My dear friends of Notre Dame,

*Three Cups of Tea*, by Greg Mortenson, includes this subtitle: *One Man’s Mission to Promote Peace, One School at a Time.*

Indeed, the book is an inspiring account of “one man’s mission” of humanitarian work in Afghanistan. However, Greg is the first to note that his mission included the attention and efforts of many people. Lost, alone and in poor health, Greg wandered into a Pakistan village in the Karakoran Mountains where the residents nursed him back to health following his failed attempt to climb a mountain in their area. Moved by the kindness and hospitality of the people, Greg promised to return and build a school for the children.

This issue of *Good Works* focuses on the ministry of a few sisters. However, each sister would be quick to affirm that she works with many others who are committed to the Notre Dame Mission of promoting peace through education, one child, one school, one project at a time. And, dear friends, by your care, concern and contributions, you are present at every school that “fulfills the dream of many parents to educate their children for life.” You uphold the vision of Notre Dame wherever we serve.

With our Sisters and Associates, I thank you for your integral participation in our efforts to promote peace and reconciliation while educating for justice.

Moved by your kindness and generosity,

*Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN*

Congregational Leader
It was a celebration of history and tradition, blessings and gifts, life and learning! A Mass of Thanksgiving at 3:00 p.m. on October 18, 2009 brought many well-wishers to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the arrival in 1859 of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Sisters from many parts of the USA and beyond joined the priests, brothers, alumnae/alumni, faculty, staff, co-workers, friends and benefactors in St. Mary of the Assumption Church. Father Jorge A. Reyes, OSA, pastor of the parish was the presider for the Eucharist. He was assisted by Father Scott Ness, OSA, a former student of the SNDs who delivered an inspiring homily, calling the Sisters to a continued commitment to apostolic service, especially through education. Three members of the Congregational Leadership Team from Rome brought the congratulations of the SNDdeN Congregation worldwide.

Praises of the SNDs and their apostolic commitment to the people of Lawrence echoed in the Jubilee liturgy. Gratitude resounded at the reception in the school auditorium, decorated with historical artifacts. The Catholic parishes and the city rejoice in the 150 years of continuing presence of SNDs in ministry in Lawrence. The people recalled and celebrated the unique history and relationship.

History in the Making: Story of the Mission
Formerly farmland in Andover and Methuen, the city site of Lawrence, MA was purchased in 1845 by a group of Boston businessmen headed by the wealthy merchant and Congressman, Abbott Lawrence, the community's namesake. Incorporated in 1853, the city was one of the first industrial cities in the USA. The pastor of St. Mary Church, Fr. James O'Donnell, valuing an early Christian education for children, had opened the schools by staffing them with lay teachers, in the hope of later finding a religious congregation to staff his schools. In 1857, he requested sisters by writing to Sr. Superior Louise Vanderschriek in Ohio; he asked her again in 1859. Sr. Louise sent five sisters who arrived in Lawrence on August 20, 1859 to teach at St. Mary School and work with the newest immigrants, mostly Irish fleeing the potato famine.

Student, Flor Frias consults with Sr. Eileen Burns, Executive Director and Lina Rodriguez, Program Director at Notre Dame Education Center.

Extensive Service
Fr. O'Donnell’s vision and planning sparked an enduring flame in the hearts of many pastors/priests who requested SNDs for their schools. In 1861, the Bishop entrusted the Lawrence parishes to the Augustinian Fathers. This SND collaboration with the Augustinians is a special gift that has brought a vibrant apostolate of proclaiming “good news” to the city and its surrounding towns. SNDs opened schools for countless children in Lawrence. They administered and taught in Elementary Schools: St. Mary, St. Laurence O'Toole, St. Rita, Holy Rosary and St. Augustine/Our Lady of Good Counsel. They founded St. Mary High School. They have taught also at Central Catholic High School. They helped to found Bread and Roses and Si, Se Puede, ministries reaching directly those living in poverty. They have served at St. Peter and Paul Parish, the Adult Learning Center, Lazarus House, Lawrence Jail, and Public Schools.

The “Now” Moment
Today, the Sisters of Notre Dame rejoice in 150 years of ministry to the Catholic population and the people of Lawrence. Sisters from six SND provinces have served in the city and continue to work with new immigrants and their families. The Sisters minister to people from Southeast Asia, Latin America and other countries at the Asian Center of the Merrimack Valley and at Merrimack Valley Hospice. Currently, Sisters of Notre Dame sponsor and staff the ministries at Notre Dame Education Center (NDEC) and Notre Dame High School (NDHS).

