Called to Be One as Disciples

See article page 4

“Come and see.”

John 1:39
and 46
My dear friends of Notre Dame,

The Year of Faith for the Catholic Church began this year on the fiftieth anniversary of the Second Vatican Council, (Vatican II) October 11, 2012 and will conclude on November 24, 2013. Christians will be celebrating vibrant faith, flourishing during the past 50 years, and preparing for ways to keep faith alive in the years to come. While all of this is happening, some Christians will encourage the others to include the inspired words of St. James: “What good is it if someone says he has faith but does not have good works? Can that faith save him? If a brother or sister has nothing to wear and has no food for the day, and one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace, keep warm, and eat well,’ but you do not give them the necessities of the body, what good is it? So also faith of itself, if it does not have good works, is dead.” (James 2:14-17)

In this issue of Good Works we have featured some of the richness, balance, blend and interweaving of faith and good works that are rooted in our heritage and mission as Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The articles are illustrations of an abundance of faith and good works that bring heaven to earth and nourish the souls of the people we serve.

Thank you for your integration of faith and good works, and for participating in and supporting Notre Dame’s good works in all stages of “call and response,” justice and peace, and our public commitment to liberate, empower and enable people to live beyond the confines of poverty.

In God’s Goodness,

Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader
Called to Be One as Disciples

By Sisters Angele Lewis and Sharon McMillan, SNDdeN

From five continents, Sisters arrived in mid-July at the Dimesse Retreat Centre on the outskirts of Nairobi, Kenya to focus on a common commitment for Formation ministers from three religious Congregations: Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld, and Sisters of Notre Dame of Amersfoort.

The purpose of the meeting was to spark renewal, enthusiasm and leadership for formation ministry. The talks and process focused on “kindling the flame of discipleship” for formation and vocation ministers and for those being formed in religious life. The facilitators, Sisters Teresa Okure, SHCJ and Clare Stanley, SJC gave input and direction in a theology of discipleship and a common process using appreciative inquiry.

Sr. Teresita Weind, Congregational Leader, challenged participants to consider our oneness in the wide Mission of Jesus, which calls each SND to share life, fire and energy for building the Kingdom of God. Sr. Mary Johnson, Professor of Sociology at Emmanuel College in Boston, described the characteristics of varying age groups in her talk, The Grace of the Generations.

She challenged the participants to understand the identity of each generation of women who come to Notre Dame. Using the medium of technology, Sr. Angele Lewis, a member of the USA National Vocation Team, demonstrated and taught the effective use of PowerPoint for prayer rituals and for formation education.

Relationships and Vision

Sisters from Brazil, Congo, Japan, Kenya, Malawi, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, Uganda, United States, Zimbabwe, and the Congregational Leadership Team from Rome, Italy pondered together the mystery and challenge of discipleship. Together, they proclaimed and shared the Word of God in a variety of liturgies, and experienced genuine dialogue and true communion within community. Sisters from five linguistic groups and many cultures were able to search together for their unique identity as women religious, as witnesses to the public nature of their vowed commitment, and as individuals with a variety of particular gifts to offer to formation ministry and the world at large. With the assistance of translators for French, Japanese, Spanish and Portuguese, the participants shared the realities of intercultural life and the common core elements of their Mission as women religious – in prayer, community and ministry.

SNDdeN Leadership and Formation personnel, Sr. Rebecca Trujillo (Nicaragua), Juana Jacqueline Castillo Salvador, Miriam Montero Bereche and Mary Isabel Kilpatrick (Peru) reflect on cultures and generations.

Srs. Jannet Tambu, SNDdeN (Zimbabwe) and Sr. Clara Golombe, SND of Amersfoort (Malawbe) rejoice in the dynamic relationship of Julie’s Congregations.
The Kenya meeting reinforced for formators that religious life is all about following Jesus closely on a day-to-day journey towards growth in wholeness and holiness. Formators asked themselves and one another the question: How do we rekindle the embers of our passion as followers of Jesus and reignite daily the embers of love from under the ashes? This is a daily challenge for those serving in formation ministry.

