SNDdeN Mission
100 Years
EMMANUEL COLLEGE
“God With Us”
Dear Friends of Notre Dame de Namur,

Acknowledgements, Congratulations, Gifts and kudos abound on the day of an anniversary or jubilee. Expressions of Joy and Delight triumph over past moments of doubt, periods of struggle, and the often hidden and internal natural fears of the unknown. The actual day of celebration is not the place and time to dwell on the rough and tough spots or the “how in the world did we ever get this far?” At the same time someone usually initiates the “stream of memories” that always includes faces and places that were critical to the person’s or peoples’ journeys.

It is at this juncture and “stream of memories,” dear Friends, that we thank you for “being there,” caring, praying, rooting for, and supporting the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in the Mission to which we are called. Even with all the saints, including our own St. Julie Billiart, we could never measure the “breadth and length or height or depth” (Ephesians 3:18) of God’s love at work in you and all who circle around and journey with us to reveal the goodness of God.

Be assured that you are intentionally and gratefully included in this year of anniversaries and jubilees.

In God’s Goodness,
Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader
Since its founding in 1919 as the first Catholic college for women in New England, Emmanuel College in Boston, MA, USA has embraced a spirit of reinvention during pivotal times of change locally, nationally and globally. Throughout these 100 years of evolution, a commitment to the Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur has remained strong and constant. Celebrating this Centennial year, the College demonstrates its guiding belief that “education is the greatest work on Earth.” From its first class of 26 young women to today’s 2,000 young men and women, Emmanuel prepares its graduates for lives of purpose and service.

A museum-quality, decade-by-decade history of Emmanuel on the walls of the Administration Building. Sister Janet Eisner, SNDdeN, President of Emmanuel College, reminded the gathering:

“On September 19, 1919, following the end of World War I, Emmanuel opened its doors before women had a constitutional right to vote. Imagine the courage. In her memoirs, Sister Helen Madeleine Ingraham, first dean for 30 years, wrote ‘Establishing Emmanuel was like a mountain that had to be moved and then again it was a dream.’”

An alumni panel, part of the annual Louise Doherty Wyant ’63 Lecture Series, established in honor of longtime Emmanuel faculty member, Sister Anne Cyril Delaney, SNDdeN, included graduates from across several decades, from the 1950s to the 2000s. They discussed “Ever Changing, Ever Emmanuel: 100 Years of Adaptation.” This event and the display, highlighting key moments in Emmanuel’s history, showed the willingness of college leadership to make bold decisions and significant changes, which have led to the College’s enduring legacy and today’s success. “So it’s a treasure, this place. Emmanuel was then and is now what the Sisters envisioned it to be, despite a world changing and the tumult that accompanies that. It’s a beacon, and it certainly was for so many of us,” said alumni panelist, Elizabeth Twomey ’59.
Expansion of Campus

In 1912, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur bought 11-acres of land in the Fenway neighborhood of Boston and built a majestic, Gothic-style building which would become Emmanuel’s iconic Administration Building. In the 1930s, 40s and 50s, the College purchased additional parcels of land and the campus grew to 17-acres. A number of new buildings were constructed at this time, including a science center and Emmanuel's first student residence hall, named Julie Hall.

In the 1960s, Emmanuel became a residential campus with three more student residence halls. By its 50th anniversary in 1969, students came from 23 states and 10 foreign countries. During the 1960s, a time of dramatic social change, the campus was active in issues of the day. Sister Marie Augusta Neal, SNDdeN, a faculty member in Sociology from 1953-1991, a champion of social justice, influenced many students to consider actions for change. The 1970s brought a deeper commitment to these matters with students participating in anti-war efforts, boycotts and strikes. The 1970s also saw a change in Emmanuel's student population with the growth of the adult learner population.

Growth and Commitment to Mission

In 1979, Sister Janet Eisner, SNDdeN was inaugurated as Emmanuel's 12th President. Now in her 40th year, she is the longest-serving woman college President in the United States. The last four decades, under her leadership, have witnessed exceptional growth, evolution and commitment to Mission. While traditional undergraduate classes were small in the 1980s and 1990s, the campus remained vibrant with activity. In the 1990s, Sister Janet initiated the Consortium of the Colleges on the Fenway to combine efforts and share resources.

In 1993, Emmanuel celebrated its first Founders’ Day, now a part of week-long events every February which focus on the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, founded by Saint Julie Billiart in 1804 and the founding of the college in 1919. The 2000s began a period of dramatic growth for Emmanuel – following the decision to expand the Mission and become a co-educational institution, traditional undergraduate enrollment quickly tripled and the College embarked on perhaps its most ambitious campus expansion and improvement plans with the addition of the Jean Yawkey Student Center, the Maureen Murphy Wilkens Science Center, Roberto Clemente Field (home field for athletic teams), and most recently an 18-story apartment-style residence hall.