Notre Dame Education Center
Encourages Dream Builders
Founded in 1996, Notre Dame Education Center educates low-income, undereducated adults and empowers people living in poverty to improve their lives and those of their families. NDEC’s mission is to promote quality of life, to collaborate with the community in improving services...
for immigrants, to generate a spirit of welcome and respect for
the dignity of individuals, and to develop self-esteem and literacy
as support for employment opportunities, a better family life and
participation within the community.

SNDs feel privileged to continue the tradition of educating new immigrants:
children/adolescents in schools and adults in education centers.
The closing of St. Mary High School and
an assessment of needs in the city impelled
the Sisters of Notre Dame to open NDEC for
educating adults. Located first in St. Mary
High School, NDEC moved to a new site
in Lawrence in 2006. NDEC partners with
some local businesses to provide literacy
services to their employees. The center
needs expansion to meet the growing
demand in the area for literacy and
occupational training for those seeking
employment in the fields of health care,
manufacturing and communications.

Over 3,700 adults have been building their dreams at NDEC.
The 2009 enrollment is 500 students. NDEC relies on grant support as
well as on additional funds from community fundraising, solicitation
of individuals and corporate sponsorships. Education and literacy
are critical needs in this large city. NDEC searches for ways to
strengthen adult education and to provide funding for the center.

Notre Dame High School Builds a Future of Hope
Founded in 2004, Notre Dame High School builds a future of hope
for young adults to succeed in life. Notre Dame’s tradition of “educating
for life” continues. NDHS develops the full potential of life-long learners
in an environment which nurtures belief in the “goodness of God” through
mutual respect, concern and service. Through a college preparatory
curriculum rooted in Gospel values and academic excellence, students
become self-confident young adults, intellectually motivated, spiritually
rooted, and courageous in their pursuit of success.
The first two NDHS graduating classes boast of 100% acceptance into
75 colleges and universities, with scholarships, financial aid and grants,
totaling over 8 million dollars. Today, there are 262 students from families
predominately from the Dominican Republic. A member of the Cristo Rey
Network, NDHS places students in 60 local businesses partnering with
the school in an innovative professional work program. Students earn a major part of their tuition by working
one day a week at entry level positions. NDHS works to keep tuition
affordable by a commitment to the scholarship aid fund.

Generous and faithful donors believe in the school’s mission of
educating those who “desire it the most but can afford it the least.”
The old building of St. Mary High School has undergone extensive
renovations, made possible by charitable donors. NDHS acknowledges
all who have invested funds for building the future of a new generation.
More than thirty SNDs have given service though the study, planning
or staffing of the school. This successful alternative education, offered
at NDHS, is making a difference in the educational and professional
life of the youth of Lawrence whose options are limited.

The People of Lawrence
From the earliest days of SNDs in the city, the warmth and generosity
of the people of Lawrence has surrounded the Sisters. That same
spirit has grown with the years. The people of Greater Lawrence
are the best for supporting any projects of the Sisters of Notre Dame.
They attest constantly to the high quality of education and strong
life values received from the SNDs. People recognize and experience
God’s goodness through education, spiritual care, and social and
medical services offered by the Sisters.

SNDs make known the goodness of God through their educational
mission at NDEC, NDHS, the Merrimack Valley Asian Center and
Hospice, in this corner of God’s beautiful world. Three communities
of SND Sisters reside in Lawrence. Today, SNDs reach out in ministry
to people in one of the most deprived cities in the country.

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
Good News from Kurashiki, Japan
By Sister Martina Kyoko Kotani, SNDdeN

Notre Dame Seishin Gakuen Girls’ High School (ND Seishin Gakuen) in Kurashiki was designated in 2006 as a Super Science High School (SSH) by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) in Japan. All SSH schools emphasize in the curriculum the fields of science, technology and math education.

In 2005, our ND Girls’ High School in Kurashiki had set up a new course, a Life Science Course. We wanted to create a model educational program for girls who wish to study in the fields of science and technology and to play an important role in these areas in the future. In the same academic year, our school was selected as one of the Super Science High Schools. ND Seishin Gakuen used to be famous for English education. Now we have added a strong science program. English is used as one of the “tools for communication.” Students have opportunities to read papers at academic meetings and present posters, before specialists and university teachers in and out of the country. In 2008, at the research presentation meeting for SSH students, our students won the Japan Science and Technology Agency (JST) Executive President Award. JST has provided a budget for this program in our school. Through these years, ND Seishin Gakuen has received 60,000,000 yen from JST to promote this program for our students.

