Our Living Legacy

“...life does not have a mission, but is a mission.”

Pope Francis, Gaudete et Exsultate (#27, p.6)
Dear Friends of Notre Dame de Namur,

In his most recent exhortation, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, (Rejoice and Be Glad), Pope Francis wrote, “Each saint is a mission, planned by the Father to reflect and embody, at a specific moment in history, a certain aspect of the Gospel.” (#19)

Every one of us, included in God’s plan, is identified with the small case “saint.” This identity is reason to rejoice and be glad because we are called to embody and reflect God’s Kingdom of Justice, Love, Mercy and Peace. This is our “specific moment in history” to reclaim, rename or renew a certain aspect of the Gospel. A good summary of many aspects of the Gospel is found in the Gospel of St. Matthew, chapters five through seven.

No one of us, on her or his own, is able to fulfill the plan of God. We need each other; we depend on each other; we count on the collaborative and cooperative participation with each other in every effort to respond to the needs of people all around us.

Today, we have the Biblical word to point to the identity we share with you: *mission*. Each of us is a mission, according to the plan of the Father, and affirmed in the words of St. Julie:

“…we are called to do what our Lord did on earth; we are to cooperate in the work of Christ to the full extent of our (baptismal) vocation.”

With this awareness and conviction, we continue with you, steadfast in the call we share with you to reflect goodness, honesty, humility, integrity and truth. Ashamed, burdened, overwhelmed and pained with the current abuse and scandal in our Church, and in governments worldwide, we support each other in our identity as mission!

In God’s Goodness,

Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader
Mamie Delaney, SNDdeN, Co-Director for US Office of Sponsored Ministries

EDUCATION/COLLABORATION | SNDdeN in Ministry

ND Ministries: Our Living Legacy

Education in all forms and outward expressions will always be at the heart of the Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN). Strengthening our connections and deepening our relationships in the ministries that carry our Notre Dame name are vital priorities to ensure the longevity of our heritage and legacy — a legacy that began in 1804, when St. Julie Billiart and Françoise Blin de Bourdon founded our Congregation. This “inheritance” has continued to thrive for over two hundred years as an international tapestry with our own distinctive motif.

Everyone who has been a student or colleague, or a relative of a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur in the past 214 years has woven a unique thread to the fabric of this treasure, which proclaims the goodness of God.

The Networking for Mission III conference held at Emmanuel College during the week of July 22, 2018 marked a significant moment for our colleagues in mission. This vibrant event provided the venue for more than 300 people, aged 16 through 90, gathered as students and colleagues from our SNDdeN ministries. More than one hundred SNDdeN from five continents accentuated the depth of our commitment to partner with our lay colleagues to proclaim the values and the teachings that animate all of us as bearers of our legacy. Keynote presentations and workshops sparked their enthusiasm and energy, deepened their Notre Dame connections and challenged us as we move forward together in ministry.

HIGHLIGHTS:

Opening and Keynotes

Sister Janet Eisner SNDdeN, President of Emmanuel College, opened the four-day conference with a history of the college on the eve of its 100th Anniversary to be celebrated in 2019. As the oldest Catholic women’s college in New England, Emmanuel towers as a tribute to the perseverance and tenacity of the Sisters who continued to overcome religious and gender bias to be counter-cultural and address existing needs.

Father J. Bryan Hehir, the initial keynote speaker, gave a profound analysis of Catholic Identity and how we manifest this identity in today’s multi-pluralistic society. He recognizes that we stand on a growing edge where the world presents new questions to ancient traditions. Father Hehir challenged us to be “penetrating presences,” witnessing to mercy, justice and service in our world and preparing people to move forward with intelligence and compassion in addressing the emerging questions of our times.

