“See, I make all things new.”

(Revelations 21:5)

New Challenge in Peru

See article page 4
**My dear friends of Notre Dame,**

From May 7 -11, eight hundred congregation leaders, representing 600,000 consecrated religious women, assembled in Rome, Italy for the 2010 Plenary Conference of the International Union of Superiors General (UISG). You already know that you are integral to the mission of Notre Dame de Namur, one of the international congregations in the Union. Please note that through your investment and involvement in Notre Dame, you contribute to the growth of collaboration and networking of hundreds of religious congregations worldwide. Thank you.

When we live and work with and for others, we become increasingly aware of the positive and negative impact of our choices and decisions on the lives of those living in impoverished conditions. Globally and internationally, we realize that we are “our sisters’ and brothers’ keeper.” Liliane Sweko, a member of our Congregational Team, addressed the plenary gathering, reminding the members that Christian faith and hope empower all to be bearers of light and hope.

The stories in this issue of *Good Works* are illustrations of the simple ways human beings bear the torch of light, bringing positive change into the lives of others. Through your love, prayer and support, you contribute to good and hope in the global and international community. Thank you.

Eight hundred religious women left the Plenary Conference thinking and wondering about “next steps to fill situations of darkness with prophetic light.” Those steps into a brighter day are strengthened by your commitment to Notre Dame. Thank you for taking the next steps with our sisters serving with courage and hope in the world!

**With gratitude for the call to be bearers of light and hope,**

*Teresita Weind, SNDdeN*

Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader
New Challenge for SNDs in Peru

By Sister Marleny Bardales Raymundo, SNDdeN

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in the Peru/Nicaragua Province have accepted a new challenge. They have a new mission in the rural area of Tambogrande, north of Lima, Peru. The Sisters are now administering a network of schools, with a central office in Malingas. Sr. Marleny Bardales Raymundo, SNDdeN is the Director of the Rural Network Programme “Fe y Alegria” No. 48. She is administrator for 31 schools in 15 villages. She works with 100 teachers and a team of 10 people who assist her in accompanying the teachers. There are 2,147 pupils at initial, primary, secondary and adult levels.

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Sister Marleny describes the benefits of this Network of Schools for Malingas, Tambogrande, Piura, Peru.

Our mission is to provide a quality education in this rural area. We prepare the teachers, visit the schools, offer breakfast to the children and provide pupils with their school equipment.

Students at the primary school learn the basic elements of farming by planting seeds for garden produce for future trade in the Tambogrande region.

We also assess the schools’ building needs and anything else required. We direct an educational project which involves the breeding of animals, the production of fertilizers, the planting of fruit trees and garden produce grown from seed, especially those products for which there is local demand. The students learn farming and animal husbandry by working together with their teachers. An agricultural engineer works directly with the teachers to prepare them in the field of agriculture.

To live each day in the network is a story at the same time difficult and rich. Though we plan our day, the reality which awaits us is another story.

A Day in our Life in Tambogrande

Sr. Marie-Laure Bentz works full time with me and Sr. Therese Hartley gives part-time service, a few hours weekly. At the beginning of the school year, we visit the schools. In the schools most distant from Tambogrande, one teacher gives lessons to six primary grades in one classroom, in schools known as “one-teacher schools.” We meet the teacher when the students are still on holiday. After our meeting, we go with the teacher for visits to homes in order to invite the pupils to come to school. We spend time in encouraging the parents to see the importance of studies. Then, we continue further into the country to other little schools.

On one of our journeys, we met a 12 year old boy who was on the way to his farm with his knapsack and spade. We stopped and began to talk to Juan. We asked: “Why are you not going to school?” The child responded: “My mother doesn’t want to send me.” We questioned: “Where do you live?”

Continued
Reflection: New and Wider Ministry

We realize the value of our mission as Sisters of Notre Dame, when we listen to stories of our people living in poverty. We empathize with their sufferings; we embrace them with compassion; we join with them in laughing over amusing circumstances or events. In all, we do discover their needs and we attempt to find tangible support in human and financial resources for education in an area deprived of this essential for survival. Currently, we are seeking sponsors for funding those children who do not have any money for education. Also, one of our secondary schools educates children from 14 villages. Many of these students walk to school for an hour and a half. For these pupils, we dream of providing bicycles for getting them to school.

