“The harvest is so great...”
Matthew 9: 37

St. Julie’s Charism:
Alive in Newer SNDs
See article page 4
My dear friends of Notre Dame,

Saints and Souls, worldwide, focus our attention on the first two days of this month. Communion of hearts, minds and memories inspire cultural and religious festivities which recognize and honor the lives of courageous and faithful men and women who “have survived the time of great distress, have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:14) In countries where we are, especially Brazil, Nicaragua and Peru, All Souls’ Day is a religious holiday. The celebrations affirm and deepen the conviction that the spirit and energy of deceased family members and friends actively assist, encourage and strengthen the living.

In the 206 years of Notre Dame de Namur’s mission and ministry in Europe, North America, Africa, Asia and Latin America, 9000 sisters have died. Reverence, respect and thanks are attributed to each one of them, especially on our Congregational Feast Days. Their vision, endurance and example accompany the dreams and aspirations of the living.

While we have these two days to turn attention to those who have blazed the trails before us, each day is an occasion to ponder and give thanks for the goodness of women and men who hear and respond to the cries and pleas of people in need. Random acts of kindness, compassionate presence with those drained by grief and mourning, unsolicited volunteer services are only a few of the ways that show that you, with us, “are God’s children now; what we shall be has not yet been revealed.” (1 John 3:1)

In the name of the Saints and Souls who have preceded us, and in communion with all the living who minister in prayer and action, I thank you for being in the Notre Dame de Namur Parade of Partners in Mission!

With gratitude and appreciation,

Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader
St. Julie’s Charism: Alive in Newer SNDs
By Sister Nancy O’Shea, SNDdeN

Often, I am asked if we have many women coming to be Sisters of Notre Dame. One answer is: “Not anywhere near the number who came in the late 1950’s and 1960’s.” However, another answer is, “Yes…and they are wonderful!”

I recently had the privilege of spending two months as part of a committee facilitating Final Vow preparation for nineteen of our newer members. Together in Namur, Belgium we formed an international community. Nine of the Sisters came from the Democratic Republic of Congo, six from Nigeria, one from Kenya, and three from the United States. (A Sister from Peru was unable to come at the last minute).

After early introductions about the importance of understanding cultural differences, we learned names and a little about each other. Then after finding our way around the Motherhouse and the city of Namur, we were ready for the Final Vow Program to begin!

Guided by the theme, “Rooted in Jesus, we live our vows in a fragmented world,” a number of Sisters of Notre Dame joined us for a day or up to a week. They conducted sessions on such topics as Charism and Spirituality; the lives of our Foundresses, St. Julie Billiart and Françoise Blin de Bourdon; Canon Law; and the Vows of Poverty, Chastity, and Obedience. Each session included information on the topic given by the presenter and facilitation of the participants in reflection, sharing, and application to life experience. We also had spent a day on two special calls of our most recent General Chapter in 2008 – namely ‘Care of the Earth’ and ‘Trafficking of Human Persons.’ Again, information was given leading to further education and action. Working with English and French translation reminded us continually of our internationality – as did the examples from life in various corners of our world.

Pilgrimages to places in France and Belgium where our foundresses were born, lived, and the new Congregation began, were a vital part of the program. This was an especially meaningful part of our time together. These newer Sisters had already established a solid relationship with Julie and Françoise. They have heard the stories, read the letters and other writings, and have become part of the family.

To see, touch, and actually be in the holy places of our ancestors was a marvellous joy for them. No matter how long we stayed in France at Cuvilly, Amiens, Compiègne, or in Belgium at Bastogne, Ghent, Antwerp…we could have stayed longer. We prepared for the pilgrimages in a spirit of prayer and were reminded ahead of time how each place

“It was indeed a grace to stand in the places of our ND ancestors. In the Julie Chapel in Cuvilly, it struck me in a profound way that I am part of a long line of strong women who started with St. Julie.”

