GoodWorks

WORLDWIDE MISSION: Making known God’s goodness

A Saint for Our Times

“How good is the good God!”

St. Julie Billiart

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Dear Friends of Notre Dame de Namur,

This issue of Good Works is filled with many examples of the spirituality and theology of St. Julie Billiart, namely acknowledging, protecting and upholding the dignity and worth of each person, and the integrity of human relationships. In his novel, Les Miserables, 1862, Victor Hugo, illustrates Julie Billiart’s mission of “saving a single soul.” The beautiful encounter between the good Bishop and Jean Valjean is summarized in these lyrics sung by the Bishop.

“Come in sir, for you are weary, and the night is cold out here. Though our lives are very humble, what we have, we have to share. There is wine here to revive you; there is bread to make you strong; there’s a bed to rest till morning; rest from pain and rest from wrong.”

[During the night Jean Valjean left the house with a bag filled with silver vessels. When he is returned by the police, the Bishop welcomes him again, and handing over the precious silver candlesticks says:]

“But friend, you left so early; surely something slipped your mind. You forgot I gave these also. Would you leave the best behind? ...But remember this, my brother: see in this some higher plan. You must use this precious silver to become an honest man. By the witness of the martyrs; by the passion and the blood; God has raised you out of darkness; I have saved your soul for God.”

Called by God, inspired by the Gospel and the example of St. Julie, we thank you for your prayer and support of the commitment we share with you to protect and uphold the dignity of each person and the value of human relationships.

In God’s Goodness,

Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN Congregational Leader
SNDdeN in Ministry  SPIRITUALITY / MISSION

A Saint for Our Times!

By Sr. Anne Stevenson, SNDdeN

For years, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) and personnel in our schools and institutions prayed that Blessed Julie, beatified on May 13, 1906 by Pope Pius X, would be canonized! Many friends and collaborators remember those years of waiting for St. Julie Billiart (1751-1816) to be recognized by the Church as a Saint! At last on June 22, 1969, the Church recognized the Sainthood of Julie Billiart, our Foundress, in the celebration of her Canonization at the Vatican in Rome. Pope Paul VI declared to all the world Julie's holiness of life and her legacy of making known God's goodness, through her apostolic religious Congregation and all groups who claim her as Foundress. Today, Sisters, Associates, Mission Volunteers, celebrate Julie’s 50 Years of Sainthood, with our co-workers and partners in our schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, clinics, centers, parishes and social agencies.

Saintliness, described by Pope Paul VI at the Canonization, is the “drama of love between God and the human soul...a glimpse of the marvelous action of God in a privileged human life.” Marie-Rose-Julie Billiart heard the whisperings of God within her, and in the signs of her times, in her country devastated by war, violence and ignorance.

In the aftermath of the French Revolution, in Cuvilly, a small village north of Paris, Julie heard God's call in the cries of the Church, separated by divisions and internal struggle, the groans of people living in poverty: hungry, homeless and devastated by war and political upheavals, the sobs of a society in crisis, with multiple refugees and orphans, the pleading of women and children, deprived of appropriate means for human life and dignity.

Congregation “Marked by the Cross”

A loving and faithful God carried Julie through 23 years of physical paralysis and psychological sufferings. On her sickbed, her prayer life deepened; her sensitivity of spirit attuned her to the inner voice of God. Scarcely able to talk or move about, Julie saw a vision of women around a cross and heard Jesus words to her: “These are the daughters that I will give you in an Institute, which will be marked by my cross.” This vision at Compiègne guided Julie in founding her religious Congregation in 1804, with Françoise Blin de Bourdon, and in accepting members.

Later in another vision on February 2, 1806, Julie was raised from the floor before her Sisters and experienced a Light of Revelation, a call to serve throughout the world. Julie attracted many young women to follow her in a ministry of education, especially for orphans and those living in poverty.

The Vision at Compiègne, a mosaic created by Sr. Vincent de Paul Curran, with assistance from other SNDdeN, in Ipswich, MA USA.
We recognize St. Julie as a Saint for our times! Her impact and influence crosses oceans and continents in a Global Mission today!

Julie reminded her Sisters to have “hearts wide as the world,” and “that the earth is the Lord’s... and a Sister of Notre Dame should be at home anywhere.”