We search for ways and means for enabling the people to move beyond their poverty. We reflect with them on such individual responses as “I know that God is good,” or “Now God has become present to us.” We acknowledge the importance of their lives in themselves and to God. We welcome all support in whatever manner it comes to us in “making all things new” for the people of Tambogrande and its environs. We accept the challenge of bringing the Gospel message through education to Peru, to a deprived corner in God's universe.

Translated by Sister Mary Kavanagh, SNDdeN

We know that each day is a ministry experience of living out our charism, that the good God is indeed good.
Mamre, a Haven of Peace on a Busy Road

By Sister Joan Mary Brown, SNDdeN

Mamre, a House of Prayer, has become a haven of peace on a busy road in Crawley, England. Three years ago, I asked our British Province leadership if I could, as my ministry in retirement, begin a house of prayer in a small province-owned house in Crawley, a 1950’s new town four miles from Gatwick airport. Crawley is forty minutes by train from London and also easily accessible by public transport. I had just retired from retreat work at the nearby Benedictine Abbey at Worth where I had been in ministry.

The insight for this project actually came to me on a cold, grey wet day in May, while I was kneeling in the mud, planting beans and wondering about my future, so uncertain. My direction for ministry was so unclear. When I looked up at the small house, it offered an inspiration and a dream for ministry. It gave me the idea to request from my province the use of this house for prayer, creative spirituality and hospitality. I envisioned offering my service in a ministry for individuals and groups in need of a refuge, hospitality and solitude. The house in Crawley could be a place of prayer on a busy road, a walk of a few minutes from the town centre.

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur often remind one another that our foundress, St. Julie Billiart, called us to “be contemplatives in action.” The 2008 General Chapter encouraged this emphasis in our lives as women religious: “We are women called personally and collectively to deepen our relationship with God and to grow in a community that chooses Gospel imperatives…” The province leadership affirmed the opening of this house of prayer for religious and laity.

Here in this place, we seek to find God through the experience of the senses and through the nurture of creativity – a creativity grounded in prayer and transforming prayer. “We hear the groaning of our Earth mistreated and endangered by our human activity.”

Set back from the road, the house has a large garden at the rear where I grow a variety of fruits and vegetables and encourage others to grow food too, in an attempt to be ecological and responsible for the earth.

My vision for Mamre is a place where people come aside to rest a while either individually or in groups. Mamre is a refuge where:

- individuals can be in harmony with God, self and creation, with an holistic approach to living and praying
- individuals take time to remember that we are woven into the web of creation by a common thread
- individuals learn to play and pray and to discover the beauty within themselves
- creativity flourishes through colour, music, mandalas, painting, poetry, clay work, journaling and various crafts.

As well as the main house and conservatory, the hermitage and quiet corners, there is also a well-stocked workroom (formerly the garage) for arts and crafts and creative spirituality projects. Groups or individuals come for quiet garden days; they use the hermitage or work room or they take a cup of tea and chat. Others come for spiritual direction or make the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in daily life.

Since its opening, many Sisters and lay people have already enjoyed the hospitality of Mamre for quiet days or longer stays to rest, relax, retreat or holiday. Mamre is open to all denominations and is a place to let creativity flourish for the glory of God. In this contemplative atmosphere we share our calling to deepen our relationship with God and with those around us. It is my hope that many more will come to find newness of life in this small haven in the midst of life’s frantic activity and that my small action will be a source of hope in this corner of the world.

I named the house Mamre because there is a large oak tree in the garden. It reminded me of the Genesis story, where Abraham unaware gave hospitality to the Trinity under the oak of Mamre.

The LORD appeared to Abraham by the terebinth of Mamre, as he sat in the entrance of his tent, while the day was growing hot. Looking up, he saw three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran from the entrance of the tent to greet them; and bowing to the ground, he said: “Sir, if I may ask you this favor, please do not go on past your servant. Let some water be brought, that you may bathe your feet, and then rest yourselves under the tree. Now that you have come this close to your servant, let me bring you a little food, that you may refresh yourselves; and afterward you may go on your way.”