We, at ND Seishin Gakuen, have planned a meeting in Fukuyama for the end of October 2009. The meeting is entitled “Atsumare, Jyoseikagakusha” (Come, Female Scientists)! We have sent invitations to all SSH high schools in Japan and also to other schools in Okayama and Hiroshima prefecture. At the meeting, we are expecting the presentation of 5 to 6 reports and a display of many posters. Our students at ND Seishin Gakuen in Kurashiki are among the chosen presenters at the meeting in Fukuyama.

Notre Dame in Japan leads the way for future women scientists!

■ Website: www.nd-seishin.ac.jp
SND Empowers Women in South Africa

By Sister Margaret Bowskill, SNDdeN

In South Africa, Cuvilly Centre in Bekkersdal and the Project in Poortje accompany women living in poverty as they struggle for survival. Both centres raise the dignity and self-confidence of poor women by giving them a skill and improving their quality of life and that of their families. The centre in Poortje has expanded the focus beyond a centre for teaching sewing and craft skills. In three donated shipping containers reconfigured with doors and windows, the Poortje Project is a training site for three special groups:

- women doing sewing, crafts and herbal remedies
- women cooking for the sick and needy
- women caring for children in the crèche (or day nursery)

With barely enough room for these activities, this centre, even in limited space, offers hope.

Story of the Project’s Origin

My introduction to Poortje began twenty years ago when I went there to help the women catechists there. I discovered this poor area where all the people live in shacks made of old and rusty corrugated iron. One woman who had been part of our Zamani sewing group in Bekkersdal moved to Poortje in 1992. She asked that we initiate a sewing group as an outreach from Bekkersdal.

Emily learns candle-making for a means of financial survival. Sr. Margaret Bowskill helps Nomthandazo with her stitching.

In one of the containers, we started a small crèche. Soon we found that many more children needed care, not just the children of the sewing group. This crèche now has a building of its own with 36 children, ranging in age from 3 to 6 years.

When more women wanted to join the sewing group, it was not possible in the one container. They were also looking for other ways of generating income. For a short time, we had the use of a store room in which the women started patchwork knitting and candle making. Unfortunately, one day in my absence, the women were told to move out. They were able to move into the crèche container but this was very small for the group. Many women became discouraged and left. We continued with a few women and also looked for land to build. This has been difficult. The church property is too small for expansion. We are still trying to obtain a piece of land.

Current Situation

In spite of some improvements, Poortje today is still an area where people live in poverty. At our centre, three groups of women work successfully together in three activities: sewing, doing crafts and making herbal remedies; cooking for the sick and needy; caring for children in the crèche. The women are keen and creative and have responded to current needs.

Besides the sewing classes and the day nursery, the women now make herbal creams, herbal oil and cough mixture because this does not need much space. These products are very good and popular. The cream gives amazing relief to many people suffering with an awful rash caused by AIDS; the oil is wonderful also for relieving some aches and pains of the elderly. A small patch of ground provides enough soil for growing the herbs and improving gardening skills of some women. For continued success, the Poortje Project, however, does need, more land for herbal gardens.

In another shipping container, a group of women cook meals for people suffering from AIDS and for some orphans. Some people come to eat at the centre while others receive food taken to them in their homes. Meals are also brought to orphans and given to child-headed families. The ministry of “feeding the hungry” is the most critical need at the centre.

The three shipping containers are now old and need maintenance. We are looking for additional property to put our resources into new classrooms. With a better
place, we will be able to empower more women with life-skills, continue our ministry to the hungry and sick as well as give more attention and support to the children. We are grateful to our good God and to St. Julie for many blessings in Poortje. We believe that Julie smiles always on us and her courage keeps us going!

200TH ANNIVERSARY

St. Julie Billart Opened Saint-Hubert School in 1809

On April 11, 1812, St. Julie wrote in a letter to Sr. St-Jean, the superior of the community in Saint-Hubert:
“Everyone wants to come to Saint-Hubert.”

On the 200th anniversary of the Institut Notre-Dame in Saint-Hubert, Belgium, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur throughout the world rejoice with the president, faculty, staff, students and alumni/alumnae. On October 18, 2009, the school, founded by St. Julie Billiart, celebrated the bicentenary with a Eucharistic Liturgy in the Basilica at Saint-Hubert. Sr. Margaret Mulholland, Education Liaison for the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, brought Jubilee congratulations from the Congregational Leadership Team to the school’s President, M. Albert Fraipont. The Leadership Teams with Sisters from the North and South Belgium Provinces extended the wishes of all the Sisters for this special 200th Jubilee Year.