She brought joy and hope in the goodness of God to a depressed and deprived generation by educating vulnerable children crying out for survival in France and Belgium. She demonstrated the power and presence of a loving and caring God in her person and in the women who followed her. Julie sent her Sisters to reach out to people “in the most abandoned places,” to give them tools for life, to dismantle unjust systems and to alleviate poverty through education. We celebrate the long line of Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

For 215 years, our Sisters on five continents have been at home among people of many cultures and sharing their gifts, learning and experience through a variety of ministries, with a particular focus on education. St. Julie was a woman of the modern era who took courage through action. By opening schools to educate children for life, she faced the inequalities of her time, especially for young girls and “those made poor in a world marked by increasing divisions and inequalities” (CALLS: 2014 General Chapter, p. 5).

She saw education for everyone as a basic human right, and teaching as the “greatest work on earth.”

This Saint for Our Times challenges us today, for another generation in global crisis: to make known God’s goodness and bring courage, hope and healing.

The 50th Anniversary of St. Julie’s Canonization calls us to celebrate our origins, and our life in mission. It calls us to recognize the extraordinary gift of Julie to the Church and our world. She is ALIVE today! This anniversary celebrates God’s goodness in our lives and in those who accompany us along the way. It challenges us to invite more women to a life commitment in our religious community as SNDdeN: women with the same courage and confidence as the Belgian women who left home and country to bring the Gospel to different parts of our world. In this era of global crisis, this anniversary summons us to extend Julie’s inner life and spirituality to a growing number of Notre Dame de Namur Associates, Mission Volunteers, Co-Workers, and Partners. In her Mission, St. Julie leads us on, showing us that education is our strongest tool in surmounting these forces.

Mothers Mary Linscott, Loretto Julia Carroll and Mère Josépha de St François Van den Ede enjoy a happy moment with a priest and a cardinal, and they express the joy of the entire SNDdeN Congregation!
Midyear Conference: “Stones of Hope Ripples of Change”

In February 2019, 280 NDMV-AmeriCorps members joined staff, presenters, and 25 SNDdeN in Baltimore, MD for the Midyear Training Conference. Volunteers shared with SNDdeN their experiences, common values, and similar challenges. They learned about the SNDdeN Mission in the USA and the rich experiences of the Sisters. They attended workshops designed to provide them with new skills to improve their ability to serve their communities, and enjoyed the chance to network with people from other cities.

Members had the opportunity to hear from inspiring keynote presenters: Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ, author of “Dead Man Walking,” shared her unique experiences with persons on death row and in our marginalized society. Sr. Helen awakened the consciousness of participants in citing the importance of the dignity and sacredness of each person, the need to speak for the voiceless in this nation, and to challenge the wrongs in our society in advocating for peace and justice.

Ronald Smith, Nonviolence Trainer, used his dynamic life experiences from a professional basketball player to a prison inmate, and now to social justice and community service. He challenged Mission Volunteers to believe in themselves and to determine their own future. He encouraged them to be driven by love to make a positive impact for change. Love-driven service speaks life into those we meet every day. We do so much better together.

The NDMV service year offers rare opportunities for individuals to serve communities and gain professional experience. Mission Volunteers enter the program because they believe that education has the power to transform communities; however, they leave the service year transformed themselves, with a new commitment to justice. They change lives in making known God’s goodness through action.

Haiti Initiative

NDMV service in the USA supports multiple SNDdeN initiatives overseas. Boulangerie Notre Dame, a community-led bakery in Haiti, is the most recent project. The bakery provides jobs, as well as access to education, in SNDdeN tradition. Children of bakery workers receive scholarships to attend school; the bakery workers learn new skills, from English to business practices.