“Very well,” they replied, “do as you have said.”

Genesis 18: 1-5

1 (Calls of the 2008 General Chapter, p. 5)
MEDICAL CENTRE ON SITE & ON WHEELS

By Sister Prisca Igbozulike, SNDdeN

Notre Dame Medical Centre is the first SND owned project in Ilorin, Kwara State, Nigeria. It is located in Amoyo, on the outskirts of Ilorin town, in a predominantly Muslim community. Most of the people are poor farmers and small business traders. The medical facility offers quality medical services to the Amoyo community on site and in the neighboring villages through mobile outreach. The Centre serves those deprived of health care in this region. With the help of a lay technician and a receptionist, Sr. Felicia Ogodobiri and I administer and staff this healing ministry.

MULTIPLE RESPONSIBILITIES AND OUTREACH

While serving the people of Amoyo and surrounding villages, we also offer medical help to our student-boarders from the ND Girls’ High School on the property. Sr. Felicia and I admit, consult and treat patients, assist in deliveries, and dispense medications. Sr. Felicia is a community health extension worker; she will eventually assume responsibility for the child welfare department when opened. I am a staff nurse and midwife; I also do all the accounting in the Centre.

On site, we treat minor illnesses, run a neo-natal clinic and assist in the delivery of babies. We have delivered eight infants, five boys and three girls. Last year, we helped to deliver twins on the Feast of St. Joseph. This year, we assisted in delivering a baby boy on the Feast of St. Patrick. In April, as I was typing this article, another pregnant woman came to the Centre. She delivered twin boys weighing 3.5kg and 3.7kg. We also do male circumcisions and run laboratory tests. The building has two delivery rooms, an operating room, consultation room, laboratory, two patient-rooms (with a total of seven beds), reception and waiting rooms, nurses’ cubicle, pharmacy, computer room, laundry and small store.

Our Medical Centre is also a “clinic on wheels.” The agency “Survive Miva” in Liverpool, England gave us a higher vehicle to penetrate into these remote villages and to provide mobile outreach to those in great need. We visit the interior villages, including nomadic settlements without access to roads or clinics. On outreach visits, we meet the sick outdoors under a tree.

BEGINNINGS OF THE PROJECT

In preparation for the Centre, Sr. Obehi Ogbeide, an SND serving in Kroonstad, South Africa, helped me to pave the way for this new ministry. Together, we travelled into remote villages in order to:
- assess needs
- raise awareness of the villagers to health related issues
- give health education lessons
- stimulate interest and create enthusiasm for the project.

The people expressed hope and gratitude for our response to the needs. The Medical Centre, built by the Sisters of Notre Dame of the Nigeria Province, was equipped to hospital standards with finances from the Congregational Mission Fund. The Bishop of Ilorin Diocese, Right Rev. Dr. Ayo Maria Atoyebi, blessed the Centre at the official opening in December 2007.

OUR MISSION

We commit our lives to expressing God’s goodness as we share in the healing ministry of Christ through rendering health services to those living in poverty, especially women and children. We respect the dignity of each person. We work to ensure quality health care in this region as our way of demonstrating God’s love and justice for all.

NEEDS FOR THE MINISTRY

At times, we know that it is almost impossible to meet the multiple medical demands of the people since our centre is located in such a poor environment. We minister each day under heavy financial constraints. Sometimes, patients come to us with little or no money for treatment. In most cases, we never recover any money. We cannot send the sick home untreated. At the end of each month, we realize also that we have a heavy deficit from the purchase of medications and drugs dispensed. We cannot pay the salaries for more workers or for maintenance. Some would tell us that we are foolish to attempt such a ministry, due to the poor financial status of the project. Yet we cannot leave the sick unattended.

Continued
We do try to provide affordable health care, but we lack adequate personnel to treat many of the sick. We are three qualified staff members: a staff nurse/midwife, a community health extension worker and a laboratory technician. We need more personnel but are unable to meet the financial demands. If we could provide larger salaries, some medical professionals would leave the town to work in our village. If we were able to build staff quarters on the premises, this would attract some medical personnel currently living in the town. It would also be beneficial to have qualified staff living on the premises in emergencies. As SNDs, Sr. Felicia and I often work around the clock when there are many admissions to the Centre.