The Sisters appreciated meeting and sharing with other formators from many countries and cultures. During the program, the words of Teilhard de Chardin echoed in our hearts: “The future belongs to those who give the next generation reason to hope.” The participants found abundant hope in Julie’s charism for each present and future generation to “make known God’s goodness.” The three religious Congregations who gathered in Nairobi experienced unity in diversity: Oneness as followers of Jesus, women religious in the Church, and daughters of Julie who are all named for Mary. They invite more young women to...

“Heaven and earth will pass away but my words will not pass away.”

Sr. Astrid Bamba, SNDdeN Director of Novices in Kenya, a way to use technology for the ministry.
Three SND Congregations Unite at RIO+20

By Sr. Maura Browne, SNDdeN Coordinator of Justice and Peace

Twelve “Sisters of Notre Dame” (SNDs) gathered among 5,000 delegates in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012 for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20). The Conference addressed the social, environmental and economic concerns about our common future and that of planet Earth. Three Congregations of SNDs collaborated as a Notre Dame NGO delegation: Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN), Sisters of Notre Dame Coesfeld (SND) and School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND).

Before traveling to Rio, we introduced ourselves and shared reflections on the issues through email. In Rio, Coesfeld SNDs graciously welcomed us to their convent, above the school, Colégio Notre Dame, where Sisters and the students had prepared within the school a mini RIO+12. This widened our circle of collaboration.

RIO+20 is actually “Two Rios”

Daily at the breakfast table, we shared our plans to participate in events at one of the two Rios. After breakfast, one group travelled an hour by bus, west, to the official United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio Centre. Another group of Sisters went 45 minutes by train, east, to the Peoples’ Forum or Cupla dos Povros in Flamengo. During the evening meal, we shared our experiences. When there was time, we posted some reflections on our “Sisters of Notre Dame” blog at http://rio-20-snd.com/archive/.

The Dorothy Stang tent in the Peoples’ Forum attracted many visitors who shared memories of Sr. Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN. In 1992 in Rio, Sr. Dorothy, representing the Brazilian Bishops at the Earth Summit, strengthened her commitment to promote sustainable development and peace wherever she went. This eventually led to her murder in 2005.

Learnings

In a presentation, entitled Doughnut Economics: Why the World Needs Planetary and Social Boundaries, Kate Raworth of Oxfam clarified the complexities of sustainable development by using a doughnut graphic to demonstrate the two boundaries. When we breach the outer boundary, we disrupt the environment. We have already crossed the boundaries of climate change, biodiversity loss, and nitrogen use. When we break through the inner boundary, those living in poverty suffer the most.

Today, the biggest sources of planetary-boundary stress are excessive resource consumption by the wealthiest, roughly 10% of the world’s population, and the production patterns of companies producing the goods and services that they buy. The eight boundaries described have been crossed. Kate Raworth suggests possible changes:

Food: Providing the additional calories needed by the 13% of the world’s population facing hunger would require just 1% of the current global food supply.

Energy: Bringing electricity to the 19% of the world’s population, who currently lack it, could be achieved with less than a 1% increase in global CO₂ emissions.

Income: Ending income poverty for the 21% of the global population, who live on less than $1.25 a day, would require just 0.2% of global income.

What we can do for Sustainability?

RIO+20 UN Conference, produced a final document, The Future We Want, with many good recommendations and suggestions, but very few commitments to action. As Sisters of Notre Dame, we realize that good intentions are not enough. So we resolve that it is time for all of us to be pro-active. The best way to begin is to adjust our own lifestyles to sustainable living. In this way, we will grow into a future that we do want; otherwise, we will drift into a future that we do not want. Together, we hear also the call to expand education on sustainability in all our ministries.
Energy and excitement surrounded the Notre Dame educational community, gathered July 12-15, 2012, in Boston, MA. Over two hundred educators from 10 countries met for an international Educational Conference, entitled Networking for Mission II, co-sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDs) and Emmanuel College. Administrative and teaching personnel, both Sisters and laity, shared expertise and broad experience from schools, colleges, universities and education centers in Belgium, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Japan, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, United Kingdom and many states in the USA. Educators at all levels, from pre-school through university, participated in assemblies and workshops to strengthen the worldwide Mission within and among educational institutions administered, staffed, sponsored or founded by the SNDs. The Congregational Leadership Team from Rome, Italy shared in the sessions at this direction-setting conference.

