years in ministry in the Office for Farmworkers, the Sisters established a permanent home in Hope CommUnity Center in 2007. The Sisters opened more doors to a future of hope for generations of women, men and children.

Inside Story: Hope for Life
Hope Center is a Service Learning Community dedicated to the empowerment of Central Florida’s working poor community through education, advocacy and spiritual growth. The mission statement, written by the whole staff, reflects Hope’s adaptability, creativity and engagement with the local community, living in poverty. The Center has many programs created organically in response to the needs of the community: courses for completion of education, citizenship, tutoring, parenting, preparation for lay ministry, advocacy for immigrants, organization of youth groups, peace and children’s camps, etc. Programs are vehicles for community involvement, as well as personal and social transformation of diverse peoples and cultures. HCC is a collaborative ministry of the Sisters of Notre Dame, the Diocese of Orlando, Notre Dame/AmeriCorps Mission Volunteers (NDMVA) and the local community of farmworkers, immigrants, working poor families, committed Board members, many supporters, volunteers and benefactors. Everybody has something to contribute.

Hope Center is about people. Sylvia and Nayeli struggle to finish high school in order to get better jobs, help their children and feel an inner self-pride. Undocumented “Dreamers,” like Eli and Leslie, band together for support and serve the community through immigration clinics and educational forums, while mobilizing for comprehensive immigration reform. Carlos, a young father himself, volunteers in the program for family nurturing and parenting. Every year, a new diverse team of NDMV discover life-changing experiences in serving and learning from this community. They become part of the fabric of Hope for Life.
Continued

World Widens as Family

Mothers, who have never been to school, band together to help and encourage each other in basic literacy. Often these mothers are being taught by their own daughters who are now in college. Some entire families benefit from our “wrap around services” which encompass all members. In one family: the father has become a US citizen, the mother is studying in the Mom’s Class, their children have passed from being undocumented to legal status with a loan from the credit union. Moreover, their teenagers have found a sense of belonging and purpose in the Sin Fronteras Youth Group, as their young adults have entered college, with help from HCC, through tutoring, encouragement, guidance and scholarships. One daughter is a Notre Dame Mission Volunteer. This entire family participates in advocacy work for immigration reform. The Sisters and staff learn through our service; we learn in order to serve better. Strong relationships and networking connect and build a transformative community.

The Center is an exciting ministry where the charism and Mission of St. Julie are breathing new life with hope into a CommUnity of believers.

Everyday miracles happen in Notre Dame, Apopka!

Visit our Web site: www.hcc-offm.org
Connect to our Facebook pages:
Hope CommUnity Center and Sin Fronteras Youth Group.

Vision Becomes Reality  Continued from page 9

exciting history shows great potential for extending the dream into the future by putting more systems in place for education, health care and economic opportunity! The Mission and vision of the Sisters bring hope for electricity, clean water and communication for more people living in poverty.

Future Expansion

Our Sisters and co-workers living and working in stable and sustainable environments have a brighter future. Now we dream together of expanding this miracle for other remote sites. We are planning additional projects in the Congo and Nigeria. We have invited local and international partners to share the dream. Working together, we aim to assist whole communities in isolated locations in Congo and struggling populations in urban and rural areas in Nigeria to emerge and participate as equals in the world community. We rejoice with those Photovoltaic sites, functioning well where the Sisters and people are enjoying their accomplishments.

We welcome you to celebrate this 10th anniversary and to help us in expanding the African Photovoltaic Project dream into a wider reality.

Notre Dame de Namur
Sisters Maria Tecla da Silva Gaia
and
Maria Socorro Oliveria da Silva
make their Perpetual Vows in Brazil,
August 2013

Get Involved
www.SNDdeN.org
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Healing Ministry in Lima, Peru

By Sister Madeleine Tagliavini, SNDdeN

In a broken down bus at night on the Peruvian Pan American Highway, the driver announced that we would be four hours late in arriving at our destination. I was on my way to visit a friend, Sheila, on her 30th birthday and to spend time in a home for abandoned children and adolescents. On this 14-hour journey from Lima to the mountain village of Cajamarca, Peru, I had much time to reflect. My thoughts turned to the many ministries in which I have served in England and now in Peru. Having worked with handicapped children in Brixton, London, I am now serving in Peru in a healing ministry in response to the needs of women and children.

Sheila’s Story

At the time of terrorist attacks in Peru from the Sindero Luminoso (1980’s and 1990’s), Sheila was a young girl whose family fled Ayacucho in the Andes Mountains. Alone and suffering from a mild form of schizophrenia, she lived consequently on the city streets of our barrio in Lima. Looking for a shelter, suffering from tuberculosis and venereal disease, she arrived one night at the door of our SNDdeN convent. She found shelter and stayed in our house until she was better. After a year, we found a place for Sheila in Cajamarca, in a home run by young Italian volunteers with the Salesian Fathers. While accompanying Sheila, I learned a lot about the TB programme and dire conditions in mental hospitals in Peru. I discovered problems in the Peruvian Health Service. My greatest challenge came, however, in assisting young girls who live on the streets and in encountering so many homeless and abandoned.