Father Hehir’s address was complemented by that of Sister Mary Johnson SNDdeN, who gave the keynote address on the second day of the conference. Sister Mary framed the address around the theme of Catholic Social Teaching — No Longer a Secret, which captured the concept of “the collective effervescence of the Charism” – the special gift given to each group within the Church to contribute to the common good.
Sister Mary shared two examples of sharing our SNDdeN charism:

- **The Hallmarks of a Notre Dame Learning Community**, used in so many SNDdeN ministries, “**which concretize(s)** our witness to the tenets of Catholic Social Teaching” and
- Pope Francis’ Encyclical, *Laudato Si* which is reflected in the *Chapter Calls of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur* to care for “our common home.”

Sister Simone Campbell, SSA, the “Nun on the Bus” continued the challenge to participants as she opened the third day of the conference with a keynote address based on the *Call to Public Holiness in Chaotic Times*. Sister Simone brought the participants full circle as she urged them to touch hearts, listen to stories, feel one another’s pain and then respond in a compassionate manner.

Thirty workshops augmented these keynote addresses with presentations on our Notre Dame de Namur Heritage, *The Hallmarks of a Notre Dame Learning Community*, governance, technology/social media, curriculum and instructional practice, ethics in healthcare, life transitions, multi-cultural responsiveness, racism and nonviolent conflict resolution and global citizenship.

All keynote addresses with several other talks and the power points from the thirty workshops are available on www.notredameonline.org.

**Student Leaders**

Prior to the Networking Conference, seventy students from ten Notre Dame de Namur high schools in the US assembled for the third annual student leadership conference. Notre Dame de Namur Academies from Hingham, Tyngsboro, Worcester, Notre Dame Cristo Rey High School (Massachusetts), Mount Notre Dame, The Summit, Chaminade Julienne and Stephen Badin HS (Ohio), Maryvale Prep (Maryland) and Notre Dame High School (San Jose, California) were well represented. The students participated in three days of workshops on St. Julie, leadership, Catholic social teaching. They completed their conference by joining in the opening sessions and liturgy of the Networking Conference. The presence of the students at the Mass celebrated the continuation of our legacy into the future.

Our sponsored ministries are treasures that extend the Notre Dame de Namur tapestry by sharing and animating God’s goodness with people all over the world. As they weave new threads into the fabric, they expand the living legacy of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. In the encyclical, *Gaudete et Exsultate*, Pope Francis exhorts each of us to “see the entirety of your life as a mission.”

We are very blessed by our colleagues who partner with us to broaden the outreach of our mission to the ends of the earth.
Sister Adèle Ndona, SNDdeN ~ (Congo-Kinshasa)
A Emmanuel College, j’ai fait une très bonne expérience d’internationalité. Cette assemblée m’a fait beaucoup penser à notre projet communautaire à Lemfu: “vivre l’unité dans la diversité.” Cette diversité de race, de culture et de langue ainsi que d’âge a été une richesse et une force pour notre communauté interculturelle. J’ai senti comment mère Julie était très contente de nous voir nous ses filles prier, chanter, travailler et manger ensemble avec ses petits-fils (élèves) et nos frères (collaborateurs), signe qui montre que nous sommes enfants d’une même mère. Le partage de vie et d’expérience des Sœurs âgées m’inspire l’endurance, la persévérance et la patience dans la vie consacrée.

At Emmanuel College, I had a good experience of internationality. This gathering made me think a lot about our communitarian project in Lemfu: “to live with unity in diversity.” This diversity of culture and of language as well as age has been rich and strong for our intercultural community. I felt that Mother Julie was very happy to see her daughters pray, sing, work and eat together with her grand-children (the students) and our brothers and sisters (collaborators), which shows that we are children of the same mother. The sharing of life and experience of our older Sisters inspires me for fortitude, perseverance and patience in the consecrated life.

Sister Florette Mbonzi, SNDdeN ~ (Congo-Kinshasa)
À Emmanuel Collège, j’étais très impressionnée par la passion et l’intérêt que les élèves et nos consœurs ont sur la vie de Ste Julie Billiart. Il y a une bonne pédagogie qui a facilité l’assimilation des vertus de Julie aux élèves: Julie vivra à jamais! J’ai apprécié aussi l’implication du Groupe 1804! L’implication de nos Associés a été très remarquable. Même si nous, SNDdeN, sommes absentes, la mission de Julie continuera toujours! Que le nom du bon Dieu soit à jamais glorifié!