Education in the 21st Century

On July 12, Sr. Teresita Weind, SNDdeN, Congregational Leader, welcomed participants to the “world-wide web of St. Julie Billiart’s Mission.” She opened the first session with an inspiring prayer using a graphic of candles, ignited in the countries where the Sisters serve on five continents. Sr. Janet Eisner, SNDdeN, Ph.D, President of Emmanuel College, gave the Keynote Address, Educating for Life: The SND Mission Continues into the 21st Century. She challenged participants to be bold and active in this Mission as educators today. Sr. Janet highlighted the role of Emmanuel’s Mission in transforming the lives of the students. Then, Emmanuel students from the 1804 Society (named for the founding date of SNDs) described the influence of St. Julie and the Sisters living out her spirituality on the campus.

Energy and Inspiration Generated

Participants agreed that such relevant keynotes stimulated thought and ongoing discussion about vision, values and identity for Catholic education. The quality presentations of speakers and panelists, with varied gifts and skills, generated many ideas which lingered on after the sessions.

The keynote conferences offered ways to engage students of the 21st century by

- harnessing insights involving the brain function,
- insuring a vision for global values in education,
- celebrating diversity in a multi-cultural environment in Catholic schools,
- making our schools places where students encounter the living God.

Professor McGettrick commented:
“Educators are people who will act with love and compassion, care for beauty and wonder, give a sense of hope and serve the world by focusing on the gifts and talents of children.”

Dr. Joyce De Leo, Vice-President for Academic Affairs at Emmanuel, stimulated the minds of participants with her call to innovative thinking by using neurological science’s insights for learning processes. She demonstrated how emotion and cognition are linked. She encouraged participants to utilize information from neuroscience to explore innovations for teaching and student learning. Professor Bart McGettrick, Dean of Education at Liverpool Hope University in the United Kingdom, addressed challenges and opportunities for “educating for life” with a vision based on Christian values. Dr. Elizabeth Patterson, J.D., Associate Professor at Georgetown University Law School in Washington, DC offered insights from her own experiences as an African American woman and called participants to find realistic solutions for inclusion of multi-cultures in our schools and universities.

As an Emmanuel graduate, Dr. Patterson noted:
“I am a witness to your SND Mission of making known God’s goodness and educating for life. My children and students… have benefitted from your SND Mission of making known God’s goodness and educating for life. My children and students… have benefitted from your SND Mission of making known God’s goodness and educating for life. My children and students… have benefitted from your SND Mission of making known God’s goodness and educating for life. My children and students… have benefitted from your SND Mission of making known God’s goodness and educating for life. My children and students… have benefitted from your SND Mission of making known God’s goodness and educating for life. My children and students… have benefitted from your SND Mission of making known God’s goodness and educating for life. My children and students…”

Energy and Inspiration generated.
The entire conference provided multiple opportunities for interaction and networking among participants. Educators from five continents shared St. Julie’s spirit and mission alive in their schools and generated ideas to strengthen the bonds and connections between countries and continents for the Mission of Notre Dame. One lay teacher exclaimed: “I believe that St. Julie saw me in her vision.”

The participants worked to set future directions for ongoing collaboration. Recognizing that “education liberates, empowers and enables choices,” the participants, therefore, moved forward together in setting corporate priorities in Educating for Life. Networking for Mission II concluded with the sharing of multiple ideas for building and reinforcing the Notre Dame educational network for Mission on five continents. Groups from the different teaching levels presented the best ways for connecting and expanding relationships and sharing resources internationally.

Through the effective use of technology, the educators agreed to:
- make a concerted effort to build this network,
- plan and implement connections for more interaction internationally between and among students, staffs and schools in person-centered education,
- organize other conferences or projects for leadership training and Notre Dame spirituality,
- make the abstract concrete in our teaching by establishing stronger collaboration in the use of Skype and Notre Dame Websites (www.sndden.org • www.notredameonline.org • www.ndvs.org).