Sr. Jennifer Pierce, SNDdeN

Continued
was significant in the lives of our forbears. For each of these sisters to have come from her own town or village thousands of miles away to find herself in such significant places, was a poignant and powerful experience.

Woven among the days were opportunities for theological reflection on experiences of ministry and living the vows. For each participant, the sharing with her small group was deep, as these incidents were significant and moving. The exchange strengthened the bonds in the group and deepened awareness of the courage and energy of these newer members as they handle challenging situations in their daily lives.

We became more and more aware of the deep values we hold in common, while acknowledging the very different situations in which we live. As the weeks went by, the world became smaller and the bonds of friendship were strengthened and deepened.

Finally, near the end of the program, the participants travelled to a nearby Jesuit Retreat House for an eight day retreat, guided by four Sisters of Notre Dame from Britain, United States, Peru, and Belgium. This too was a very significant part of their preparation for Final Vows.

The program was rich in information and depth of sharing. It was transformative for each of us hearing the varying perspectives and diverse life experiences. I know I won’t hear or see things in the same way again! My eyes and ears have been opened. My heart has grown wider...these women, my sisters, with their love of God and our foundresses, their depth of insight and commitment to those living in poverty, have brought much to life in me.

Our charism, the commitment to reflect God’s goodness and help others realize their own goodness as God’s gift, is alive in a new way.

Most of all, as I near my Golden Jubilee year, I realize the gift these newer members are to our Congregation, the Church, and the world. These Sisters will bring new life to many communities and to the varied ministries where they serve in schools, hospitals, clinics, parishes, etc. I know that the elderly Sisters in Namur and Jumet, as they interacted with our newer members, felt as I do... the future of the Congregation is in good, strong and holy hands.

“The harvest is so great, and the workers are few. So, pray to the one in charge of the harvesting to send laborers…”

Matthew 9:37-38
New Life Springs Forth from Sr. Dorothy’s Death

By Sisters Jane Dwyer and Kristin Hokanson, SNDdeN

Planting trees in the Amazon saves crops, the forest, life…and everything! “The land and its forest are sources of life for God’s people. We must work and live with the land and forest in a way that leaves us both richer and more life-filled. The land and forest must last forever. We must remember those who will come after us.” These words of Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, have inspired the people of Anapu, Brazil, with whom she walked, worked and lived for so many years. Her people have not forgotten the lessons taught by Sr. Dorothy. In her memory, they have founded the Anapu Tree Project.

Involving Notre Dame Virtual School

As a life-giving outreach for schools, Notre Dame Virtual School (NDVS) offered an opportunity for student growth and networking through the Anapu Tree Project. NDVS supports the Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur by using technology to expand teaching and learning and to connect across the world students and teachers from Notre Dame schools and sponsored ministries. Focusing on a global theme each month, NDVS asks the schools in April to celebrate Earth Day in different ways. Many schools encourage their students to plant a tree. This project for “new life” inspired Sr. Kristin Hokanson to question: “Why not contribute to the reforestation of the land and assist our Sisters in Brazil by encouraging students to raise funds to plant trees in Anapu?” So NDVS expanded the monthly theme in April for increasing awareness about the land and the Tree Project in Anapu. Our virtual school encouraged all ND schools to use the resources offered by the Web sites of NDVS and NotreDameOnline so that students may learn more about Sister Dorothy Stang and her work in the Amazon. NDVS asked also that schools support the project by raising funds for seedlings to be planted in Anapu.