At Emmanuel College, I was very impressed by the passion and interest that our students and our Sisters have for the life of St. Julie Billiart. There is a good pedagogy which has assimilated for the students the virtues of Julie. Julie will live forever! I appreciated also the involvement of the 1804 Society. The involvement of our Associates is very remarkable. Even if we, SNDdeN are absent, the Mission of Julie will continue always! May the name of God be forever glorified!

Sister Juana Jaqueline Castillo-Salvador, SNDdeN ~ (Peru/Nicaragua)
La Reunión de Educación ha sido un regalo valioso. Me he maravillado del compromiso, seriiedad y madurez de las adolescentes, al igual que la pasión de las profesoras y hermanas encargadas. La experiencia y reflexión que se les ha ofrecido a nuestras estudiantes ha sido increíble. He recibido muchas ideas para poder usar con nuestras estudiantes en nuestra escuela; ellas son nuestras mejores aliadas en esta GRAN Misión que nos ha confiado Sta. Julia.

Las ponencias han sido como un manantial refrescante para mí. Cada una me ha dejado un detalle particular para seguir reflexionando en mi propia vida y en mi compromiso como hermana de Notre Dame de Namur. Nuestros corazones son anchos como nuestro mundo y el mío se ha regocijado con el encuentro de tantas hermanas y el reencuentro de otras que han vivido en mi Unidad o que he conocido tiempo atrás. Esto me ha dado mucha alegría, somos una familia grande que sigue buscando maneras de que el Carisma de Sta. Julia siga esparciéndose por el mundo.

Networking for Mission III has been a valuable gift for me. I have marveled at the commitment, seriousness and maturity of the teenagers, as well as the passion of the teachers and Sisters in charge. The experience and reflection offered to our students have been incredible. I have received many ideas to use with our students, our best allies in the GREAT Mission that St. Julie has entrusted to us.

For me, the presentations have been like a refreshing spring. Each one has left me a particular detail to continue reflecting on my own life and my commitment as a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur. Our hearts are wide as our world. My heart has rejoiced with the meeting of so many Sisters and the re-encounter with other Sisters who have lived in my Unit or whom I met sometime ago. This has given me great joy, we are a big family that continues to look for ways that the Charism of St. Julie continues to spread throughout the world.
SNDdeN, Collaborating at the United Nations

By Sister Amarachi Grace Ezeonu, SNDdeN, Congregational Representative at UN

People around our globe recognize that women religious are involved in education, healthcare, and other helping professions, but not usually in an institution like the United Nations (UN). When I introduce myself as the non-governmental organization (NGO) representative at the UN for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN), I am often asked what we do at the UN. The SNDdeN Mission at the UN reflects our efforts to live St. Julie Billiart’s vision and hope that “her sisters would go throughout the world, proclaiming God’s loving care for all peoples.” Our presence is also a response to our Constitutions which challenge us “to work with others to transform unjust structures and systems as we participate in creating new ways of relating which enables all to experience more fully the goodness of God.”

As an international Religious Congregation, our presence at the UN helps us to maintain a global perspective in life, while being grounded in our particular ministries.

For over two centuries, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have provided services to those living in poverty in the fields of education, healthcare, community development, and pastoral care. Committed to providing many other services as long as we have the resources to do so, it has also become imperative for us as women prophets in the 21st century to complement these efforts with advocacy for systemic change.

Critical Questions

• Why do over 760 million people around the world still live in extreme poverty (that is, on less than $1.90 a day)?
• Why do more than 800 million people still do not have enough to eat?

These are figures from recent reports from the World Bank and World Food Programmes. There is certainly enough wealth in our world to provide for the basic needs of everyone. The problem, however, is that the world’s resources are so unjustly, inequitably distributed, a trend starkly reflected in a 2017 study by Oxfam, titled, “An Economy for the 99%.” This report revealed that eight men in the world own as much wealth as 3.8 billion people who make up the poorest half of humanity. This fact reveals extreme and grave injustice.

