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- Romans 8:28
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Good Works

Published on-line and digitally three times a year

PUBLISHER
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
Congregational Mission Office
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Ipswich, MA 01938

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FRONT COVER
Sr. Mary Johnson, SNDdeN explains the Study of International Sisters in the USA to the Union of Superiors General (UISG) in Rome, Italy. These 4000 international Sisters from 83 countries on 6 continents enrich the Church in the USA, for “God’s purposes.”

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STUDY: International Sisters in United States

For three years, beginning in 2014, Trinity Washington University (Trinity) in Washington D.C and the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University collaborated in a Study of International Sisters in the United States. Sr. Mary Johnson, SNDdeN, Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies at Trinity, with her colleagues in this study, Dr. Mary L. Gautier, Sr. Patricia Wittberg, SC, Sr. Thu T. Do, LHC acknowledge with gratitude the support of GHR Foundation for this project.

By Sister Mary Johnson, SNDdeN

In this study, we define an international Sister as “a woman religious who was born outside the United States and is now living in the United States, in ministry, or study or residence.”

At a time of great trial for immigrants to this country, we conducted the first-ever national survey of Sisters who were born outside the United States. We used multiple methods to find as many Sisters as possible by contacting the leaders of every apostolic, monastic, and contemplative institute of women in the United States, along with the vicar of religious of every diocese. (Only 18 dioceses reported no international Sisters.) Through these methods and using various other contacts with Sisters and groups, we identified and surveyed in this country over 4,000 international Sisters from 83 countries and 6 continents. Several Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are included. The survey was translated into English, French, Spanish and Vietnamese. We had help with the other languages. In addition, we conducted 26 focus and individual interviews across the county.
Here are just a few demographic findings from the survey:

Continent of Origin of the Sisters (with largest sending continent first)

- Asia
- Europe (older international sisters are from western Europe, younger are from eastern)
- North America (Canada and Mexico)
- Central and South America
- Africa
- Oceania

Reasons for Entering the US

39% were sent by their Congregations for ministry
28% arrived as children, teens, adults, before entering religious Congregations
13% were sent by their Congregations for study
10% were sent by Congregations as part of their formation programs
6% transferred from provinces outside US to US provinces in their Congregations
2% transferred to a Congregation in the US from another Congregation outside the US
2% came to enter religious life in US

Demographics related to age and arrival

The average age of international Sisters is 58, which is 20 years younger than the average age of US born Sisters

On average, they entered religious life at age 23, and came to the US at age 30

Forty-one percent have been in the US for 15 years or less
Ethnic/Racial Background (self-identification)

35% Asian/Pacific Islander  
33% European/Canadian/Australian  
21% Latin American/Mexican  
11% African/Afro-Caribbean

Current Ministries

The largest percentage of international Sisters serve in parish/diocesan/ethnic group ministry, healthcare, and education.

14% are students in college or a school of theology.  
13% serve in congregational/vocation/formation ministry. Some of these Sisters are in Congregations that have just opened a new mission in the U.S. The mission of some of these is to evangelize.  
9% serve in social services.  
5% are contemplative nuns in monasteries all over the U.S.  
1% serve in campus ministry.

Notre Dame de Namur Sisters Vivien Echekwubelu (Nigeria), Josita Colbert (US), Cristina Garces (Mexico) attended a conference in which Sr. Mary Johnson explained the survey results.
Needs identified by these Sisters:

- Language training to attain fluency in English.
- Mentoring so that Sisters are accompanied as they navigate complex situations of ministry, community, Church and society.
- Acculturation processes for the sending and receiving groups.
- New initiatives on the part of US based Congregations to reach out to international Sisters in order to increase their sense of belonging and to build solidarity.

Listed above are just a few findings. Many more findings, plus analysis and recommendations, will be provided in a forthcoming book to be published next year. In the meantime, there has been keen interest in this study, especially at a gathering of leaders of national Catholic organizations in Washington, D.C. in March, 2017 and a session sponsored by the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) in Rome in May, 2017.