Healing Ministry

In 2005 when I came to Lima to prepare for a formation ministry, I met a homeless woman, Anna, a woman of 38, who had been thrown out of her house by her family. Estella, the President of the Parish Health group found her sleeping in the park outside our parish church and asked the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur if we could help Anna. So we made a small corner for her in the parish hall. I accompanied Anna on her visits to the Mental Hospital, and for a massage in a Holistic Centre in our neighbourhood. One day, Sr. Eileen, a Presentation Sister, invited me to take a course in energy medicine at the Centre. After finishing this course and completing a course in “Healing Touch,” I formed with new companions a team who opened our Centre for Therapy in the parish library.

Complementary Medicine

Now I am involved in complementary medicine. We are five therapists, specializing in reflexology (foot therapy) and massage. We offer healing touch therapy to parishioners for about three hours, twice a week. Invited by Sr. Iris Carmen Zapata to the Fe y Alegria School, we give healing therapy to the children two days a week, in a room shared with the school psychologist. At my request, the teachers select three children who could benefit most from 15 minutes of relaxation therapy. Some students...
themselves ask to come, and even during break-time. We treat children from 5 years old to adolescents of 18 years. Most of them are children lacking concentration, or they are either hyperactive or lethargic. Many have a sad history of abandonment by fathers or mothers. Others never see an adult at home because parents are working day and night. A lot of the adolescents spend hours on the Internet. When I go to the local market, invariably a child, who recognizes me as one of the therapy team, gives me a huge smile and a hug. It is very rewarding to give therapy to young children and teenagers.

**Visiting the Sick**

In Lima, I visit many sick people. A young woman, Sofia, fell a year ago, and broke her hip replacement. Her family has abandoned her. She has been a helper in the parish, and now she needs caring and companionship too. **There are so many women like Sofia who have been abandoned in their disability or illness.**

Reaching out to those who live in poverty and abandonment has taught me much about hospitals, operations, the Peruvian Social Services, and loneliness. With the help of donations and the Parish Health Group, I buy medicines for the sick not covered by the National Health Service. I admire the many young people from different nations who offer their services for the benefit of others. **Young people, called Kurame, visit patients who have few or no visitors.** In August, Sulema, a young catechist from our parish, went with a group to World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, to meet with our new Pope, Francisco. Animated by the experience, Sulema returned full of enthusiasm for working for a better world and for Justice in Peru. Many young people in Peru show this same generosity and they are the hope of our Church!

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**Support Our Mission**

Your donations support and sustain our worldwide Mission on five continents.

The Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) is a charitable institution with 501©3 status in the United States. Contributions support our Mission in a variety of ministries across the world.

**How to support our Mission?**

- Give Charitable Gift Annuities
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**For more information, please contact:**
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coan@sndden.org

Website: www.sndden.org
FBI Values Assistance from Women Religious

By Sister Joan Krimm, SNDdeN

In 2010, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in the United States took a national corporate position on anti-trafficking. Collectively, the Sisters declared their “abhorrence of all forms of human trafficking in all the places where it exists,” and gave a commitment to implement this position in working with others to eliminate sexual slavery with action, possible for them. In our Ohio Province, the Justice and Peace Committee discussed how to take action against human trafficking. We formed a sub-committee to meet with women religious in the area and to research the viability of opening a “safe house.” Now, six religious congregations collaborate on various anti-trafficking projects. At our monthly meetings, our local FBI Agent and the Director of Stop Slavery offered us education on trafficking. The FBI Agent advised us to concentrate our efforts on what we do best, educating others, instead of focusing on opening a safe house at this time. With the agent’s help, we have written letters to about 80 Hotel/Motel managers in educating about human trafficking and in promising them follow-up phone calls and visits. We have been able to visit almost all managers and give them packets with materials and posters. We have also offered education for their staff.

Action Against Slavery

The Sisters joined efforts with a former victim of trafficking. Aware that the bathroom is the only place where these captive slaves are allowed to be alone, this former victim started a project called SOAP (Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution). We have been posting labels, with a crisis number for help, on bars of soap. We have sent 3,000 small bars of soap to managers of hotels/motels who are willing to put them in hotel rooms. Many victims have already received help by calling the crisis number. Our province committee, working closely with Sr. Therese Del Genio, SNDdeN, is helping a man and woman who have been labor-trafficked from India. Having discovered that this husband and wife were slaves of a restaurant owner, the chef helped them to go to the authorities. An FBI Agent has been helping the couple and their two children to obtain documentation which had been confiscated by the trafficker. The Sisters are enabling the family to move forward by providing resources for their physical examinations and necessary inoculations.

Six religious Congregations are in dialogue with the Office of Religious Education in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Specifically for the schools, we are now researching and writing a curriculum for grades 7-12 for possible use in Catholic schools. The students at Chaminade/Julienne High School in Dayton and the Summit Country Day School in Cincinnati are very active in researching human trafficking and in promoting Justice and Peace issues. Educating others about trafficking is a slow, difficult struggle but little by little, we can make a difference.
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.

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.

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have gone social...

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