Located in the heart of the Ardennes in the Province of Luxembourg in the southern part of Belgium, Saint-Hubert welcomed St. Julie who pursued her goal of extending the right of education to young people of humble origins. Today, the Institut Notre-Dame celebrates two centuries of life as an educational institution! The school is moving forward into the future with the conviction of leading each young person to expand the best of his/her abilities, in continuity with the early SND foundresses. In her predilection for Saint-Hubert, St. Julie magnified her educative radiance beyond the ordinary into the extraordinary in a worldwide system of education, known for its quality and excellence!

AD MULTOS ANNOS, Saint-Hubert!

■ Website: www.libresthubert.be
Sr. Suzanne Hall Receives Recognition for Her Work

At the annual conference in New Orleans, Louisiana in August, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) recognized Sr. Suzanne Hall, SNDdeN, with an award for her work. Sr. J. Lora Dambrowski, President of LCWR, praised Sr. Suzanne for her energy, enthusiasm, creativity and service to women religious in New Orleans after the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. “She worked tirelessly, competently, with great sensitivity and loving concern for the congregations who lost ministries, homes, and even some of the people they served.”

In February 2005, Hurricane Katrina struck forcibly the Gulf Coast of the USA. It caused vast damage to major cities, especially New Orleans. Women religious, as their lay neighbors, suffered irreparable damage to life and property. The hurricane and raging fires created a crumbled city drowning in destruction, homelessness and health crises. By assisting people in the recovery effort, women religious lost millions of dollars. To help lay employees, the Sisters borrowed funds from their own endowment and retirement funds. They were the first to negotiate funding and restoration of New Orleans. They were first also to re-open schools, offer critical medical help and social services. Yet the losses of the Sisters, especially in smaller congregations, were overwhelming. In 2007, LCWR appointed Sr. Suzanne as Coordinator of the New Orleans Recovery Project to assist women religious in rebuilding their devastated homes and ministries.

Sr. Lora Dambrowski cites Sr. Suzanne’s outstanding work:

Suzanne walked into the heart of chaos! Her journey was one of accompaniment, she walked with the sisters, the streets of New Orleans, to the doors of funders; she walked with the people; she walked and walked, faithful to her mission and the task. Suzanne has been here and will continue to be here with our sisters. She embraced the chaos and has led the way in creating new life…Suzanne exemplifies our vision of a Woman of Spirit.

At the banquet, Archbishop Alfred Hughes offered words of gratitude to Sr. Suzanne for her contributions to the Archdiocese of New Orleans. Sisters of Notre Dame rejoice with her in this ministry for building up the Body of Christ, the Church.

Sr. Suzanne Hall describes THE “NEW” NEW ORLEANS
The New Orleans Recovery Project (NORP), initiated by the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in collaboration with Foundations and Donors Interested in Catholic Activities, has assisted eight religious congregations to rebuild their lives and ministries after the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. During and after the storm, the Sisters lost not only their homes and ministries but also their own Sisters and family members. Through it all, however, they maintained their courage and faithfulness to their mission. After the needs assessment, the project raised for the rebuilding almost $7.3 million in funding, secured from many major foundations throughout the United States. The Sisters rebuilt schools, motherhouses and residences, early childhood education centers, nursing homes, and social service centers. The funding and rebuilding efforts are now winding down.

The Newly-Emerging Needs
In April 2009, NORP convened a seminar with the Sisters to discuss the needs of the “new” New Orleans. Added to the basic need for safe and affordable housing, the Sisters cited:

- Access to health care including psychological services for children and families
- Experienced teachers for Catholic schools
- Protection of immigrant rights
- Outreach to emerging Hispanic population
- Services to growing ‘fragile-elderly’ population.

According to the Greater New Orleans Community Data Center, the population of the city has rebounded to approximately 75% of pre-Katrina numbers. The center reports that housing, health care and education remain major challenges in the city. The women religious of New Orleans are dedicated to their current ministries and possible new ventures. Hopefully, other congregations of women religious may respond also to the cited needs of the people in this city. Many civic leaders in the city realize that women religious have played a profound role in the rebuilding, and indeed, the resurrection of New Orleans. These leaders say: “If it weren’t for the nuns, this city would not be where it is today.” As the city moves forward in its rebirth, women religious continue their legacy as bearers of hope and signs of God’s goodness.
The children in Ilorin, Nigeria discover each day that “education liberates, empowers and enables choices” (2008 SND Chapter Calls) at Our Lady Catholic Nursery, Primary and Junior Secondary School. Three SNDs are presently bringing this message of hope and growth by their service and their example in the school.