Students Respond from California to Britain

This first year of the project has been a tremendous success. The tree project captured the imagination of the students at Moreland Notre Dame School in Watsonville, California. The third grade students in Sr. Bernadette Garcia’s class studied the life and work of Sr. Dorothy Stang. They created and presented a play about the rain forest to the whole school; they held a bake sale to raise funds for the project. Likewise, students in the after-school program liked the idea of a “tamale” sale to raise money for Anapu. Notre Dame Mission Volunteers (NDMV), Cristina Garces and Luz Olaguez, and the NDMV program director, Sarah Legions, helped these children with the project. Also in England, students at Notre Dame Roman Catholic Girls’ School in Southwark, London responded to the call to participate in the project. Mairead Grey planned with the students and staff a “Green Day” on April 28, 2010. The aim of the day was to “Wear Green” and “Be Green,” that is, to wear mostly green clothes and to make efforts at being as environmentally kind as possible. No computers were used and some teachers even left their cars at home! The school raised £540 to donate to the Anapu Tree Project for the purchase and planting of seedlings in Brazilian forests to honor Sr. Dorothy Stang. The Sisters in Brazil sent an e-mail telling the staff and students in Southwark about the impact of their donation: “Today suddenly your Anapu Tree Project came alive in our lives…so much money to plant trees! Suddenly a dream came true and a national campaign comes alive…giving us new life and hope.”

When Sister Jane Dwyer received the first donations from NDVS schools, she wrote this message of gratitude: “Dorothy is rejoicing today, as are we, the Sisters of Notre Dame in Brazil, that people have heard and held on to this wisdom. The forest and land in Brazil will continue to live and expand because people are helping.”

Notre Dame Virtual School will extend the successful influence of the Anapu Tree Project by encouraging more schools to celebrate Earth Day every April in order to learn about Sister Dorothy, the Amazon, and to raise funds for seedlings in the coming year so that the farmers and their families will be able to plant trees in the devastated forest.

“We hear the groaning of our Earth mistreated and endangered by our human activity.” 2008 Chapter Calls, p. 5

See Web site: www.ndvs.org
Transformative Power of Education in DC:
By Ann Pauley, Vice President for Institutional Advancement

Sister Mary Hayes SNDdeN, a professor of history at Trinity Washington University, is energized by her students: “I am challenged and stimulated by their passion for learning and inspired by so many of them who have overcome significant life challenges in order to achieve their dream of enrolling at Trinity. I value their insights and enjoy every single class.” Sister Mary, a graduate of Trinity who has taught at Trinity since 1967, adds: “St. Julie would be proud of Trinity’s commitment to making higher education a reality for our students.”

Trinity’s enrollment picture is substantially different from what it looked like 20 years ago. In fall 2010, a record 2,358 students enrolled in Trinity’s degree programs. These women include nearly 1,000 students in the College of Arts and Sciences, the largest enrollment ever in Trinity’s historic women’s college, a 136% increase in the women’s college enrollment since the year 2000 – an unparalleled achievement among women’s colleges and rare among private colleges. One of the oldest Catholic women’s colleges in the United States, Trinity had suffered steep enrollment declines and mounting financial problems in the 1970s and 1980s.

SND Mission: Focus on Women
In 1989, the Board of Trustees appointed Patricia McGuire, a 1974 graduate of Trinity, to serve as President. Inspired by the Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and the teachings of St. Julie Billiart, President McGuire, with her administrative team and faculty, set about transforming Trinity. “Taking my cue from St. Julie and Trinity’s founders, I focused on transforming the university to serve new populations of women whose economic, family and social circumstances were barriers to higher education,” said President McGuire.

“At one point, I asked the trustees whether they saw Trinity’s mission as continuing to serve predominantly Catholic students of traditional age, or whether educating women remained the primary mission focus. The trustees were adamant about women’s education: ‘Why should we try so hard to reclaim an audience that no longer needs us,’ asked a Sister of Notre Dame trustee, ‘when there are thousands of women at our doorstep who need this education so much?’”

Transformation: DC Partnerships
Trinity focused on recruiting students in DC and surrounding communities. Trinity forged partnerships with local organizations committed to helping students graduate from high school and enroll in college, including the DC College Access Program and DC College Success Foundation. Today, Trinity proudly educates more DC residents than any private university in the nation; in the freshmen class, 50% are DC residents. Ninety percent of Trinity’s students are black and Hispanic. The majority of undergraduate students are first generation college students. The median family income is $30,000; Trinity provides substantial scholarships to students. A new curriculum, extensive co-curricular services and proactive advising are designed to ensure the academic success of each student.