We refer many cases to hospitals in town because we are unable to pay even for a part-time doctor. Some patients are not happy when we refer them to a hospital; they pay more and do not receive the same type of care rendered at our centre. For instance, we admitted a woman in labour who stayed for two days because she had a serious laceration due to the birth of her big baby. We sent her to the hospital in Ilorin because she really needed a doctor’s attention. For a thirty-minute treatment, the hospital charged her more than we had for the two days she had spent in labour and rest at our centre. Unable to pay, the woman was distraught.

**Often the people are living in such poverty that they do not come when they are sick.** Instead, they use native herbs to treat themselves; they come to the Centre only when these herbal treatments fail and they become critically ill. Our ministry includes educating the people on the need for medical assistance and regular check-ups.

We also need a child welfare clinic; we also need a place for testing and counseling those living with HIV/AIDS. These services depend on financial sponsorship for future expansion. Also, we hope to construct a photovoltaic project in Amoyo for supplying light and energy to the Centre and to our local SND school. Our Congregational Leadership Team has assisted with grants from the Mission Support Fund for the purchase of medical supplies, equipment for the operating room, and finances to supplement salaries for three workers. We count on our benefactors to contribute generously to ministries sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.
SNDs Educate Against Modern Day Slavery

By Sisters Margaret Cummins, SNDdeN and Rosemary Reynolds, SNDdeN

Human Trafficking is a subtle and cruel form of slavery in our society. It has become a plague of global proportions. The 2008 General Chapter called all Sisters of Notre Dame to a deeper awareness of this modern-day evil.

“We are called to listen to the mourning…of the sexually exploited, trafficked, marginalized and abused women and children…especially girls.”

(Call of the 2008 General Chapter, p. 5)

In our worldwide mission, Sisters are committed to action for justice for these victims of modern day slavery. As educators, our action in eliminating human trafficking has focused on:

- educating ourselves and others
- working with other religious congregations
- collaborating with religious, political and social groups

SNDs believe in the power of prayer. The systematic elimination of trafficking has become a priority intention for individual, community and congregational prayer. Sisters pray that lawmakers internationally will find wisdom and insight, courage and integrity to confront this modern-day evil. In different parts of the Notre Dame world, Sisters are experiencing a ripple effect of educational awareness programs and the power of communal prayer. SNDs are collaborating with many groups to protect persons from human trafficking, the most lucrative slavery in our day.

Sisters in major US cities ACT to help trafficked women find new life. The Sisters of Notre Dame from Boston and Ipswich Provinces have formed a committee committed to self-education, and educating the Sisters and laity in schools, parishes, hospitals, retreat houses, social agencies, etc. They collaborate with the Anti-Trafficking Coalition of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR) of Boston and other local groups assisting with emergency shelter for women seeking escape and safety. The committee has disseminated resource materials and sponsored three symposia on the scope of trafficking, both domestic and international. Attendance at symposia with subsequent activities demonstrates interest with continuing involvement. One symposium speaker thanked teaching Sisters for their inspiration for her social-justice work and for their action now, especially with financial support for a promised safe-house for trafficked women in Greater Boston. Throughout the US, religious congregations have been providing clothing, food and necessities for women rescued from abuse and modern day slavery. Some Sisters have initiated programs to engage men and boys in reducing gender based violence: other Sisters work at achieving gender equality.

In the US and internationally, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are collaborating with our “cousins,” the Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld. Committee members from both congregations have initiated efforts for awareness and prayer against the global evil of human slavery and trafficking. Three members have served on the United Nations Working Committee on Girls whose major focus is eliminating the exploitation of children. Recently, this SND committee disseminated a Novena for Pentecost for this specific intention. The committee included stories of individuals from different countries where our two Congregations minister.

Scope of the Problem

United Nations statistics show that there are 700,000 to 2,000,000 individuals trafficked annually. This is the second largest form of organized crime and the fastest growing worldwide. Profits from this trade of persons exceed $9.5 billion a year. US Studies estimate 150-200 commercial child-exploitation Websites existing globally.