Our Lady Catholic Nursery and Primary School in Ilorin was opened in September 1986. The Secondary School was established in September 2007 by the Catholic Diocese of Ilorin. The pupils range in age from three to fifteen. The entire school provides formal education for children of the peasant farmers, artisans and police officers living in this part of Kwara State. Located on the same compound as the SND Novitiate and managed by the Sisters of Notre Dame, the school fulfills the dream of many parents to educate their children for life. Our Lady’s is the only quality school in the area. The children learn not only reading and writing but strong moral values.

**RESOURCES**
In the early days, the Sisters opened a library in the novitiate for all children from Our Lady School and other schools. The library provides an opportunity for the SND novices to tutor the local children and educate many children in the neighborhood. Our Lady’s offers some job opportunities for less privileged parents, widows and youth in the area.

The scholarship scheme is another resource. About 10% of our pupils are sponsored by funds from friends and benefactors of the Sisters of Notre Dame from overseas. Many children from less privileged homes benefit from these scholarships, given to Muslims and Christians, (Catholics and non-Catholics). Students from our school demonstrate success in other secondary schools as well as tertiary institutions.

**STORIES OF THE CHILDREN**
A young woman, Amina Alao is one child who benefitted from these scholarships. Her father was unable to speak English but helped the Sisters by doing errands for them. His little daughter, Amina, was not able to go to any school because her father had no money for school fees. Sisters Marian Alexander (teacher in the novitiate) and Helena Boland (headmistress at Our Lady’s) solicited and obtained funds from Britain to sponsor Amina’s education. Amina, at age 10, enrolled in the school. After completing her studies from nursery one through primary six, she was chosen as the head-girl of the school. The Sisters supported her through secondary school; she graduated with excellent grades. Recognizing her abilities, the Sisters sponsored her college education. Amina is now a fully trained teacher, majoring in chemistry and biology.

All over the world, some children have difficult learning problems. There does not seem to be any place for these children in the Nigerian education system. In Nigeria, all schools are compelled to follow the curriculum approved by the National Government. The children study about fourteen subjects. In Our Lady School, children with learning disabilities are taught in an “Interest Room,” on the one-to-one. Over the years, this method has helped many children. One girl, Bosede Owolabi, was admitted into the school without any command of English. She could neither read nor write well. For one year she was tutored in the Interest Room. Today, she is a promising young woman doing well in Our Lady’s secondary school. Our school takes pride in her success and this special program. Our Lady School is the only school in this state that offers this service to children with learning problems.

Continued
SNDs in Ministry  EDUCATION FOR LIFE

Continued

SECONDARY EDUCATION
As the economic situation worsens in the country, more and more parents are finding it difficult to send their children to good schools. They are forced by economics to send them to public secondary schools where the students are not well taught, and morals are sometimes in question. Before 2007, many of our graduates were not succeeding in secondary education in the public sector. Many of them got into all sorts of trouble. A few years ago, many parents pressured the Sisters to establish a secondary school in Ilorin. SNDs heard the call and responded to this obvious need by opening a secondary school in September 2007.

EDUCATION EXTENDED TO PARENTS AND TEACHERS
Since most parents who bring children to Our Lady’s are not educated, our work at the school does not end in teaching the children. It includes teaching and instructing parents on how to care for their children and manage well their families. Sometimes we serve our children in other ways, by taking sick students to hospitals or by bringing food to school to feed malnourished children.

The standard of education in Nigeria has greatly deteriorated. Among the many reasons contributing to this situation is that teachers are not well prepared. Our dream in the Nigeria Province is that the Sisters of Notre Dame establish a teacher-training college for making a difference in Nigerian education. We hope and pray that Notre Dame will look into the possibility of establishing a university, to expand the vision of St. Julie to teacher-training in Nigeria.

Formerly, Our Lady’s had a population of about a thousand pupils in the primary school alone. Today, due to the deteriorating economic situation, enrollment has radically reduced to less than half in both the primary and secondary schools combined. This drastic reduction has serious financial implications for the school. It is extremely difficult to pay the salaries for 45 teaching and non-teaching staff in the three schools. It is particularly challenging to set up the necessary elements of a secondary school. In spite of these many challenges, we are happy to bring St. Julie’s charism and educational principles to our children, living daily in poverty.

We commit ourselves each day to carry out, through education, the SND call to empower and liberate people living in poverty.
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

Latin America
Brazil
Mexico
Nicaragua
Peru

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

Europe
Belgium
France
Italy
United Kingdom

www.sndden.org