

Good Works

Worldwide Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Sister Joan Kelly:
Nurturing Her
Students and
the Planet

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Dear Friends,

“Look! On the mountains, the feet of those who bring good tidings, who proclaim peace” (Nahum 1:15)

In this issue of *GOOD WORKS*, you will be reading about Sisters who “educate for life” in schools, through projects that bring people together in homes, parish centers, and in the natural settings of neighborhood farms.

In Maryland, Sister Joan Kelly broadens education to develop within her students a sense of responsibility for the “life of the planet.”

In Brazil, Sister Maria Sousa Arruda ministers with youth, who proudly call themselves, “Planters of Peace.”

Two Congolese Sisters, Virginie Makengo and Lucie Batuyangene, spread good tidings in Thuin, Belgium, one of the oldest Notre Dame establishments for education.

Sister Obehi Ogbeide walks directly with orphaned and vulnerable children in Kroonstad, South Africa.

On December 10, 2008, the United Nations publicly recognized the humanitarian work that Sister Dorothy Stang had given for more than 35 years, selflessly laboring to secure human rights for the poor and landless people in many areas of Brazil.

Thank you, dear Friends, for your interest and involvement with the committed women in Notre Dame. Thank you for walking with and supporting these women. Thank you for the courage and conviction with which you spread good tidings and proclaim peace!

In God's Goodness,

Teresita Weind, SNDdeN

Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader



Front Cover:

Sister Joan Kelly, principal at St. Ursula School in Baltimore, Maryland, teaches students to appreciate and care for the environment.



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GoodWorks

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The New Congregational Leadership Team of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur



(back row, left to right)

Sisters Maria Delaney, Liliane Sweko, Jeanne MacDonald

(front row)

Sisters Nancy O'Shea and Teresita Weind

Sister Joan Kelly: Nurturing Her Students and the Planet

By Elaine L. Ricci

When Sister Joan Kelly entered the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur at age 17 in Ilchester, Maryland, she never envisioned that she would someday be a school principal. In fact, she didn't think she even wanted to teach. Today she looks back upon a 50-year career as an educator that has included teaching assignments in Washington, D.C., New York, and Philadelphia. She has master's degrees in education and administration. For the past 23 years she has served as principal of St. Ursula School in Baltimore, where, since her arrival, the enrollment has gone from 370 to 700.

Over the past eight years, Sister Joan has added another dimension to her work: developing within her students, and the community at large, a sense of responsibility for the life of the planet. "The school has made one of its goals to care for the environment," Sister Joan said. "One of our teachers, Kathy Bivons, has become a self taught environmentalist, and she has done a lot to make us more aware of ways to conserve. We don't abuse the use of water, electricity or the ground around us. We recycle paper, cardboard, plastic and aluminum, and we never throw away anything electronic; we pile it in a bin and then have it picked up to be safely recycled." The school also has an environmental club.

"The school has made one of its goals to care for the environment"

Continued



Even the ground beneath their feet is used judiciously at St. Ursula's. Sister Joan has a vegetable garden and recycles food scraps into compost. She recalls Sister Marie Angèle Kitewo from the Congo once asking her how many people the garden fed. When Sister Joan told her it was just



Sister Joan Kelly, principal at St. Ursula School in Baltimore, Maryland, and some of the school's students

enough to support the household, Sister Marie Angèle nodded and said, "Don't take from the earth more than you need." So when the household size was reduced, Sister Joan reduced the size of the garden.

The commitment to living green is part of an overall commitment to social awareness. The students have helped raise funds for a school in Africa and now support the Sisters of Notre Dame Power of the Sun Project. This project in the Congo and Nigeria creates solar electricity to purify water and to run homes, hospitals and medical facilities.

"I read about the Power of the Sun Project several years ago, and it touched me that people in Africa didn't have clean water or the electricity to purify it," said Sister Joan. "When we showed the students pictures of the Sun Project, they were stunned. They saw how people live with so little, so simply, and it has helped them to form a mindset, to understand that we've been given the gifts of the earth. I think that is a really important part of education."

The commitment to raise awareness does not end with the students. The school reaches out to parents and the community through fundraising programs to support the Sun Project. When the parish and school board wanted to mark Sister Joan's 20th anniversary at St. Ursula's, they offered to send her on a trip. She said she would rather a donation be made to Power of the Sun Project. St. Ursula's obliged with a \$25,000 check.