Members of the UISG appreciated Sr. Mary Johnson’s presentation.

(Used with permission of UISG)
Please show your support for all efforts to welcome “the strangers” among us.

Also, my colleagues and I were grateful when Sr. Mary Pellegrino, CSJ, mentioned the significance of the study to the leaders assembled in Orlando, Florida in August 2017, in her Presidential Address to the Leadership Conference of Women Religious (LCWR).

It is the hope of our research team that the findings of this study will shed further light on the experiences and gifts of those who migrate to this country. We hope that it will be a useful tool for those who are interested in issues of immigration and particularly the gifts and challenges of those women religious who were born outside this country and who minister in the United States.
Ministry Widens Urban Outreach

By Sister Gertrude Tonsi, SNDdeN

In 2009, the Centre Mary Linscott opened in Kisantu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 120 kilometers from the capitol in Kinshasa. Meeting the changing needs in this urban community, this ministry of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) evolved from a center dedicated to **young people living with handicaps to a place for the formation of young unemployed women.**

The Centre began as a response to a request from Mr. André Lukoki, (father of Sr. Solange Lukoki, SNDdeN), who managed a nearby center for persons with physical handicaps. Mr Lukoki realized that he needed the support and backing of a larger organization, such as a religious congregation whose charism included **promoting God’s goodness by reaching out to people living in poverty.**

![Sr. Gertrude Tonsi, SNDdeN (center) encourages the young women to show the clothing they made.](image-url)
leadership in the Congo-Kinshasa Province accepted the challenge to take on responsibility for a center for the handicapped. For greater oversight, they decided to regroup the young people from Mr. Lukoki’s site to the SNDdeN property in Kisantu. The Sisters named the new center for a former Superior General of the SNDdeN, Sr. Mary Linscott, a woman who loved people living in poverty, and who had a “heart wide as the world.”

Here, the Sisters organized lessons providing the young men and women with possibilities enabling them to take greater responsibility for their own lives. To provide a more rounded formation adapted to the level of the students, the Sisters, aided by lay teachers, taught the students reading, spelling, (Kikongo and French), arithmetic, religion and music as well as practical training in dress making. They renovated available buildings in the convent compound as classrooms for the handicapped.

Moving from one place to another around the property, however, was difficult for the handicapped. Hand-powered three-wheel chairs were purchased to
help them get to classes. They appreciated this Notre Dame education, which helped them to take charge of their own lives.

A New Moment
After some time, the Centre found itself called to a new moment in ministry. As local people in the area took greater responsibility for handicapped persons, they requested that the Centre Mary Linscott (CML) be transformed as a place for women, a social center for the promotion of girls and young mothers who did not have the financial resources needed to finish their formal education and were in need of means of earning a living. The Sisters staffing the CML organized a three-year formation program with literacy (reading & writing) dress-making, homemaking/household practice and courses in religion. In collaboration with the local Ministry of Social Affairs, the Sisters organize at the end of each year a jury to test the level of each candidate. Those who successfully complete the three year cycle receive a certificate and a sewing machine, provided by World Vision. This certificate enables them to find employment in workshops and elsewhere.

The Centre now has two classrooms. The Sisters are struggling to construct a third classroom, but the contribution of parents is
minimal. The annual fee for each student is 50,000 Congo francs or $35.00. These funds are used to maintain the sewing machines and to pay the teachers. Young women come in crowds at the beginning of the year, but disappear afterwards for lack of money to buy material for dressmaking during the course of the year. The Centre is unable to meet the needs of all. These young people are often victims of every type of manipulation. Actual fees are insufficient even to provide a meal during the day. The Ministry of Social Affairs does not give finances to the Centre.

The SNDdeN Congregation does give to the Centre some support funding which is used for purchasing sewing machines, supplies and contributing to the salaries of a few teachers. Sr. Julie Santu, SNDdeN is responsible for the Centre and works with five lay
women who take work with these young unemployed girls and mothers. From Monday to Friday, courses begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 12:30 p.m. The learners spend one day per week in manual labor which is called “the work of goodness.” The parents and families are happy with this environment for their daughters. This year, we have found jobs for six young women at a local market. Some unemployed men, also living in poverty, have asked to be part of this formation.