At present, NDMV has 450 AmeriCorps Volunteers ministering full-time in teams in 25 USA cities: in the east, Boston, Baltimore, Philadelphia, and Apopka; on the west, Los Angeles, San Francisco, and Seattle; in smaller cities, like Boulder, Colorado, Cincinnati and Northeast Ohio, and Thoreau, New Mexico. NDMV-AmeriCorps members serve in schools, community centers, after-school programs, and family education programs, and support education initiatives through small group and one-on-one instruction. They act as classroom assistants, GED citizenship instructors, and environmental education coordinators, ranging from under-resourced urban neighborhoods to migrant farmworker groups. This commitment of NDMV ensures access to education for each person to reach a full God-given potential.
In a quiet neighborhood with rice fields and cherry trees, a cross towers on a church steeple, east of Hiroshima City. Beneath this cross, a Catholic faith community gathers in this church dedicated to St. Julie Billiart, our smiling saint from the wheat fields of Cuvilly, France. To tell our story about this site, we have to go back to 1973 when Mazda Motor Corporation opened a Catholic Kindergarten for the children of the young workers at Takaya in Higashi Hiroshima City. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) accepted the invitation to be the administrators and teachers in this school.

Story of the Ministry and Community

Gradually, a Catholic group began gathering for Sunday Mass in the Kindergarten chapel. After thirty years, Sister Keiko Suzuki, SNDdeN (formerly Sr. Mary Angelina Suzuki), Provincial, planned to build a new convent and bought land in a residential area, not far from Takaya. She visited Bishop Misue of Hiroshima and asked about the possibility for the Hiroshima Diocese to buy a part of the land for a church to serve the local Catholic community and international students at the near-by universities. The Diocese was unable to invest in such a project at the time. Sister Keiko, however, saw the need for the SNDdeN Japan Province to assume all expenses and include a large chapel in the building project. On May 11, 2003 the new buildings were blessed in this beautiful location with a pond surrounded by cherry trees, and a breathtaking view from the convent. The garden, filled also with fruit-bearing trees of cherries, apples and blueberries, is particularly for the enjoyment of the children.

We chose St. Julie, our Foundress, as the patron saint of this home. Hiroshima Diocese promised to send priests for Sunday Mass for the people and weekday Masses for the Sisters. The SNDdeN pioneers were four, with one Sister who had to commute to the Kindergarten. Three Sisters took on many responsibilities in the new foundation. Faithful parishioners who had been worshipping in Takaya came to the new location, which gave a familiar and friendly atmosphere in this second stage of our story. With the support of the pastor of the Hiroshima Cathedral, the cooperation of lay leaders and the dedication of the Sisters, the foundation was firmly established.

Parishioners

The parishioners at this church are Christians who belong to many cultures and countries: Brazil, Philippines, Vietnam, Korea, USA and some countries in Africa. Some individuals have been long-term residents of Japan; others came to find work in Japan and have been here for some time. In the parish, there are also university students, visiting professors, participants in an international work training center and government projects. The people have different purposes for being in this city, but their presence makes the church lively and multi-cultural. This community of parishioners is blessed with many artistically talented members whose creativity enriches the liturgy and various activities in the parish.
In 2018, Bishop Shirahama reorganized the churches in the Hiroshima Diocese. On May 27, he named our chapel in Higashi Hiroshima as a diocesan parish church; he appointed Father John Nguyen Quang Thuan, a Vietnamese priest, as the first pastor. This is the third phase of our story, with larger SNDdeN community. Ten Sisters are living in the community residence and are active members of the parish. Two Sisters serve in ministry in Takaya, an official Notre Dame ministry, begun in 2013 when Mazda transferred ownership to SNDdeN. There are now 335 children in the school.

St. Julie Corner
The Sisters have a good support role now as members of new ministry groups, different from our earlier role as initiators and leaders in education. Yet in thinking about some possible ways to serve the Church, we decided to open a St. Julie Corner in the front lobby. The statue, originally sent from Namur, Belgium, has been standing in the convent from the opening days of this building. Every year on May 13, we celebrate the Feast Day of St. Julie, by singing hymns in her honor and listening to reflections and talks. We would like to have similar celebrations throughout the entire year. Also, we hope to teach our parishioners and visitors more about our saint and foundress. Our Julie Project is just beginning; we are taking our first steps and St. Julie is constantly guiding us in a new way. We hope that this St. Julie Corner may become a new center of activity among our international group of parishioners.

May St. Julie touch and inspire each person, families and parishioners with the faith and courage of

A Saint for Our Times.

