“Truly the Lord is in this place!”

Genesis 28: 16
Dear Friends of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur,

As the newly elected Congregational Leadership Team of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, we are honored to serve our Congregation and are delighted to speak to you of our life and mission through Good Works. We are so proud of our Sisters and the many good works they initiate and sustain throughout the world. Of course, we do not work alone. Collaboration is fundamental to the fruitfulness of our ministries. We thank you and all who work with us, accompany us, and pray for us. Together we make known the goodness of God during this time in which many of our sisters and brothers, along with the earth, suffer. The Calls of the 18th General Chapter of our Congregation inspire all of us to “listen to the cries of people living in poverty as well as the cries of Earth.” The Calls also remind us that, like Saint Julie, “our belief in God’s goodness is strengthened by our contemplation of the beauty of Creation, of both humanity and Earth.”

This edition of Good Works illustrates the variety of responses our Sisters are making on behalf of the flourishing of God’s Creation. We ask you to join with us to support our efforts. We are grateful to our donors whose generosity helps to sustain many of our ministries with people living in poverty. Know that we are so grateful to all of you who accompany us in whatever way you are able.

We ask you to pray for us, and we promise to continue to pray for you and your intentions.

Sr. Amarachi Ezeonu, SNDdeN
Sr. Mary Johnson, SNDdeN
Sr. Evalyne Aseyo, SNDdeN
Sr. Miriam Montero, SNDdeN

Sr. Lorraine Connell, SNDdeN
Sr. Patricia Rolinger, SNDdeN

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Editor
Anne Stevenson, SNDdeN
Director of Communications

Photos
SNDdeN and Staff, Congregational Staff, East-West Province Staff

Contact
Telephone
1-978-356-2159 (ext. 214)
e-mail
anne.stevenson@sndden.org
Website
www.sndden.org

Front Cover:
Sr. Patricia Rolinger, SNDdeN recognizes the priority for education on this sacred ground. At Cuvilly Arts and Earth Center, the guiding principle is: “All life is sacred...for the well-being of the planet.” Founded in 1984, Cuvilly is named for the rural birthplace in France of St. Julie Billiart.

Cuvilly Arts and Earth Center: “Sacred Ground”

Sixty Years: “Truly the Lord is in this Place!”

Needed Winds of Change

Centre for Disabled Children in Kenya

Five Younger Women Religious Share Significant Insights
Cuvilly Arts and Earth Center: “Sacred Ground”
By Sr. Mary Alice McCabe, SNDdeN

Cuvilly Arts and Earth Center (CAEC) is one of many creation-centered treasures to be found on the LAND of our Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur in Ipswich, MA. It is sacred ground. Our sister, Patricia Rolinger, SNDdeN, foundress of this Center, states its purpose: “...to have children fall in love with creation so when they grow up they will preserve what they love.”

Pope Francis’ Encyclical, Laudato Si’: Care for Our Common Home, and St. Julie Billiart’s spirit and mission come alive on this property through communion with nature. On this land, named Cuvilly, for Julie’s village birthplace, her never-ending challenge resounds in our time: “Teach the children what they need to know for life.”

In 1984, this captivating Center opened on the premises of a former dairy farm, with the renovated barn that serves currently as a pre-school and kindergarten. The Center includes also a reconstructed 19th century barn, housing a variety of animals, several acres with fields, pastures, woodlands, a pond, gardens and a play yard. Solar panels for generating photovoltaic energy and a wind turbine on the hills supply electricity to the center and some to the town!

Today, when an understanding of ecological issues is critical for the survival of our planet, children especially are able to experience themselves as an integral part of the natural world. At Cuvilly, teachers delight in using the 15- acre campus to provide a variety of learning experiences: gardening, hiking, pond exploration, farm chores and more that stimulate the natural curiosity and creativity of these little children. The guiding principle of Cuvilly is: “All life is sacred and the diversity of life is essential for the well-being of the planet.”

Cuvilly also challenges the wider adult community, by teaching and promoting landscaping for Biodiversity. We are facing now a global crisis because we are damaging the natural world so profoundly that many of its natural systems are on the verge of breaking down. This year, the Center will “dig in” by removing areas of grass and creating habitats that support plants, animals, insects and other pollinators natural to the area.

