"Look up and see the fields ripe for the harvest."

John 4:35
My dear friends of Notre Dame,

Depending on where each of us is on the planet, the cycle and season will be different for looking up and seeing “fields ripe for harvest.” And depending on where each of us is on the planet, each will discover many different examples and expressions of vulnerable and wounded persons crying out for and awaiting care and attention. At the recent United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 16-27 May 2011, representatives from all the Continents delivered passionate pleas for the Right to Water. In native languages, each participant addressed members of the United Nations with creative plans that converged around several common and clear concerns, one of which was, how can we make the human right to water a reality?

The good news is that in each of the articles in this issue of Good Works, the Sisters, Associates, Volunteers, faculty and staff talk about their ministry, presenting aspects of the various ways each affirms and supports those striving to live the Gospel. In each article there are examples of the harvest of justice and peace, responding to pervasive hungers and thirsts in the world.

Our Sisters move forward, day by day, with the support of the Congregation, family and friends. I thank you for being in that circle of support. Your love for the Sisters, interest and investment in the Mission of Notre Dame encourage us to continue as faithful disciples of the Risen Christ, listening to and answering the mourning of the earth and the cries of human beings who have been stripped of human rights, dignity and self-esteem.

Thank you.

In God’s goodness,

Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader
Sr. Albertine Katula, a Congolese, has been in Cuvilly for 11 years, and she:

- prepares parents for the sacrament of Baptism of their babies/children;
- shares the Gospel in the convent and in parishioners’ homes;
- does catechetical ministry with teen-agers;
- lends a “listening ear” to students at St. Julie Billiart School in Orvillers;
- provides socialization for lonely parishioners who sew materials to be sent to the Congo;
- represents Sisters for a term on the Parish Council.

In St. Julie Parish, there is only one priest, Monsieur le Curé Geoffroy de Lestrange for the 25 villages. With him, the SNDs form a core group for the parish. Four Sisters animate a spiritual and educational network in a corporate ministry for adults, adolescents and children in all the villages. They also tutor the students in Orvillers-Sorel at Lycée Sainte Julie Billiart, a high school directed for 34 years by Sr. Marie-Thérèse Béget, now in Namur. As Julie’s daughters, the Sisters continue to educate for life in Cuvilly and the surrounding villages.

The fields of Picardy are ripe for the harvest! A “saint for our times” calls the people of this region to renew their faith. In the Diocese of Beauvais, the people claim our ND Saint for their patroness in this rural area, north of Paris in the French Province of Picardy. St. Julie Billiart Parish comprises 25 churches in 25 villages in one large sprawling geographical area. In each church, a statue or image of St. Julie has a prominent place near the altar. In Reccons, a large village 5 kilometers from Cuvilly, the priest (le curé) celebrates Mass on Sundays and Feast Days. St. Eloi, the church of the Billiart family in Cuvilly, hosts the villagers for Mass on a Saturday evening, on a rotating basis with the other churches. Parishioners join the Sisters in the convent for the weekday liturgy, morning and evening prayer, and adoration on Sunday.

Welcoming Community
The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are a welcoming community for the people. Now surrounded by many new homes, their convent is a center for the “good news.” Many of the villages have no large space for meetings. So, the convent doorbell often announces the arrival of persons or groups who gather for meetings, animated by the Sisters and the laity. The atmosphere is peaceful, reflective and conducive to prayer and warm relationships for such groups as engaged couples.
The Sisters are involved in outreach in different ways with people living in poverty, with young people, and with other organized groups. They visit the sick and elderly in hospitals and at home. They offer hospitality for meetings to groups who help people in need, especially women. All the Sisters share a common ministry with certain groups:  
- **Foi et Lumière** (Faith and Light) a group of disabled individuals with their companions, similar to the **L’Arche** communities, founded and inspired by Jean Vanier. Living independently, these individuals meet monthly as a group.  
- **Amies/Amis de Julie** (Friends of Julie), women and men, similar to Associates who are devoted to St. Julie; they meet semi-annually. Most come from the Noyon, where our Sisters had a school previously.  
- The Parish Choir practices in the convent.  
- Villagers come to Julie’s home and chapel to pray or ask for information.  
- French people come regularly from Paris, as in Julie’s time, for a “get away” in the countryside or enjoy a vacation home in Cuvilly.  