Notre Dame Mission Volunteers (NDMV) is a US national ministry of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN). In the Mid-year Training Conference, held on February 15-18, 2019 in Baltimore, MD, 280 NDMV-AmeriCorps members joined staff, presenters and 25 SNDdeN Mission Volunteers gathered with the SNDdeN to share service experiences, common values and challenges and benefit from the input of vibrant presenters for transforming their lives and those in communities where they serve.

NDMV service year offers an opportunity for individuals to serve their community and gain professional experience. NDMV is currently seeking applicants for the 2019-2020 service year, beginning in September 2019.

For further information: please contact Adrienne Andrews (aandrews@ndmva.org) or visit the website at www.ndmva.org.
Maryhouse for Homeless Persons

By Sister Anne Locke, SNDdeN

In 2006, I came to Sacramento, the capital of California, to our newly formed Cristo Rey High School (CRHS). As job developer, I acquired a special placement for our students at Maryhouse, a Program of Loaves and Fishes. The students entered data for the Development Office and also served the noon meal to guests. Today, CRHS still places students at this center.

Moving from a ministry in education at CRHS, I wanted to serve with “those made poor in a world marked by increasing divisions and inequalities” (CALLS: 2014 General Chapter, p. 5).

Sister Libby Fernandez, RSM, Director of Loaves and Fishes, introduced me to the Director of Maryhouse, who invited me to work there. I have been serving now for 8 years!

Maryhouse provides services for homeless female, transgender persons and single fathers. We open our doors at 7:00 a.m. for showers. We serve breakfast from 8:00 to 9:00 a.m. and end all services each day at 2:30 p.m. On any given day, at least 45 guests take showers; more than 120 individuals, including children, have breakfast. Over 100 persons receive requested items, such as clothing and personal items. Church and community organizations, with some groups having been here over 15 years, prepare and serve breakfasts. Menus include oatmeal, grits, dry cereal, French toast, scrambled eggs, sausage, chopped ham, grilled cheese sandwiches. The number of guests increases at the end of each month.

Good Health and Well-Being

At Maryhouse, I began by helping with breakfasts, and making sure that we had enough supplies on hand. As a great way to get to know guests and develop relationships, I took their names as they entered.

Homeless for years, many individuals have been camping along the rivers flowing through Sacramento. Oprah Winfrey did a TV series on these homeless persons, in the early 2000s. Their stories often include physical and/or substance abuse, poverty of parents, housing too expensive for those living in poverty. At this center, individuals establish relationships with one another through a variety of interests and activities, in solving puzzles, checking in guests, or viewing local birds. With interaction and support, Maryhouse staff assist the guests to break their habits of addiction and/or to seek permanent shelter. We rejoice with each person who says: “I’ve been sober for a year!” or “I have a place to live!” or “I’m moving back home to live with my family!”

Besides providing showers and breakfast, Maryhouse dispenses survival products for women and babies. We provide whatever is donated to those in need, including clothes, blankets, sleeping bags, feminine hygiene products, toiletries, diapers, and more. With the help of wonderful weekly volunteers, we sort for distribution these items, stored in our supply warehouse. We assemble also hygiene packages for guests unable to make the shower list. This number has greatly increased in the last 2 years.

Newer Members Assist

During these years, I had a graced opportunity to have younger Sisters spend summers with me in service at Loaves and Fishes, an alternative experience from education or parish ministry, and a ministry with those living in poverty, a commitment to the Mission of Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN). In recent years, we asked Gillian Wallace, an affiliate, if she would come to experience a ministry for the homeless. She came to serve that summer and volunteered during the next summer as well!

Programs at Loaves and Fishes include a school, health clinic, law clinic, mental health service, men’s wash house, and dining room, serving about 700 meals a day. We provide also a night shelter for mentally ill persons.

We live faithfully our Mission Statement: In an environment of welcome, hospitality, safety and cleanliness, we seek to provide an oasis for homeless men, women and children seeking survival services.

As an SNDdeN, I realize that I am “making known the goodness of God” to a very vulnerable group of persons in our society today!
SNDdeN Communications Team Builds Networks

By Congregational Communications Team

Our Congregational Communications Team networks with Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) internationally on many projects throughout the year. Using our SNDdeN Intranet System (FirstClass), we reach a wide audience by multiple communications. We work with our Congregational Leadership Team in Rome, Italy and Leadership Teams in 13 Provinces in 17 countries. We collaborate with co-workers in centers in Namur, Belgium and Ipswich, MA, USA. We enable communications with a strong network of stakeholders in our Mission: Sisters, NDdeN Associates, Mission Volunteers (NDMVA), partners and donors.