In fall 2010, the College of Arts and Sciences enrolled 345 new students. They come from 18 different states and have at least 14 different nations in their immediate family backgrounds; 67% are African American and 17% are Latina. These young women are accomplished and recognize the transformative power of education. One student...
wrote in her application essay, “A college education will allow me to continue to improve my life and more importantly it will provide me with the avenue to help make changes in the world. …I hope to become a beacon of light for others.”

A classmate wrote, “I feel so privileged to have the opportunity to go to college. As a woman from Haiti, education is something I have never taken for granted... With my mother’s encouragement and guidance, I made it a priority to learn.”

**Transformation: Education for Life**

Part of Trinity’s transformation has been the expansion of its programs for adult learners, many of whom are juggling school, full-time jobs and family responsibilities. More than 1,300 students are enrolled in coeducational undergraduate and graduate programs in the School of Education, School of Professional Studies, and the recently established School of Nursing and Health Professions. Trinity College became Trinity Washington University in 2004 to reflect the broad range of academic programs it offers. With increasing enrollments, Trinity is in the planning stages of a new Trinity Academic Center, which will include classrooms, laboratories, gathering spaces for students, and an auditorium.

As Trinity grows and changes, the Sisters of Notre Dame who live in residence on the campus and those who serve on the Board of Trustees provide a tangible connection to the visionary Sisters who founded Trinity and to the Gospel values that continue to guide Trinity’s ministry. In the heart of the US capital, Trinity Washington University expands the SND Mission through an education that “liberates, empowers and enables choices” for each student. (SND Chapter Calls 2008, p. 8)

*Trinity today is vibrant and flourishing. Trinity is an extraordinary institution of higher education, one that provides tremendous value by living St. Julie’s call to educate for life. As Sister Mary Hayes reflected, “Trinity is a community that represents a diversity of religious traditions, and at the same time we are a community that values and embraces the Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame. When I begin each day, I am challenged to live the Gospel.”*

See Web site: [www.trinitydc.edu](http://www.trinitydc.edu)
SNDs in Ministry  GLOBAL EDUCATION

Global Citizenship Links Schools Across Continents
By Leyla Froomes and Sister Anne Marie Niblock, SNDdeN

Notre Dame Roman Catholic Girls’ School (NDRC Girls) in Southwark, London has been involved in international work with schools abroad for several years. Sr. Anne Niblock, Head-teacher (administrator/principal) says: “Notre Dame aims to incorporate a global dimension into the learning experience of all the students in the school.” Several international projects have a direct impact on learning, teaching and enabling many students to be active participants. With a large range of language and international activities, the school received British specialist status of “Language College” in 2004.

Connecting Classrooms Through Rivers
Most recently, some students of NDRC Girls have produced a piece of artwork which was displayed to millions of people on the south bank of the River Thames, as part of the Mayor’s Thames Festival 2010. The project, called Rivers of the World, is a Thames Festival venture delivered in partnership with the British Council’s Connecting Classrooms initiative. The project links more than 2,000 young people from around the world each year through shared river themes. Students were linked with Bell Multicultural School in Washington DC, USA and both schools spent last year in studying the history, culture and environment of their local rivers, the Thames in London and the Anacostia River in Washington, DC. With the help of professional artists, students have produced huge art works inspired by what they have learnt. As well as being displayed along the River Thames, the works of art have also been reproduced for an exhibition in the gallery@oxo. In September 2010, teachers from Washington, DC visited the school to plan for a series of cross-curricular lessons and exchanges with the objective of establishing a sustainable link for the future between the two schools.