As for the students, Sister Joan sees evidence every day that they are taking the green message to heart. "I see the kids put things like used tissues into the trash and paper into recycling. They've learned the difference." And she is hopeful that it is a lesson they will take with them when they leave St. Ursula School. "We are forming habits for life," she said. "I hope that we are teaching global awareness and fostering concern for the environment in a way that they will never forget."

"We are forming habits for life... I hope that we are teaching global awareness and fostering concern for the environment in a way that they will never forget."



'Planters of Peace' Nurture Hope in Brazil

by Maria Sousa Arruda, SNDdeN and Rita Raboin, SNDdeN

We live on the periphery of the city of Breves, on the Island of Marajó in the State of Pará in Northern Brazil. The island has 16 counties and is the largest archipelago in the world, with a population of 360,000 people. Marajó is a 15-hour boat trip from the capital city, Belém. Breves, with more than 96,000 inhabitants, is the largest county in population.

Our neighborhood, Jardim Tropical, "Tropical Garden," has approximately 1,000 families, including hundreds of children and teens. There is no school, health clinic, or even a street in various areas. Where streets

do exist, they do not have asphalt, and there are few street lights. In flooded areas, slats of wood are thrown together to form makeshift bridges. Most houses do not have water spouts.

Drugs, violence, unemployment, alcoholism, gangs, and lack of security characterize our neighborhood. Bars play pornographic music that demoralizes families and exploits women.

We and the youth with whom we work are providing an island of hope in Jardim Tropical. A group of 30 to 40 young people that I (Sister Maria) facilitate are active in a weekly youth group.

Continued



Sister Maria Sousa Aruda coordinates a group of young people working for peace in Brazil.





These youth help prepare the liturgy and also participate in novenas, processions, preparation for baptism, a nutrition program for babies, and protest marches – all activities that energize our community. The youth named their group “Planters of Peace”, a significant choice in light of their neighborhood situation.

There is so much goodness in our young “Planters of Peace.” They are among the reasons why our neighborhood, poor as it is in some ways, deserves to be called “Tropical Garden.”

This youth group wants to evangelize by including the social dimension, and contributing toward the creation of a more just world. There are plans on the diocesan level to form Justice and Peace Commissions in all the parishes. We hope to provide ongoing formation that will enable group members to participate in these commissions. Bible formation is also a priority.

Another vital aspect of this work with our young people is the inclusion of youth who are repeatedly in trouble with the law because of drugs, alcohol, and violence. They have many personal problems, but we are blessed to have a psychologist who is willing to work free of charge with them.

There is so much goodness in our young “Planters of Peace.” They are among the reasons why our neighborhood, poor as it is in some ways, deserves to be called “Tropical Garden.”

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Early Community and Young Branch of SNDs Collaborate in Belgium

By Sisters Marie-Rose Lepers and Alberte-Marie Collard



Sister Lucie Batuyangense with a group of students at Pins Verts

One of the oldest Notre Dame establishments, founded at Thuin, Belgium, still operates today with the help of two Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur from the Congo. Sisters Virginie Makengo and Lucie Batuyangense make it possible for groups to continue to use the property for children's camps, formation weekends, retreats, environmental education, and family events.

These guests provide their own cooking and other activities; the Sisters offer a ministry of listening, counsel, and shared prayer.

Françoise Blin de Bourdon, who with St. Julie founded the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, began a community at Thuin with four Sisters. The Sisters ministered in a home for the elderly and a school that were part of the compound. The school continues today with a lay staff.

A children's camp began at Pins Verts in Thuin in 1961. The large garden, a large house for the children's use, and a smaller house for the community of Sisters made the property ideal for this ministry. Periodic renovations and additions have made it possible for the Sisters of Notre Dame to continue to respond to the needs of local youth.

When the Belgian Sisters were no longer able to continue their ministry at Pins Verts, they appealed to the rest of the Congregation for help. Two Congolese Sisters visited Pins Verts to see whether Sisters from the Congo might be able to respond to the need. Beginning in July 2007, Congolese Sisters have made possible an ongoing SNDdeN presence at this site whose history goes back to the earliest years of the Congregation.

Sisters Lucie and Virginie share community with Belgian Sister Albert-Marie Collard, age 90, who cooks for the sisters and visits the sick in their homes. These three sisters radiate our mission statement that God is so very good and the reality that "we are called to be one".

HIV/AIDS: 'An Enemy to Humanity'

By Sister Obehi Ogbeide, SNDdeN

Thabo is a 16-year-old orphan caring for his blind grandmother.

An intelligent boy full of boyish pranks and enthusiasm, Thabo is the caretaker of their home.