Today, undergraduate enrollment at Emmanuel has reached its highest, with 2,000 students from 32 states and 52 countries. More than 80% of Emmanuel students participate in service initiatives, contributing 50,000 volunteer hours to the community each year. Academic and student life is vibrant with more than 70 majors, minors and areas of study and more than 100 clubs, organizations and activities. Students benefit from Emmanuel's Boston location, especially the Fenway neighborhood, chosen by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur to open a college 100 years ago. At the College Convocation on September 19, 2019, the 100th anniversary of Emmanuel's opening on September 19, 1919, Sister Janet invited the assembly of faculty, students, assembled guests of alumnae, alumni and Board members to move Emmanuel College into its second century of quality education and service to a global community.

“Our past is an inspiring prologue to our second century.” Sr. Janet Eisner, SNDdeN
On May 30, 2019, over 400 people gathered for a historic gala honoring Sister Janet Eisner SNDdeN, on her 40th anniversary as President of Emmanuel College. Among them were graduates from across eight decades, along with Boston Cardinal Archbishop Seán P. O’Malley, OFM Cap., Boston Mayor Martin J. Walsh, and leaders in higher education, biomedicine, finance, the arts and a host of other fields. They came to pay tribute to a respected peer, collaborative partner and beloved friend—a woman religious who for 40 years has led Emmanuel with vitality, creativity and an unwavering dedication to the College’s Catholic educational mission.

As they walked toward a magnificent glass tent raised for the occasion on the College’s central quadrangle, guests could observe symbols of Sister Janet’s transformational presidency: a modern student center, a state-of-the-art science center, and a new 18-story apartment-style residence hall. The buildings told a broader story of institutional momentum, one highlighted by a threefold increase in enrollment, innovative academic and student life programs, grants from the National Science Foundation and other prestigious funders, and new endowed professorships and lecture series, including one named in honor of Catholic Worker Movement co-founder Dorothy Day.

More than 800 graduates attended events throughout Centennial Alumni Weekend, May 31 – June 2, 2019. A number of celebrations, including Sr. Janet’s 40th Anniversary Gala, were held under the lights in a glass house on Emmanuel’s Quad.

Advancing Mission in a Changing World

These and many other advances have taken place amid seismic changes in higher education, reflecting Sister Janet’s attentiveness to the “signs of the times” and her commitment to adapting to the evolving needs of each generation of students. As she told attendees at the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur’s Networking for Mission III Conference, held at Emmanuel in 2018: “We constantly look to the future and ask: What brings us joy? What are we good at? And what does the world need us to be?”

The past four decades provide numerous examples of Sister Janet’s entrepreneurial spirit. In 2000, after a careful analysis of data and trends, the College made the decision to admit young men to its previously all-women’s four-year undergraduate program. That same year, the College entered into a 75-year ground-lease agreement with Merck & Co., enabling the company to begin construction of an 11-story, 300,000 square-foot research facility on a back parcel of the campus in exchange for a substantial one-time upfront payment.

Committed to the Vision of St. Julie Billiart

Amid changes, Sister Janet has remained steadfastly committed to the vision of St. Julie Billiart and to the values of the Sisters of Notre Dame who opened Emmanuel in 1919. In her messages to the College community, she has addressed topics including immigration, the environment, gun violence, and racial and religious intolerance. In addition, she has delivered keynote lectures on Emmanuel’s history during the annual Founders’ Week, which celebrates the educational legacy of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

Under Sister Janet’s leadership, faculty continue to challenge students to engage in critical social analysis of the root causes of the problems...
of their times and to consider effective responses and actions. By reflecting on these discussions, students further develop a commitment to social justice, and often express it through volunteer service. In fact, each year Emmanuel students contribute more than 50,000 hours of service to people in need throughout Boston and beyond.

“A Source of Great Joy”
During the 40th anniversary gala, Sister Janet’s longtime colleague and friend, Emmanuel Vice President of Finance, Sister Anne Mary Donovan, SNDdeN, announced a recent decision by the Board of Trustees to name the College’s iconic Administration Building in Sister Janet’s honor. For a woman who had spent decades of her life living, teaching and serving as President within the walls of the Collegiate Gothic building, it was a profoundly moving moment. Speaking to the guests that evening, Sister Janet reflected,

“Our founders gave us the name Emmanuel, which means ‘God with us.’ And I believe that to the core of my being. It is very real to us as we experience God’s amazing action in our work, in our lives and in the journeys of our students and graduates. For me this is a source of great joy.”