Global Citizenship Links Schools Across Continents
NDRC Girls’ School, London has also embedded an international ethos into the wider Notre Dame community by setting up a Global Citizenship Programme. Charlotte Town, currently the Deputy Head-teacher at the school, conceived the programme over four years ago. Leyla Froomes is now the Leading Teacher of Global Citizenship. During a three-year period, a group of students from the school take part in the programme with students from five other Notre Dame schools in the United Kingdom (UK), namely, Notre Dame Glasgow, Notre Dame Liverpool, St. Julie’s Liverpool, Notre Dame Sheffield and Notre Dame Norwich. Liverpool Hope University and Catholic Charity Cafod work alongside the students in annual three-day residential conferences in different cities, where the students participate in workshops about global responsibilities and global citizenship issues. Students combine discussions on global issues with practical activities and social events such as city tours, theatre visits and eating out! Students are accommodated in university halls of residence or youth hostels. At the end of the three days, each group makes a presentation to the whole gathering through art, music, dance, the spoken word or technology. This project has been running successfully for four years and going now into the fifth year. The aim of the project is that all involved students have a better understanding of global issues happening around the world. Then, they feed this learning back to their peers at school. This programme has fostered links across the Notre Dame schools in the UK. It enables students from different backgrounds and geographical areas to work together to make the world a better place with “hearts as wide as the world.” Global Citizenship starts at home. These links are supported by a yearly conference for head teachers and senior leaders in all Notre Dame schools, colleges and universities in the UK. Notre Dame Leeds and Notre Dame Plymouth, as well as Liverpool Hope University, join the six other ND schools at the Conference for Head teachers.

Continued
ND Sister Schools

Notre Dame RC Girls’ School in London also has an ongoing international link with sister schools in Peru and Nigeria. Students exchange penpal letters with schools in Peru in conjunction with the Languages Department. They have had several teacher exchanges among the schools over the last 5 years. This year, the school’s Assistant Head-teacher went to Nigeria to visit the schools there; information about the visit was fed back to the whole school through assemblies during the year.

Through NDRC Girls’ charity work, the school raises money for the sister schools during ‘St. Julie’s Day’ in February, on a day-off timetable for all the students. Activities are planned for raising money which is sent to schools in the Southern Hemisphere. Also, the London school raises money for the schools in Nigeria and Peru through a ‘Christmas Gifts’ scheme in which students and parents have the opportunity to buy gifts for students in these two countries, e.g. £1 will buy a student pencils for a year in Nigeria and Peru.

Each year, a range of teachers from different curriculum areas organize activities and hold an ‘International Evening’ for parents and pupils in Year 7 and 8 during International Week. During this evening, parents bring food from around the world and students perform music, songs, and dance from many parts of the world. The school has students from over 50 countries, so the experience is amazing. Bilingual students use their talent by acting as translators and interpreters within the school and for local primary schools.

The British Council recognised in 2010 this curriculum-based international work by awarding the school with the International School Award (ISA). The ISA will provide a framework within which Notre Dame RC Girls’ School can develop further international partnerships and continue to embed a global dimension into the learning of all the students who go there.
Dear Friends and Partners in Mission,

You are precious and vital to the Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN). Your presence in our lives allows us with you to continue the Mission of the Congregation by “making known God’s goodness” in our world. We do pray daily for you, our partners in Mission.

Also, each year on October 15 and the days before and after, each province throughout the Congregation sets aside a special day of prayer to remember the countless good women and men who support the Mission of St. Julie Billiart. Sisters gather to pray together for your intentions in gratitude for your prayer and resources. Through your assistance, we are able to continue our vital ministries on five continents. We place before God your many needs and request graces and blessings for you and your families.

This year, Sr. Teresita Weind invited Sisters gathered from across the United States to lift their voices in song and prayer at a special liturgy offered on October 17. In Mary Queen Chapel in Ipswich, MA, we thanked God for the generous hearts and faithful presence of our many benefactors. We celebrated you, your loving, generous support and your gifts as you, with us, make known the goodness of God through our worldwide ministries.

During these days in local settings, SNDs in 16 countries across 5 continents have also joined this congregational prayer of thanksgiving. We have asked our God to extend a gentle touch in all our relationships and to make us bearers of justice, peace and love in our world.

Loving prayer and gratitude to our Partners in Mission,

Sister Leonore Coan, SNDdeN
Director of Mission Support
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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