With renewed enthusiasm for St. Julie’s vision and educational ideals, these educators experienced a greater commitment to network for Mission and to promote the “goodness of God” and Julie’s spirit in their educational institutions.
Bishop of Namur Blesses Heritage Centre

By Sr. Marie Kelly, SNDdeN, Coordinator of the Heritage Centre

Sunday, June 10, 2012 was a significant day in Belgium at the Motherhouse of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN)! Mgr. Rémi Vancottem, Bishop of Namur, blessed and dedicated the new Heritage Centre. In celebrating this opening, our Congregational Leadership Team (CLT) joined with SNDs from different provinces, Sisters from Amersfoort and Coesfeld, priests and religious from Belgium, directors and teachers from Notre Dame schools and friends. This happy day fulfilled a call from the 2002 and 2008 General Chapters to establish a heritage and spirituality centre for preserving the richness and traditions of our roots. In 2009, the Congregational Leadership appointed a Coordinator, Sr. Marie Kelly, to carry forward this Heritage Centre project. Sr. Marie worked at research, design and development of the Centre with an international committee of SNDdeN, the General Archivist, Marie Felten, and an architect, David Lucaccioni. The opening of the new Centre, became a beautiful reality.

Opening and Blessing
At the entrance and front foyer of the convent on rue Julie Billiart, six huge banners, created and produced by Sisters Joan Mary Brown and Margaret Helen Wears (Britain), welcomed all those arriving to celebrate this day of blessing. The opening prayer and blessing began in front of banners symbolizing our international Congregation and describing, in brilliantly colorful images, the five continents on which Sisters of Notre Dame minister. In this space also, six unique table settings, the creative work of Sisters throughout the Congregation, represent St. Julie Billiart, Françoise Blin de Bourdon, Sisters Theophanie de la Passion, Dorothy Stang, Mary Linscott and Teresita Weind. These personalized table settings invite visitors to join in feasting on the wealth of inspiration and knowledge in the Centre.

To celebrate our rich heritage on the holy ground of our Motherhouse, our Notre Dame family gathered for the blessing, having been prepared by Sr. Sharon McMillan (CA) who incorporated into the ritual some Scripture, song, words of Julie and Françoise, our Constitutions and Chapter Acts. Sr. Paul-Therese Vandenbyyang, Moderator of the South Belgium/France Province welcomed the guests; Sr. Marie Kelly, Coordinator, gave a short description of the Centre. The chorale de Béffroi and Mil Mougnot, composer of songs about our co-foundresses, provided the music. After the opening prayer, Sr. Teresita Weind, our Congregational Leader, chanted a litany of our deceased Mothers, as the Bishop blessed the first tombstone of Mère Julie, now located in the garden outside the Centre.

Continued
Walking Alongside the Wall

While singing “Confiance en Dieu” (Trust in God), the participants in the procession advanced through the corridors of the house, leading to the former chapel of the Sisters, now transformed into the Heritage Centre. In a thrilling moment of awe and silence, the Sisters and guests entered and viewed the marvel before them. They walked along the high and long black wall, immediately evident, where more than 12,000 names of past and present SNDs are inscribed in white lettering. As the ceremony continued, Sisters carried lighted candles to represent the past, present and future life of the Congregation.

The Centre comprises four themes: the life of Julie and Françoise and the beginnings of the Congregation, its expansion on five continents, the Mission and ministries of the Sisters, and the Spirituality of Julie. Although only the first theme was fully completed for the blessing, the Bishop blessed the entire Centre in a ritual including prayer, water and incense. On large panels, a creative and dynamic exposition masterfully interweaves information and emotion into the story of the Congregation. The altar, reliquary of Mère Julie Billiart, the remains of Mère St. Joseph Blin de Bourdon and Mère Ignace Goethals which had formerly been located in the St. Julie Garden Chapel, are now located in the sanctuary and the sacristy of the newly blessed Heritage Centre. The “châsse” or reliquary of Mère Julie has a prominent place in the center of the sanctuary for easy viewing from all four sides.

In his remarks, Mgr. Vancottem recalled the significance of the ritual: “By honoring the roots, we open ourselves toward the future.” After the blessing, guests had the opportunity to visit the Heritage Centre and share the joy and wonder of the day at a reception in the convent.