In Julie’s spirit, the Sisters welcome various international groups or individuals on pilgrimage.

They extend hospitality to Sisters who come for prayer, retreats or vacations. The Sisters celebrate with parishioners and pilgrims the feast days of St. Julie. Sisters Albertine, Christiane, Georgette and Patricia are a welcoming presence to all who come to meet or visit Julie’s home and chapel.
Women and Water: Island of Beauty & Challenge

By Sisters Maria Sousa Arruda and Rita Raboin, SNDdeN and Zenilda Mauricio do Nascimento, NNDeN

Our Notre Dame community lives on the Island of Marajó, on the largest navigable archipelago in the world, located at the mouth of the Amazon River, in the State of Pará, Brazil. This is an island of beauty and challenge! The people find their means of support in extraction of açai for juice, palm hearts, wood from family-owned sawmills, and fishing. Some plant and sell cassava, rice, or beans. In our county, there is 80% unemployment, gang violence, drug trafficking, and other criminal activity. Unable to find jobs, the people are migrating from the river communities and searching for schools for their children. Our neighborhood with 4000 persons and 853 families, on the periphery of Breves, does not have any school, health clinic nor potable water. Our streets are muddy in the rainy season and dusty in the dry season. Most women work in homes of wealthy families; the men find odd jobs daily. On days when adults do not work, the families do not eat.

Women United

We, Sisters Maria, Rita and Zenilda offer pastoral service in Breves and in other areas of the county and diocese. Aware of day-to-day survival and limited job opportunities for the people, we submitted a request for funding to our SND Congregational Mission Office. Awarded a Notre Dame grant, we are able to help women in an income-generating project, called “Women United.” Many women live in difficult situations with alcoholic husbands, not supporting their families. Our project provides education for women, enabling them to face daily challenges. Twice a week, in our back yard, we teach women how to make greeting cards. The women are learning how to promote and broaden the market for selling their cards in local shops. Some SND friends have helped with the sale of these cards in the US but we encourage the women, for their own self-esteem, to seek local recognition of their work. The 15 women in this project find time with our community for formation and reflection. Although it is modest, the project gives the women an opportunity to be self-sustaining by developing their skills. These Brazilian women suffer, but they show great courage. From their earnings, they buy food, clothing, medicine, school supplies and bare necessities of life. The women are pleased when they have the ability to provide, even in small amounts, whatever their families need. We share their joy!

Islanders Deprived of Water

Our people are confronted with still another challenge: the lack of water on an island surrounded by water. It is not safe to drink our rusty, non-potable water. We treat water from the river with sulfate or chloride. Everyone, including little children, fetch water in containers transported in small carts, frequently getting stuck in the mud. During the rainy season, we collect rain water. For decades, the people have suffered without clean water. Recently, their anguish spearheaded a popular movement for “the right to water,” as a long-awaited vindication of human rights. Over a two-month period, 400 persons from 7 neighborhoods met to discuss the problem and to make suggestions for resolving this crisis. At a future Popular Assembly, the people will choose specific suggestions, even perhaps a “sit-in” on the grounds of the state-owned Water Department. Our county coordinator has invited a technician to examine the potential for purifying river water for drinking. Our Bishop, other individuals and groups are currently supporting this movement. The hope that concrete action will emerge underlies all our efforts.

We, SNDs, walk with our people. We are working for quality of life and justice in helping the people to seek a remedy to the water crisis. Our pastoral ministry offers hope to our people struggling for survival. We are planting the seeds of goodness and human dignity in the hearts and minds of a new generation, for future growth and flowering.
Cultivating Dignity for Women in Okayama, Japan

By Kate Bowes, Lecturer

Notre Dame Seishin University (NDSU), dedicated to formal education for women since 1949, is situated in a rich historical setting in Okayama, Japan. Discovery of pottery and other artifacts on the campus marks this site as once an ancient and thriving agricultural area from the Yayoi period of 4th century BC! In these environs at NDSU, the gifts of nature are abundant; reverence for nature is deeply rooted in a heritage from the native Shinto tradition. The land is rich with beauty, growth and ripening. As the cherry blossoms fall and the leaves green the hills surrounding our city, the tender shoots of rice are going into the dark muddy fields in some places in Japan, eventually ripening into the grain that sustains us. The fireflies are putting on nightly shows and summer is swelling all around. Ripening at the University, too, is well underway for another year. Indeed, the gifts of nature are signs causing our hearts to exclaim with Mother Julie: “Ah, qu’il est bon, le bon Dieu!”