Modern Day Slavery exists as far away as India, where children are born into bondage, or as near as any US city where runaways and abducted children are sold as slaves or prostitutes. The second highest group of trafficked victims in the US are domestic servants or nannies, the slaves “next door,” women prisoners, kept hidden, maintained, unpaid and abused, at the mercy of their keepers. The buying and selling of human beings for sexual exploitation is modern-day slavery. The secrecy surrounding this crime promotes its continued expansion.

The January earthquake in Haiti underscores the great danger for children, orphaned and left unaccompanied; they fall into “restavek” slavery: fetching water, running errands, cooking, cleaning, etc. This slavery existed prior to the earthquake. Following the earthquake, many organizations have been working to save children in Haiti from slavery. International agencies and religious congregations are planning with the Haitian government to protect children, but so many appear to be falling through the cracks. No one sends a child on an errand at night for fear that the child might be abducted and/or raped.
In Africa, trafficking happens mostly within country borders. In many countries (e.g. Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda) women, men, and children are used as sexual slaves, forced laborers in the mines, domestic servants, child laborers and combatants. Child laborers on the Ivory Coast pick 85% of US cocoa beans. UNICEF estimates 30,000 child soldiers are used as combatants; 40% are girls. Women and girls are sold across borders as domestic servants and sex slaves in many African and European countries. Today, a potential threat for trafficking women and children surrounds international sports events. Sisters are partnering with world organizations to prevent forced prostitution at the upcoming World Cup in South Africa.

Brazil is the major exporter of Latin American women destined to be sold for sex. After the sale of weapons and drugs, the third source of profit in Brazil is the sale of women and children. Prices for women depend on age, race, culture, beauty. In this commerce, the person deprived of her human rights, is in danger for her life, loses dignity, security, and the right to travel freely. Women who thought they were choosing life, find themselves trapped into a system where they are dying a little each day.

**Action for Justice**

SNDs pray and act with mercy and compassion for the millions enslaved by human trafficking in our world today. They partner internationally with organizations:

- to combat human trafficking and slavery, especially of women and children
- to foster collective action in advocacy for protection of children or child rights
- to prevent abuse and violence against women and children, especially girls

Sisters hear again the words of Jesus: “The blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the poor hear the good news proclaimed to them.” (Matthew 11:5) In an attempt to confront modern-day slavery, Sisters of Notre Dame search to be the Body of Christ and “to bring liberty to captives…to let the oppressed go free” (Luke 4:18) by working with others to liberate the slaves of our day.

As contemplatives in action and educators, our best means is through prayer and education in collaboration with others.

See Twitter@trafficking_snd
Children find hope through education! Notre Dame Early Childhood Development Centre (NDECDC) has brought new life to Malava, Kenya. In response to a need for pre-school education in the area, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur opened a nursery school for children in Malava on January 13, 2010.

Two Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are members of staff: Sr. Margaret Inziani is the head teacher; Sr. Jane Wangeci Nyaga is the administrator. A lay teacher is also employed. In January, 15 children (11 boys and 4 girls) enrolled in the three-year old class, with the expectation of another, larger enrollment in January 2011.

Presently the classes are held in a small house which was occupied by a caretaker on the compound of the Sisters. A new toilet block has been completed and the Kenya Ministry of Education has given government approval to this early childhood project. The school has potential now to expand into a primary or elementary school in the future. The children start school at 8:00 a.m., full of energy and as clean as can be. By break-time, most of the children are covered in red dust from their outside activities. They have porridge during the morning and then after more lessons they have lunch, followed by a rest. After more activities school ends at 3:00 p.m. when the children are collected and taken home.

The current system of education in Kenya is examination-oriented and highly competitive. The Sisters are trying to use techniques which help the parents to understand that education is more than marks and positions in class. The Sisters are hoping to organize the Notre Dame School so that the children are educated for life. The motto of the school is: Education for Life.

The school can only grow if it has classrooms and other facilities beyond the present small building. The plan is to build a block of four classrooms before the end of the year 2010 so that there can be more than one class in the year 2011. The Sisters are handicapped by insufficiency of funds. They have had some generous donations but the funds available are not yet enough. This educational ministry is giving new life in forming the minds and hearts of little children for generations to come.
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.