The prevailing rate of the HIV/AIDS pandemic in South Africa is alarming. Many families are either infected or affected by this disease, which has left many children like Thabo orphaned or vulnerable due to the death of parent(s) or family members.

A response to this scenario is the Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Project. It was established in January 2008 in the Diocese of Kroonstad to cater and support children between ages 0 – 17 years. I am a Sister of Notre Dame from Nigeria serving as the coordinator of OVC in the Diocese of Kroonstad.



Sister Obehi giving out Christmas gifts to children

Many families are either infected or affected by this disease, which has left many children like Thabo orphaned or vulnerable due to the death of parent(s) or family members.

The children live in very poor townships and locations with little or no form of support. The project provides:

- nutritional support to the children through giving cooked meals at the different drop-in-centres on a weekday and weekend basis and food parcels to support their families;
- educational assistance through preventative and educational talks, helping with home and school work, providing learning materials, uniforms and school fees;
- psychosocial support through recreational activities and individual/group counselling for the children's mental and emotional health;
- assistance with obtaining legal documents and birth certificates for those not yet eligible for state grants so that they can have access to such grants; and
- assistance with the development of healthy bonding between the children and their families.

Continued



Augustina Kwala addressing the children on World AIDS Day

There are a number of volunteers from the various communities working with me and helping with outreach to the children. The project has grown immensely, with a network of 64 individuals caring for and supporting 1,040 orphans and vulnerable children at 22 centres. These centres cover the three regions of the diocese (north, central, and south).

The caregivers receive training in how to care for the children. They are helped to identify the children, assess their living conditions, and determine their areas of need. The project has

made a huge impact in the lives of these children and their families. Augustina Kwala is one such person who is passionate about helping HIV positive children take their antiretroviral medication without interruption and focuses on home-based care for very ill children.

The project has grown immensely, with a network of 64 individuals caring for and supporting 1,040 orphans and vulnerable children at 22 centres.

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The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are a charitable institution with 501(c)3 status in the United States. Contributions support our mission and ministries and are distributed across the globe.

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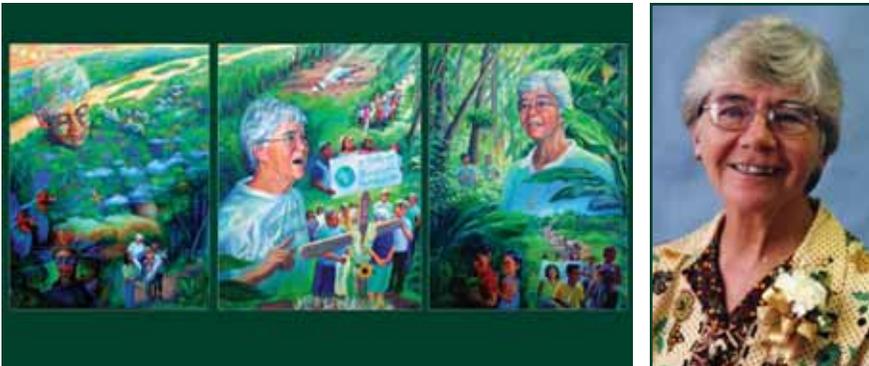
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Sister Dorothy Stang Receives United Nations Award

By Sister Joan Burke, SNDdeN

Seven Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur were present when Sister Dorothy Stang was among those honoured with the 2008 United Nations Award in the Field of Human Rights on the December 10, 2008. Her brother, David Stang, received the plaque in the name of the family and Sister Joan F. Burke, as representative of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, accompanied



Sister Dorothy Stang

him to the podium in the UN General Assembly. Part of the citation read by the President of the General Assembly, Miguel d'Escoto, stated, *...[Sister Dorothy] spent nearly four decades in Brazil defending the human rights of the poor, landless and indigenous populations... She worked tirelessly, together with the farmers of the region, to help them rebuild their livelihoods, cultivate their land and defend their rights from illegal loggers and ranchers.*



David Stang and Sister Joan Burke, SNDdeN

Sister Dorothy became a symbol of the fight to preserve the rainforest and to protect the rights of the most vulnerable groups. After receiving several death threats for her work in Brazil, she commented, "I don't want to flee, nor do I want to abandon the battle of these farmers who live without any protection in the forest. They have the sacrosanct right to aspire to a better life on land where they can live and work with dignity while respecting the environment."

GoodWorks

Worldwide



Our Mission

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur making known God's goodness... educating for life.

Sisters of Notre Dame, 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.

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