Collaboration with persons living with handicaps is still a focus at the Centre. Mr. Alexis, a person with a handicap, works in the clothing workshop of our school. He makes all the blouses worn by our students at the Lycée Notre-Dame de Kisantu. The Sisters continue a journey of fidelity by helping unemployed women and girls, and in supporting persons with handicaps, in a ministry which is certainly the work of St. Julie in the Congo.

Outside the clothing workshop, Sisters Emily Mullen and Julie Santu discuss with Mr. Alexis the need for blouses at Lycée Notre-Dame de Kisantu.

Please show your support for educational efforts of the SNDdeN at Centre Mary Linscott in Kinsantu.
**Dorothy Lives!**

By Sr. Judith Clemens, SNDdeN

In the twelve years since February 12, 2005, when Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN was killed in the Amazon in Anapu, Brazil, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) and many organizations and projects around the world keep her memory and her mission alive. On May 27, 2017, on a bright Saturday afternoon, a parish in Hamilton, Ohio dedicated and blessed Dorothy Stang House in a newly renovated parish home. St. Julie Billiart Parish welcomed eight Sisters, from the Ohio SNDdeN Province to the celebration of a Eucharistic Liturgy and this dedication. The Sisters presented a framed poster of Sister Dorothy to be hung in “Dot’s House.”

**Ministry for Families**

St. Julie Parish participates in a program called Family Promise, in collaboration with two other Catholic parishes, eleven support churches and a mosque. This program in Butler County, Ohio seeks to provide temporary resources for homeless families, especially women and children, with a primary goal of finding permanent housing and full time employment for each family. The churches and the mosque welcome...
the families for a week at a time. These families face many challenges following strict guidelines and rigid schedules while in the program. Depending on daily schedules, the guests leave by 6:30 a.m. for their work or other activities.

With the involvement of more than ninety volunteers, a supportive church staff, and the generous service of an entire pastoral region, many renovations and extended cleaning have made Dot’s House a wonderful residence for hosting homeless guests. Guests appreciate the cleanliness and being able to sleep in real beds with beautiful quilts. One parishioner, Theresa Murphy, makes and donates creative and colorful quilts for all the beds which each family takes when they leave. Over the 2017 Memorial Day weekend, St. Julie Parish hosted five families, who would have been living in their cars or on the streets without this residential program.

At the celebration, Sr. Judith Clemens expressed appreciation for the SNDdeN community, to all involved: One of Dorothy’s great gifts was to be at home wherever she was welcomed... I know she is thrilled to be remembered in the naming of this Dorothy Stang House where homeless families are welcomed.

As daughters of St. Julie Billiart, we are so grateful to you for offering this sign of hospitality. Your choice to name this home in Dorothy’s memory opens both doors and windows into the souls of many people. We lift up the lives of all who made the renovation of this lovely dwelling possible, all who have ever lived here and those who greeted them with a smile. Dorothy is smiling with us today. We believe that all goodness shared, somehow permeates our world, so every welcome, particularly to women and children in need, makes this home a holy dwelling.

Dorothy lives in the people!

Please show your support for parish and homeless ministry today.
Prison Ministry in South Carolina, USA

By Sr. Christina Murphy, SNDdeN

When I first began my ministry in 2004 at Our Lady of the Hills Parish in Columbia, South Carolina (SC), I never expected to be involved in Prison Ministry. In my first meeting with the pastor, he told me about the large number of the correctional institutions located within our parish boundaries, even though such boundaries in SC are loosely acknowledged and configured. He asked me to become involved in this critical area of parish life, since no one was visiting the women’s correctional institutions. Once I completed all the paperwork, background screening and orientation, I began this new and challenging ministry.