On the afternoon of June 1, 2019, during the Centennial Alumni Weekend, nearly seven hundred came together for a joyful Liturgy to honor Sister Janet on her 40th anniversary. Rev. J. Bryan Hehir celebrated the Liturgy, which featured a gathering hymn called “Ever-Beginning,” with lyrics written by Sister Evelyn Ronan, SNDdeN ’63, and a special original composition by Sister Janet’s nephew, Joseph Taff, with the title, most expressive for Emmanuel’s Mission: “Ah qu’il est bon!”

Sr. Janet greets alumni and friends during Emmanuel’s Alumni Weekend. Nearly 700 alumni gather for a special Liturgy on June 1st.
SNDdeN in Ministry  
EDUCATION: NURSERY/PRIMARY/SECONDARY

SNDdeN Schools Proclaim God’s Goodness in Nigeria
By Sr. Christiana Sidi, SNDdeN, Province Education Director

“Education is the most important work on earth,” said St. Julie Billiart. Fifty-six years ago, in 1963, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) responded to St. Julie’s vision to proclaim the goodness of God by coming to teach in Nigeria! No doubt many people continue to benefit and share this unique privilege of being “equipped for life” in all our schools. We educate children irrespective of their ethnic, religious, social or economic backgrounds.

Presently, we, SNDdeN, work in six nursery/primary schools, and six secondary schools across the country. We serve 2,309 pupils in our Nursery/Primary schools (Kindergarten 1-3, Nursery 1-3, Basic one to six) and 1,592 students in the Secondary Schools (Junior School 1-3, Senior Secondary School 1-3). We work with 192 staff members in Nursery/Primary schools, 268 staff members in Secondary Schools. All schools have Sisters as administrators, bursars, and teachers, who work with lay co-workers, inspired by the spirit of Notre Dame and who inculcate in the learners Catholic values and St. Julie’s educational ideals.

We struggle with affordable tuition and fees, to give everyone the opportunity to receive a good education, because most learners come from middle class or low-income earner homes. In spite of our efforts, many families find it hard to pay students’ school fees. Administrators, adjusting lower fees, face the challenge of paying just wages to our co-workers and providing a good education to those living in poverty. The government does not give any subsidy to support “mission” schools; school fees are the major sources of income to meet expenses in our schools. The Congregational Ministry Support Fund helps many schools meet some needs; other individuals and groups support our schools financially, enabling us to carry on the mission.

Our Sisters prepare young children for life in the following schools:
- Sacred Heart Catholic College (Abeokuta, Ogun State)
- St. Joseph’s Nursery/Primary School (Ogwa, Edo State)
- St. Peter’s Nursery/Primary School (Ndeaboh, Enugu State)
- Notre Dame Nursery/Primary School (Ugwumunike, Enugu State)
- St. Michael’s International Nursery/Primary School (Kontagora, Niger State)
- St. Michael’s International Secondary School (Kontagora, Niger State)
- Notre Dame Nursery/Primary School (Akwunanaw, Enugu State)
- Notre Dame Academy (Akwunanaw, Enugu State)
- Our Lady’s Nursery/Primary School (Kulende, Ilorin, Kwara State)
- Our Lady’s Secondary School (Kulende, Ilorin, Kwara State)
- Notre Dame Girls’ Academy (Amoyo, Kwara State)
- Notre Dame Girls’ Academy (Kuje, Abuja State)

The service we provide to those living in poverty, experiencing the transformation that education brings to individuals and society, gives us joy and spurs us on to continue this unique mission of forming young people for life, as did St. Julie Billiart. We must continue to “exist for the poor, absolutely for the poor” (St. Julie Billiart).
Threefold Jubilee in the Congo

Sr. Evelyn McKenna, SNDdeN

On Saturday, August 10, 2019, a memorable and festive “Threefold Jubilee” took place in the Province of Congo-Kinshasa. The festive Mass in Sainte Marie parish church at Kimwenza, attended by numerous Sisters, Associates, Alumnae, family members and friends, was celebrated in typical African fashion with an enthusiastic and talented choir, accompanied by drums and other musical instruments. Dancers enhanced the prayer of all from their beautiful participation in the entrance procession, the Gloria and throughout the Liturgy – praising the Good God for the blessings of so many years. The Mass was followed by a delicious meal shared by all.