Sr. Frances Takagi, President of Notre Dame Seishin University, is a graceful and dignified figure, gliding across campus in her simple habit. This SND always has a ready smile and a bow of greeting for students and staff alike. A professor for over 30 years, with a doctorate in theology from Catholic University of America in Washington D.C, she has guided the University since the millennium began. Sr. Frances continues to teach Christian Philosophy and Church History with a focus on enculturation and women’s studies; she confesses that she would love to be teaching more. As President, she is leading the University into the future!

NDSU administrators, faculty and staff have faith in continuing good harvests by sowing the seeds of love that nourish, sustain and energize the diverse communities belonging to the University. Inspired by Mary, and St. Julie, called affectionately “Mother,” we work to cultivate virtue, respect and kindness and to nurture human dignity. We make space for young women to dream, explore and study in order to discover meaning and integrity in the demands of adulthood. Truly, this is education for life!

Beneficiaries of Great Spirits
A long history of the land helps us to gain perspective on our recent cultural history in the last century. We are co-creators in the grand drama of God’s love for humankind. Almost eighty-seven years ago, those single-minded Sisters from Massachusetts arrived on these shores and gave commitment to the mission of educating Japanese girls and women, first in high school and later at university level. Looking back, we recognize strong foundations laid for us by the Holy Spirit, working through our forebears. With courage, determination and energy, the Sisters surmounted difficulties, survived and grew through critical wartime experiences. Over time, these women, American and Japanese, have journeyed far, endured much and acted with deep trust in God’s goodness.

Working in schools led by SNDs, we find ourselves beneficiaries of these great spirits, who continue by example, to bless our endeavors. The Japanese Sisters, however, are in something of a unique position. Working in schools led by SNDs, we find ourselves beneficiaries of these great spirits, who continue by example, to bless our endeavors. The Japanese Sisters, however, are in something of a unique position. They work in a context that appears strongly secular but is deeply influenced by the history, tradition and cultural springs of Shinto and Buddhism. Christianity itself, to say nothing of Catholicism, is a minority religion and regarded as something of a curiosity. Indeed, for the Japanese, as with many non-European-rooted congregations, cultural negotiations in following the way of Jesus have consisted in delicate accommodations and compromises over time. Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life is revealed to us in this here and now moment. He is right for this time, place, culture, and in service to our people and their needs. The wise Japanese poet Basho reminds us: “Do not seek to follow the footsteps of the men of old; seek what they sought.”

Success and Growth
The local community praises NDSU consistently, in appreciation of the University’s prestigious high rate of post-graduate employment in our sixth decade of service. This success testifies to strong roots, trust by the community, and respect for the faithful work and witness of Sisters and lay staff. Despite economic challenges and increasing pressures in a declining population, NDSU is the only university in the prefecture with...
a student body of all women. They are 99% non-Christian with 85% from Okayama prefecture, a distinction that no other regional university holds. The faculties of Arts and Human Life Sciences offer Japanese and English Language and Literature, Sociology, Human Life Sciences, Child Welfare and Development, and Food and Nutrition. NDSU awards also Masters’ and Doctoral Degrees. Notre Dame Scholarship Foundation and the Alumnae Association give approximately $150,000 each year to students in financial need. An increase in applicants demonstrates that high school students, parents and grandparents believe in the strong education at NDSU. With 550 new students in April 2011, the University has a healthy student body of 2369 students. Sr. Frances Takagi smiles in reporting the enrollment; her face lights up as she rejoices: “See the work of the Holy Spirit?”

Global and Local Connections

The University’s commitment to global connections includes opportunities for study abroad. Currently, some students are enrolled in long-term study in Canada. Others benefit from educational opportunities in Taiwan, China and Australia. Japanese language teaching is now an anticipated annual event in Taiwan for our student-teachers. In addition to regular volunteer activities in Malaysia, we are planning more educational opportunities in Asia and in the UK, with Liverpool Hope University. NDSU students from Notre Dame Seishin High School or Junior High School in Kurashiki do their practice teaching in these schools before they take the prefectural examination. Student candidates for Kindergarten or Elementary school teaching are able to complete their practice teaching in the ND schools located on the campus!