Correctional Institutions

In South Carolina, there are 22 correctional institutions which do not include the detention centers, jails, 4 federal correctional institutions and the Department of Juvenile Justice. These institutions have three levels: Level 3 for high maximum security, Level 2 for medium security and Level 1 for minimum security or work camp. When I began my service in prison ministry, there were two women’s prisons in Columbia, SC, one maximum and the other minimum security. In July 2016, the minimum security prison was changed to a men’s facility and the women were moved over to the maximum security facility.
From the beginning, I recognized that God was present in this new venture. I made an immediate connection with the women who attended our Catholic services. These inmates were both Catholic and non-Catholic. All who came seemed to crave a spiritual connection and wanted to hear the Word of God, in listening to Scripture. For some, this was the first time since early childhood that someone had spoken to them of God and God’s love for them. I remember the first time in teaching these women that each of us is created in the image and likeness of God and that each time someone looks at one of them or they look at another person, individuals can see a little bit of the face of God. So touched to the heart by this concept of being persons who are reflections of God, some of the women even wept at this thought! I knew then that this prison ministry was a call to me for further transformation.

Parish Involvement
As the ministry has grown, more involvement and activities became possible. Eventually two additional women joined me each week in visiting the facilities. Now, a diocesan priest visits the correctional institutions across the state and celebrates a Eucharistic liturgy once a month. He also provides the Sacrament of Reconciliation when requested. Each Christmas Eve, our bishop goes to one correctional institution in the state to celebrate Mass with the inmates. We take to the prison a meal at Christmas time after each item has been approved by the warden. We bring the women hygiene items, such as toothpaste, shampoo, body wash lotion, etc. Again, the size and type of items is determined by the Department of Corrections.
We are able to provide these items from generous parish members and through a fund from the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

According to a statistics report in 2016, there are about 20,000 inmates in these 22 institutions. The state spends $49.50 per day for food, housing and personal care of the inmates. Of the 22 institutions, 2 are for women and 20 for men. Nothing is free in prison. The inmates have to pay fees for medical visits and hygiene items: they do this through a special account, a personal account in which inmates keep any money sent by family or friends. It is much like a “mail in bank.” If the person has no outside financial help, the inmate is listed on the indigent list. Due to budget cuts, there are not many educational opportunities in these penal institutions, and especially not for women. The men in some institutions are able to learn horticulture and make furniture. The needs of prisoners, both women and men often go unseen.

In June 2017, we held the first state wide Prison Ministry Conference, so well attended that we had to close off the registrations. From this
Conference we are developing a Diocesan Plan. We are meeting with people who volunteered to be on Advisory Boards, to work on committees, such as programs for Volunteer Training, Re-entry Programs for ex-offenders, Victim Assistance etc. We are planning for an Office of Prison Ministry in our diocese to help oversee all volunteer services in these correctional institutions.

**Necessary Work of Mercy**

So much is still needed for all persons who are imprisoned, especially for volunteers who are willing to step forward and give their time, talent and even expertise to the imprisoned. As ministers in prisons, we recognize the necessity for programs to support persons who serve their terms and are released back into society. They need mentors, jobs, places to live, transportation, supportive people in their lives, and most definitely, a Church which accepts and challenges them to be the persons that God created them to be. Prayer with and for prisoners and for those whose circumstances in life has led them to crime is another work of mercy for all Christians and believers in our good God.

One day when I was leaving one women’s institution, I saw a pencil sketched picture on the wall. The picture was titled: **Forgotten Faces**. It showed three faces, all women, looking out from behind bars. It caused me to wonder:

- **What faces have we forgotten that once were so present to us?**
- **Family members, friends, those who have passed away---faces we thought we would never forget.**
- **What about our own face? Have we forgotten where the laugh lines, the worry lines have come from? The ever-aging process?**
- **What faces do we see today when we look in a mirror or see someone on the street?**
- **Who do we see in those faces? Do we take the time to see the face of a child of God, hidden behind whatever face is presented to us?**

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Please show your support for prison and parish ministry today.
Stewards of the SNDdeN Charism

By Sister Maria Delaney, SNDdeN, Co-Director in US Office of Sponsored Ministries

In a world of instant communication where circumstances can change in an instant and people can be redirected from one path to another in the blink of an eye, the words “mission integration” take on new meaning. The process of integrating the Mission becomes the root and anchor which ensures that an organization, whether religious, educational, social or corporate, remains true to its original vision and purpose.