As a faith-based community, we publish stories of our ministries in education, health care, community development, pastoral and social work on five continents. We encourage our world-wide Notre Dame de Namur Community in Mission to tell their ministry stories which we publicize in internal and external communications. We communicate with an external audience with our Websites, Blogs, Social Media, newsletters and *Good Works*, to make known the goodness of God in the “good works” of all participating with and in our international Congregation.

Global Networking

Recently, our Communications Team received an invitation to submit an application to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Action Campaign. This consideration confirmed for our Team the reality that our SNDdeN community is accomplishing many of these goals in ministries described in our congregational communications. Our global network through technology, meetings, events, and publications disseminated internationally promotes the SDGs. With the approval of the Congregational Leadership Team (CLT), our Team, collaborating with Sisters Amarachi Grace Ezeonu, SNDdeN NGO Representative at the UN and Kristin Hokanson, SNDdeN Director of Notre Dame Virtual School (NDVS), sent an application to the UN Action Campaign in late January 2019. We applied for an award for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, who implement the SDGs internationally. As a Congregation, our Sisters, with Associates, NDMVA, and all participants in our Mission are making an impact by taking action on many of these goals.

Our application highlights some ministries where our Congregation gives direct service to people living in poverty and fulfills also specific SDGs. With an international Network, SNDdeN empower people at all levels in education, health care, community development, pastoral care and social work. We believe that our international communications educate for action, especially in promoting the *African Photovoltaic Project*, the Clean Water Project and ministries reaching vulnerable people living in poverty.

Many positive actions in process and already accomplished by our Sisters as Gospel women, impact and fulfill these goals. Our Team has been active in a *global initiative of networking in all our communications*. We focused initially on the UN Millennial Goals, in collaboration with...
our UN SNDdeN NGO Representative. In 2015, after world leaders at the September UN Summit approved the SDGs, we decided to communicate with multiple stories on SDG actions. Now, we promote information on Websites,* three WordPress Blogs: Good Works, Justice and Peace, SNDdeN at United Nations, and on Social Media. We include action stories in printed materials, such as this international magazine, Good Works. Working with our Mission Support Office, we include many articles in Good Works and on our Websites about our African Photovoltaic Project which shows action for sustainability in two developing countries. The Lenten Project, on our congregational site features stories of our Sisters, implementing action on specific SDGs in their ministries.

In 2016, we encouraged more education projects to raise awareness of SDGs on our Education Website.* Sr. Kristin Hokanson, gives major support, by posting a calendar and monthly themes of SDGs for our schools, colleges, universities, and centers in 17 countries. A brochure, entitled Sisters of Notre Dame at the United Nations, written by Sr. Amarachi Grace Ezeonu and printed in English, French, Japanese, Flemish, Portuguese and Spanish is available for our institutions and for visitors to the UN.

SNDdeN Mission is ALIVE in many countries in our world suffering in a global crisis of “people made poor in a world marked by increasing divisions and inequalities.” (Calls: 2014 General Chapter, p. 5) Analytics testify to multiple numbers of people served in SNDdeN ministries. Our Mission involves over 1100 Sisters, hundreds of Associates and Mission Volunteers, innumerable persons in parishes and all our institutions. We continue to tell our stories through multiple media. We bring the “good news” to our collaborators who work also in transformational action for systemic change.

We choose to stand with people made poor in a world marked by increasing divisions and inequalities.

*Websites: www.sndden.org and www.notredameonline

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
Invite You to
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
- Remember Sisters in your will
- Contribute gifts of stocks
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For more information, please contact:
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The expression of St. Julie Billiart, “How good is the good God!” showed 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, women with hearts as wide as the world, make known God’s goodness and love, with and among people living in poverty, through a Gospel way of life, community and prayer.

Continuing a strong educational tradition, we take our stand with people living in poverty, 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

Europe
Belgium
France
Italy
United Kingdom

Latin America
Brazil
Nicaragua
Peru

North America
Haiti
United States (23 states and the District of Columbia)

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