All potential teachers must fulfill a requirement, called ‘care for the vulnerable,’ a week spent in service to the elderly, the handicapped or children. All students take classes in Christianity and Christian culture. With these courses, the University claims identity as a mission school. Also, we teach Mother Julie’s values and priorities, particularly solidarity with women and with people living in poverty, and ways to proclaim God’s goodness in our lives. Jesus said: “By their fruits you shall know them.” This is, after all, the prayer of our hearts.
Today, about 450 women and men across the United States belong to the St. Julie’s family as Associates of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Over 200 years ago in the midst of the ashes of the French Revolution, three women vowed themselves to God and formed a community for reaching out to people in the most abandoned places. In a vowed commitment, Julie Billiart, Françoise Blin de Bourdon and Catherine Duchatel desired to share the love of the good God, permeating their own lives. They planted wisely, nurtured tenderly, and shared widely the seeds of this new religious Congregation. Two centuries later, the fruits of that moment continue to flourish and attract. In our day, SND ministries, especially among the poor and most abandoned, flourish on 5 continents with the generous support of thousands of people. Associates, alumni/alumnae, students, co-workers, benefactors, friends and families live gratefully and nurture God’s goodness in their lives and among others.

The Second Vatican Council in 1965 initiated a new season in the life of the Church by recognizing the laity’s role as: “a call rooted in each person’s very vocation as a Christian.” As an apostolic Religious Congregation, Sisters of Notre Dame pondered well this Vatican II statement. We see today a growing emphasis on the participation of lay women and men in church ministries. We also are able to trace, in our General Chapters from 1969 to 2008, the SND challenge and development of opportunities for lay engagement. These years have been planting and growing seasons for ND Associates. Our first USA Associates met regularly, studied the life and spirituality of Julie, made a simple commitment to live the charism in daily life and to attend regular meetings and days of prayer. Each province developed recruitment, training, policies and accountability for Associates. There was generally little involvement of the Associates in province assembly gatherings of the Sisters.

New Season

A new season is coming, new soil is being tested; tender yet strong nurturing, diverse flowering promise new fields of God’s goodness wherever God’s people are waiting. A commitment and challenge have been accepted. Since the early 90’s, there has been a growing collaboration among Sisters and Associates. Each province has a coordinating team with one Associate and one Sister. These Co-Coordinates of the Associate Program have met each year as a group nationally. Over 10 years, they have expanded their vision and mission while defining and agreeing upon common elements. Believing that Association is a personal call from God to live Julie’s charism in ordinary life, the Associates reflect and raise questions constantly about relationship to SNDs.

In 2009, Associates were invited to participate in prayer, ritual, table conversation, as well as discernment on Chapter Calls at the SND National Gathering. Associate Anne Hannigan (CA) clearly defined the Associates present history and their deep desire to be active “Partners in Mission” with Sisters of Notre Dame. The standing ovation with tears of joy, said it all. The season of greening of mission through Julie’s charism has begun.

“...a season to plant and a season to harvest.”
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Invite You to

Support Our Mission

Your donations energize 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:
Sister Leonore Coan, SNDdeN
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
Congregational Mission Office
30 Jeffreys Neck Road
Ipswich, MA USA
goan@sndden.org

Website: www.sndden.org

Called to Be One

Our Associates in the USA are called to be one with the Sisters of Notre Dame in sharing Julie’s charism and a common process of formation in preparation for commitment. Recently, they have updated their statement of mission and have one identifying symbol of ND Association in the USA. Associates attend regular meetings and minister in SND health care centers, schools, colleges, universities, parishes, centers for adult learning, for youth and care of the disabled, prisons, shelters for the homeless, etc. Some provide pastoral care and others are legal advocates, counselors and teachers. Sisters and Associates count on the prayers of all inspired by St. Julie’s spirit, wherever they find it.