Many of our SNDdeN educational and health care ministries worldwide trace their roots deep into the 19th century. As the Sisters of Notre Dame have aged out of many ministries, many dedicated lay professionals have taken our place as stewards of the SNDdeN Charism. To assist them in their preservation of our legacy, we have created many opportunities to instill the Charism, values and Hallmarks of a Notre Dame Learning Community.

In this global community where terrorism and destruction in all forms capture all news cycles, the values that have sustained the Sisters from the time of Napoleon through multiple world and civil wars still resonate throughout our ministries worldwide. The question of what difference we make in our geographical area propels us to do everything in our power to keep our relationships strong.

The strength of our network of Notre Dame colleagues depends upon the connections made among the participants. To this end, every year in the United States and Europe, the Sisters offer day long workshops...
and retreats and multi-day conferences for administrators, boards and students which provide a solid grounding in our history and philosophy for everyone carrying forward the Notre Dame de Namur Charism.

Recent Meetings and Beyond

In late June 2017, the US Office of Sponsored Ministries gathered 50 Juniors and Seniors from Notre Dame high schools across the country for a Student Leadership Conference at Emmanuel College in Boston, MA. At this second gathering for young people, the enthusiasm and energy were infectious among them, and groups from different schools instantly intermingled and began to share their specific realities.

From July 16 to 19, 2017, the Office of Sponsored Ministries held their third annual conference of US Administrators from Notre Dame Schools at Notre Dame High School in Belmont, CA. Speakers provided stimulating presentations on:

- Weaving the “Hallmarks” into our school
- Inclusive Just Schools – Are we serving all our students?
- How Challenges of St. Julie’s time resonate with ours today
- Educating for Life in the Current Global Situation
- Energizing new and re-energizing Veteran Staff in living the Mission.

These sessions centered on the importance of insuring that administrators, faculty and staff in our Notre Dame schools resonate with the dynamism of our Charism.
On October 2-3, 2017, Notre Dame schools in the United Kingdom held a conference entitled “The best is still to come,” in Wrightington, England. Bringing together head-teachers, colleagues and Sisters, the conference reaffirmed for these educators a holistic approach in educating the whole person and preparing students for what they need for life. This annual meeting opened doors to newness in a future for Notre Dame education in the 21st century. [http://notredameonline.org/news-and-events/the-best-is-yet-to-come]

On October 16, 2017, in Namur, Belgium, the Association des Ecoles Notre Dame (Association of Notre Dame Schools) organized and directed a formation meeting for new directors, teachers and staff in the Notre Dame Schools in Belgium (photo above). Following input sessions and discussions on the charism and educational goals of St. Julie Billiart, these educators toured the Heritage Centre. For the purpose of networking with the schools in Belgium and around the ND world, the participants were delighted to receive a long list of our Notre Dame schools on five continents.

The planning is in process for an International Meeting: Networking FOR MISSION III, scheduled for July 25-28, 2018 to be held in the USA at Emmanuel College, 400 The Fenway, Boston, MA 02115. This Conference is open to “those who minister, with, for, on behalf of or under the name of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur or St. Julie Billiart.” The opportunity to connect with other professionals strengthens the ties among the schools and health centers founded by the Sisters and still carrying the Notre Dame de Namur name deep into the twenty-first century. [http://notredameonline.org/news-and-events/networking-iii]
The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur welcome and appreciate your financial support as we continue our ministries around the world.

We thank you for your prayerful and generous support.

**How good is our good God!**

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SNDdeN Mission

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

Continuing a strong educational tradition, we take our stand with people living in poverty, 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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Democratic Republic of Congo
Congo
Brazzaville
Kenya
Nigeria

South Africa
South Sudan
Zimbabwe

Europe
Belgium
France
Italy
United Kingdom

Latin America
Brazil
Nicaragua
Peru

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

Asia
Japan

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