125 Years of SNDdeN Mission

The first event to celebrate was the arrival of the first missionaries from Belgium; the second event was the entrance of the first Congolese Sister of Notre Dame de Namur and the third was the 50th Anniversary of the Canonization of St. Julie. The Sisters in the Province commemorated the arrival of the first seven Sisters on July 2, 1894 in Matadi, Congo, 125 years ago. They had sailed from Anvers, Belgium on June 6, 1894. Accompanied by a Jesuit priest and seventy baggage carriers, they left their encampment each day at 6 a.m., walked along the rough route through high grass, woods, and streams of water. After eight days, the Sisters had three days of rest and then, after another week of travel. On foot, and carried by “tipoy,” and by railroad, they finally reached their destination, after an additional fifteen days, in reaching Kimwenza after mid-July. Following this dangerous journey but filled with zeal, they began their work, nurturing the seeds of faith which continue to produce fruit to this day through the ministries of the Sisters currently serving in this country. Today, in the Congo-Kinshasa Province, there are currently 131 professed Sisters and 10 postulants and 3 novices in training to become Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. The median age of province members is 50 and their oldest member is 91 years old.

In the Congo, the Sisters serve in a many ministries, including education of small children, adolescents and college age, in health care in clinics, maternity wards and hospitals, in religious education and pastoral work in parishes, as well as in social services, justice and peace ministry, and formation into religious life. A strong system of education for life and vital health care for the people have been at the heart of this Province. Sisters are teachers, administrators and staff in schools; they are nurses, midwives and nursing assistants in clinics and hospitals.

One Sister is a medical doctor with several others who work in the SND Hospital Rene de Haes on the grounds of the Provincial House at Kimwenza. Our schools, clinics, dispensaries and communities are located in numerous towns and villages in the Province, and our communities include Sisters in the varying ministries.
Congoles SNDdeN

The second event commemorated was the acceptance of the first indigenous Congolese woman into the Sisters of Notre Dame. Sister Marie-Gonzague Mbala entered the Congregation in 1959, paving the way for the dedicated Congolese Sisters who have followed in the footsteps of their foremothers over these past 60 years. Since the beginnings of the “Congolese Branch” of Notre Dame de Namur, the lives and ministries of the Sisters have expanded and Sisters have assumed roles of leadership in local and international ministries, including leadership service. Eight Congolese Sisters have ministered in leadership as Provincials and three Sisters have served in Rome, in leadership of Notre Dame worldwide. In response to calls from the Congregation, some Sisters are now in cross-cultural service, outside their own country, in Belgium, France, Kenya and South Africa.

The third celebratory event marked the 50th Anniversary of the Canonization of St. Julie Billiart by Pope Paul VI on June 22, 1969. This wonderful celebration was an appropriate reminder of God’s ongoing presence with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, past, present and well into the future! Similar celebrations of our Foundress were held in settings throughout the Notre Dame world. The entire Congregation congratulates the Congo-Kinshasa Province for 125 years of service and commitment to the people in difficult times of poverty, political turmoil and unrest. Our Congolese Sisters live out daily the words of St. Julie, (Letter #57) “Now that we have set out on this road let us walk with courage.”

Our SNDdeN Congregation thanks all who contribute to this ongoing life of Mission in the Congo, and support our Congolese Sisters into a new era in this twenty-first century.

Come, join us...

as a Sister (Vowed Member), an Associate or Mission Volunteer!

Twenty-six Associates of Notre Dame de Namur from New England, with a few Sisters, made a week-end retreat, directed by Sr. Anne Stevenson, SNDdeN, in June 2019 at Ipswich, MA. The Associates reflected on Pope Francis’ Apostolic Exhortation, Gaudete et Laudate, A Call to Holiness, and rejoiced in personal calls as individuals, dedicated to Mary, and living in the spirit of St. Julie Billiart. In praying together, reflecting privately and interacting with one another, and the Sisters, the Associates appreciated the strength of their commitment to the Mission of the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and to making known the goodness of God in our world in need of hope.

For more information contact us at: INQUIRY@sndden.org
Notre Dame Celebrates the

50th Anniversary of our St. Julie

Some 2019 ND Jubilarians process to St. Julie’s parish church in Cuvilly, France.

People at St. Julie Church in Eccleston, England viewed displays, after the special Liturgy.

Sisters and families pray at St. Julie Corner in the church in Higashi-Hiroshima, Japan.

The children, people and priest in Breves, Pará, Brazil carry in procession the statue of St. Julie.

Sisters, Associates and priest, in Nigeria, celebrate St. Julie and the 50th Anniversary.

Sisters, Associates and former SNDdeN in New England pray together to St. Julie in Wenham, MA, USA on June 22, 2019!

200 Students from ND Schools in England and Scotland celebrate St. Julie in Rome.

Notre Dame Celebrates the 50th Anniversary of our St. Julie

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
SNDdeN Mission

Sisters of Notre Dame, 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.

The expression of St. Julie Billiart, “How good is the good God!” showed her special gift of unique trust in God. Today Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur on five continents make known God’s goodness.

Africa
Democratic Republic of Congo
Congo
Brazzaville

Asia
Japan

Europe
Belgium
France
Italy
United Kingdom

Latin America
Brazil
Nicaragua
Peru

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

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have gone social…

- 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