We invite you, our Sisters, Associates and friends, who are unable to visit the Heritage Centre in person, to follow its progress on our Web site: www.SNDdeNHeritageCentre.org/Museum.
In July, a large banner decked the main street in the Town of Ipswich, MA to announce a Year of Jubilee, celebrating the presence of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDs) in Ipswich for 50 years (1962-2012). On July 8, about three hundred Sisters, Associates, former SNDs and three priests joined in an Opening Liturgy in the magnificent Our Lady, Queen Chapel, designed by the noted SND artist, Sr. Vincent de Paul Curran. The joy-filled presence of SNDs from Brazil, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Nigeria and Peru swelled the happy community of Sisters from New England and other States. The Congregational Leadership Team from Rome, Italy added to the solemnity and international spirit of the gathering. Following this prayerful celebration, the reception captured jubilee joy in the sharing among friends.

Celebrating Members and Ministries
In these 50 years, Notre Dame, Ipswich has been home for hundreds of postulants, novices and professed Sisters, and a place for formation and educational training. Currently, this facility houses one large Notre Dame Community of about 75 Sisters of Notre Dame from Boston and Ipswich provinces. St. Julie Billiart Residential Care Center, on two floors, provides health care for Sisters in the community. Also, Province and Congregational Offices, a USA National Vocation Office, a Spirituality Center, and an Art Studio bring various groups to participate in meetings, workshops, retreats, liturgies and educational activities in this special place! The province, community and staff continually host meetings of SNDs, other religious and laity from all continents. They welcome school, college and parish groups from MA and other States. At times, children from Cuvilly Arts and Earth Center and Ipswich public schools entertain the community with choral and instrumental programs. For years, the Sisters have reached out to residents on the North Shore through their many religious, pastoral, educational, artistic and social programs. Many residents from the region have been employed in the various ministries and services on this property. SND Congregational offices have been located in Notre Dame Ipswich since 1993.

Celebrating African Connection: Photovoltaic Systems
Cuvilly Arts and Earth Center, located at the front of the property, continues to educate pre-school children from the area, in an ecological and sustainable environment. The soil and land at Cuvilly yield a harvest of herbal gardens and shelter many and varied farm animals. A wind-turbine behind the school produces electricity for the school. In 2005, the school became a successful prototype for testing a photovoltaic system as an experiment for an SND international project for bringing energy to Notre Dame sites in Africa. At present, in the school, batteries still receive and store energy from solar panels installed earlier. So, Cuvilly, Ipswich celebrates a connectedness to the photovoltaic systems now providing electricity and water purification systems to SND ministries and the people in six sites in Nigeria and the Congo.

Years of Favor
To commemorate this year-long Jubilee, the Sisters hosted more events in October 2012. On October 6, the residents of Ipswich and neighboring towns joined in an ecumenical prayer service, toured the property and learned about the many entities serving at this facility. Families of the Sisters and donors shared a Liturgy of Thanksgiving and a brunch on October 14. The guests at both celebrations admired an Art Exhibit, viewed a power-point on the Sisters’ 50-year history in Ipswich and appreciated videos, photo-frames, and displays featuring the sponsored ministries of the SNDs in Massachusetts. The Sisters have planned days of prayer for women in their lives, for November 2012 and April 2013. The Jubilee Year will close with a liturgy in August 2013. All are welcome at Notre Dame in Ipswich now and for many years to come.
SN D deN  M ission
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.

St. Julie’s characteristic phrase: “How good is the good God!” expressed her special gift of unique trust in God. Today Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur on five continents make known God’s goodness.

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- **Africa**
  - Democratic Republic of Congo
  - Congo Brazzaville
  - Nigeria
  - South Africa
  - South Sudan
  - Zimbabwe

- **Europe**
  - Belgium
  - France
  - Italy
  - United Kingdom

- **Latin America**
  - Brazil
  - Nicaragua
  - Peru

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

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Visit our Website at www.sndden.org and scroll to the bottom of home page to:

- Find us on Facebook
- Tweet with us on Twitter
- Subscribe to our e-newsletter online
- Read our stories
- Share in our hope
- Rejoice in God's goodness

Visit international Web sites of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur at: www.sndden.org ~ www.notredameonline.org ~ www.ndvs.org