God’s plan for every human being is to live in safety and dignity. For this reason, Jesus came, “that all may have life and have it more abundantly” (Jn. 10:10). This is the goal of our SNDdeN presence at the UN. Presence at the UN provides us the opportunity to collaborate with dozens of Catholic Women and Men Religious, as well as other faith-based and non-faith-based NGOs and civil society organizations. Together, we advocate for policies that ensure “life in abundance,” especially for those living in poverty. Advocacy for systemic change tackles the root causes of poverty and holds governments accountable to provide basic services, including quality and affordable healthcare, education, housing and security for the people.

Collaborative Strength

In 2001, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur obtained consultative status with the UN. We are there because we believe in many values that the organization strives to promote and achieve in our very complex and fractured world. Our affiliation with the UN affords us access to many major forums, conferences and commissions where policies are formulated at the global level. With like-minded NGOs, we shape these policies, using different advocacy strategies, in jointly making...
oral or written statements, co-sponsoring side events on given issues. We do not engage in our advocacy work as a single entity, but we collaborate with others, working on committees to amplify our voice. NGOs organize themselves on committees around some UN issues, such as human rights, anti-trafficking of persons, and migration. SNDdeN at the UN follow issues related to poverty eradication, migration, rights of women and girls, sustainable development, financing for development, climate change, education, and eradication of human trafficking.

Sisters of Notre Dame at the UN can also obtain some UN ground passes each year to enable our members or affiliates to access, and possibly attend a UN conference. In July, 2018, eight SNDdeN from different countries attended in New York the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development Goals. We have also hosted students at the UN from some SNDdeN schools; we have given talks to groups outside New York about UN projects and the SNDdeN Mission at the UN.

Our Sisters are working with others for a better world. Our efforts at the UN must also in some measure be replicated in the different countries where we minister. Our continuous services for people living in poverty must be combined with the quest for systemic change to achieve sustainable development.
Sustainable Future for Improved Communications

By Sr. Lorraine Connell, SNDdeN

We are 15 years into our African Photovoltaic Project (APP) this year of 2018, and we are happily reporting that currently we have completed 9 sites in Nigeria, and 7 sites in Democratic Republic of Congo. The project began in 2002 with a request from our Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) in countries without internet access and seeking improved internal communication within the Congregation. They were aware, of course, that the northern portion of the Congregation had almost instantaneous communication across the world through the Internet. Their cry was “what can be done for us?”

Collaboration

We have traveled many roads since those first days of determining needs, finding co-workers willing to help us along the way, both for funding and for design, construction, and maintenance. The Provinces in Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) have taken quite different routes to their current status in the Photovoltaic Project, for several reasons.

Nigeria had two of the first systems installed, and dealt with early “bugs” in the design, including problems with the lightening protection. They had more advanced local access to internet providers and water systems, and needed more help with the electricity and solar panels than with other elements of the system. They found local providers of the panels, and the Congregation used donations from our generous contributors and foundations to provide the funds needed. Now, 9 operating sites provide electricity to both convents and schools across the SNDdeN ministries in Nigeria.

In the DRC, the locations of the SNDdeN ministries are more remote and “off-grid,” requiring a full range of panels, internet access, water source upgrades, including pumps, pipes and cisterns. In our latest round of installations we made the decision to upgrade the water provisions when needed, a feature on which we had not originally planned. The needs of clinics and hospitals in remote locations required the augmentation of water provision in order to improve the sanitation and overall quality of health services that the Sisters are able to provide. While increasing the costs, the improvements are directly beneficial to the local people and patients. Through our Ohio Province, where the Clean Water Project has provided hundreds of thousands of dollars in donations from friends dedicated to the provision of safe water for the local communities, we have increased our donor base.