Solidarity is evident in our National Newsletter, Associates Alive and in overwhelming support for a statement on National Anti-trafficking. Growth is evident in an increased understanding of a commitment to long-term formation and the legacy of Julie’s mission. Associates renew their commitment each year on February 2 in the public, mutual celebration of the Sisters’ Vows and Associates’ Commitment. They reflect supportive relationships capable of bringing about a “viable, independent non-canonical community of committed Associates,” now being considered.

SNDs together with ND Associates hope to carry Julie’s charism toward a fruitful harvest in our time and beyond.

“Charism is precisely a gift of Prophecy…an awareness of being called…to contribute to its historical impact as a commitment and as a challenge” Bruno Secondin, OCarm. 2010

Ohio Associates, Pat Martindale and Mary Margaret Pry enjoy lunch break at Day of Prayer in Columbus, OH.
PROPHETIC CALL TO Justice and Peace
By Sister Maura Browne, SNDdeN

While Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur value direct service with and for people living in poverty, our prophetic vocation calls us also to recognize and change the underlying causes of injustices at the root of that poverty. As Justice and Peace (J&P) Coordinator for our Congregation, my ministry impels me to support this prophetic call through research, analysis and communication with our Sisters and the wider Notre Dame family. St. Julie Billiart gave us this legacy: “Surely justice comes before any other consideration” (Letter 2), and “It is to the glory of my Father that all bear fruits of justice and truth” (Letter 4). Julie lived this commitment to action in her efforts to educate girls and address injustices during and after the French Revolution.

Catholic social teaching is likewise prophetic, especially in Vatican II documents which reiterate the responsibility for all Christians to build structures for a more just and peaceful world. The Catholic Church commemorates in 2011 the 40th anniversary of the Encyclical, Justice in the World, which promotes Gospel imperatives for Justice. “Action on behalf of justice and participation in the transformation of the world fully appear to us as a constitutive dimension of the preaching of the Gospel.” (p. 5). Providing a blueprint for the Church’s social justice ministry, this encyclical calls Christians to build structures for a more just and peaceful world.

As SNDs, we have organized our J&P Network on national and international levels. Electronic communication has facilitated our working together for J&P through our internal SND Intranet and external Website, and Twitter. I use also several list-serves and external websites for obtaining material to disseminate electronically. I join groups which focus on peace, economic justice, human trafficking, migration and the environment, in response to our 2008 General Chapter call: “to listen to the mourning of our fragmented world… those impoverished by the growing divide between rich and poor… the sexually exploited, trafficked, marginalized… abused women and children – especially girls.” Our Sisters collaborate and share face-to-face their local realities at international J&P meetings. Our Congregational Leadership encourages Sisters from Africa and Latin America to attend the World Social Forum and the World Forum on Theology and Liberation. In recent years, some SNDs attended meetings in Nairobi, Kenya and Belem, Brazil. As follow-up to meetings, I network with our Sisters through the Intranet, phone calls or meetings.

ECUMENICAL ADVOCACY DAYS (EAD)
Based in Washington D.C., I participate in several Catholic and Ecumenical working groups who share our values and goals. We can do much more together than as individuals. Each year, all the groups sponsor a multi-issue conference called Ecumenical Advocacy Days. J&P advocates from across the USA gather for a weekend of prayer, networking and education. In March 2011, Sr. Eucharia Madueke, a Nigerian SND, offered valuable insights at a workshop, Equal or Complementary? Gender Relations Seen through African Eyes. Exploring the cultural, religious and social understandings of the roles of men and women in Africa, she contrasted equality with complementarity. She showed some implications related to marriage, children, work, salaries, social standing, and security.

On the last day, all participants visited members of the US Congress and urged them to recognize their moral obligation “to protect and strengthen the health, well-being, and security of women and families” by funding programs that serve families, especially those struggling to overcome poverty, locally and around the world. Also they asked Congress to re-authorize and fully-fund the Violence Against Women Act, and to enact and fund the International Violence Against Women Act.

In our ministries globally, SNDs work for Justice and Peace.

“Sustained by the goodness of God…we are inspired as a congregation to renew our prophetic vocation.”

(2008 General Chapter Call, p. 5)
SNDdeN Mission

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

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

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

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

Asia
Japan

Europe
Belgium
France
Italy
United Kingdom

Latin America
Brazil
Mexico
Nicaragua
Peru

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

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