Long-Term Change and Goals

Our reflections on the ups and downs of this Photovoltaic Project leave us with the sense that we are involved in long-term change in both Nigeria and the DRC. Although these life-style changes are benefits for the people, they meet them at times with fear and resistance. A generation of young people will become responsible, hopefully, for the upkeep and continuity of the services being provided.

Our long term goals remain that the SNDdeN and local colleagues will be trained and accept the burden of maintaining and enhancing these systems in the years ahead. They will transfer the knowledge and expertise needed within the local communities, no longer relying on external resources. This is always the goal of “development,” not just the addition of resources, but the enhancement of the living conditions and hope for ongoing improvements in communications and for sustainability into the future.
SOLIDARITY WITH SOUTH SUDAN MARKS
By Sr. Carolyn Buhs, SNDdeN

In the first week of July 2018, we, members of Solidarity with South Sudan (Solidarity), gathered in the Good Shepherd Peace Center in Kit, across the Nile River from Juba. Our Assemblies are wonderful occasions to connect with the other Solidarity members who work in Wau, Riimenze and Juba, South Sudan. From 17 countries, we number 32 men and women from 19 Religious Congregations and also 3 lay volunteers.

Our July Assembly marked the Tenth Anniversary of Solidarity with South Sudan (2008 - 2018). Solidarity began with a plea for help from the Bishops of Sudan to the Religious Superiors of the world to rebuild Sudan, after the years of conflict since 1956. Men and women religious internationally realized that no one Congregation would be able to train health workers and teachers and to care for the pastoral needs of a Church, traumatized by years of conflict. In 2008, the first religious arrived to serve in Wau, Riimenze, Malakal and Juba. Sr. Margaret Scott, our Principal in Yambio Solidarity Teacher Training College, (STTC) was among those first Sisters arriving in Riimenze.

NEW PARADIGM OF COLLABORATION
The Major Superiors of Religious envisioned a new paradigm of religious life, in which men and women religious of various Congregations and countries would live together in four communities, sharing the Mission of Jesus in various ministries. They sent a Call to all Religious Congregations for personnel and donations. After being accepted by Solidarity, I arrived in Juba on October 31, 2011 to serve in Malakal Teacher Training College. My new adventure in this collaborative ministry began!

In December 2013, fighting broke out in South Sudan. Our College in Malakal was looted and our Solidarity Community was displaced. I went to teach English in Wau in the Health Training Institute and to organize their library. By the end of 2014, I moved to teach and help in the library at Yambio Teacher Training College where I am living now with nine other men and women religious and a lay volunteer. We pray, work, eat and relax together. Our countries of origin are: New Zealand, India, Ireland, Nigeria, Ghana, Papua New Guinea and USA. We also have South Sudanese, Kenyans and Ugandans on the staff.
Sisters in Ministry

TEACHER TRAINING AND OTHER MINISTRIES

Solidarity in ministry evolved from the original idea of an STTC in Riimenze to an STTC in Yambio, a larger town with better transport. In Yambio, I enjoy most Teaching Practice when we visit the neighboring primary schools to supervise the teaching of our students, work in the library and offer encouragement to our students to read more! Riimenze has become a center for farm development, a nursery school, and relief help for Internally Displaced People.

In a population with a literacy rate of 24%, the need for trained teachers is great!! Now our STTC is the only operating teacher training college in this war-torn country. For the past eight years, our educational collaboration in Solidarity has graduated about 25 certified teachers each year. Some of our graduates are now teaching in the nursery and primary schools in Riimenze. As our graduates increase, we are delighted to see several become headmasters in primary schools around the country. The unity among our students of so many different ethnic groups and the cooperation among the members of our Solidarity communities are signs of hope for a young nation that is struggling to live in justice and peace for all 64 ethnic groups in South Sudan.

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
- Send gift envelopes and more
- Contribute online

For more information, please contact:
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Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

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.

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.

Africa
Democratic Republic of Congo
Congo Brazzaville

Asia
Japan

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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• Read our stories
• Share in our hope
• Rejoice in God’s goodness

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www.sndden.org ~ www.notredameonline.org ~ www.ndvs.org