The Center’s most recent mission is the Cuvilly Ecological Justice Consortium (CEJC), an inclusive gathering of persons and organizations working together to create a movement for ecological justice. CEJC seeks to create “an inclusive, equitable local community space where people deeply reconnect to the earth and grow in their understanding that all species are interconnected and interdependent. Through community building and educational programs for all ages, CEJC teaches and models ecological sustainability, honoring the land and all its inhabitants.”
“Ah! Ha!” Moment
By Sr. Patricia Rolinger, SNDdeN

Shorty after we opened Cuvilly, I had the opportunity to go to the Topsfield Fair where I observed a mother hen caring for her chicks. I was reminded of the reference in Matthew 23, “How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings…” It was then that I decided we should have chickens at Cuvilly to provide a firsthand experience for our students. We organized a big yard sale to raise money to put up a shed for a chicken coop and went about outfitting it with everything chickens would need. Once our state-of-the-art coop was finished, we went to a local hatchery to purchase some chickens and a rooster. In talking with the owner, I told him that I could hardly wait for my hens to hatch out new chicks. He looked at me and said: “Oh, that will never happen. We breed that instinct out of them.” What a shock! How is it possible to breed the basic instinct of survival out of a species? I bought the chickens and rooster anyway determined to prove wrong the chicken farmer.

However, as predicted, the hens laid many eggs but never hatched them out. They also decided that the coop we built was not what they wanted and the hens began to explore the campus, finding for themselves the most suitable habitat – often times in trees. Ten years later and many chickens later (none of which were born here) an amazing event took place. While working around the farm, I heard a sound that I had never heard before – a very distinctive “Peep. Peep” - and out from underneath the chicken coop emerged a mother hen and her chicks! It was at that moment that I realized the instinct to bring new life into the world was not bred out of the chickens but was merely latent. Given the proper environment, the latent instincts are awakened. And that is the mission of Cuvilly!

Every human being is an integral part of the earth community and knows, instinctively, how to live in harmony with it. However, we have developed a culture that has forced these instincts to become latent. Given the proper environment, our instincts will be reawakened.

Cuvilly Arts and Earth Center seeks to create this environment.

Sixty Years: “Truly the Lord is in this Place!”
By Sr. Angele Lewis, SNDdeN

Or more than 60 years, the property of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) in Ipswich, Massachusetts has been sacred ground! On the Feast of the Canonization of St. Julie Billiart, June 22, 2022, the Sisters in the Ipswich Community decided to celebrate the Diamond Anniversary of the SNDdeN in this sacred place in Ipswich, MA. In a Jubilee Liturgy reflection, they recalled the history, heritage and significance for this “Year of Favor from the Lord.”

What a treasure of God’s goodness has this property been for over sixty years! (1962-2022). Acquired in 1959, this land with its mansion, a carriage house, a dairy barn and vast property of acreage has been a sanctuary for all life, since July 4, 1962. Not only all the of trees, bushes, varying plant life with a multiplicity of animals and species of bird life have inhabited this land but the thousands of persons who have shared in this awesome beauty of Creation. With the opening of the new buildings on the property in a move of the SNDdeN Massachusetts Province Center from Waltham to Ipswich, MA, Sisters, Associates, Co-Workers, teachers, students, alumnae/alumni from our schools and colleges, other Religious Congregations and other educational, health and social care groups have occupied this building and property.

Also, our families and friends have been blessed and inspired by the river of prayer and grace flowing from this center of prayer and reflection at the heart of this place.
international, national and province groups of SNDdeN.
The Cuvilly Arts and Earth Center, previously a Reading Center, is since 1984 a pre-school, kindergarten, a farm, barns for animal shelters and chickens, gardens for plants and spices and open space play-yard “classrooms” for the children, with solar panels and a wind-turbine for electricity. On this property, there is also the acreage of watersheds, marshlands, wetlands, natural springs, bridging the water, with flowers, fauna and multiple species of birds.

A Province Strategic Plan in 2005, projected a Land Ethic including putting in reserve some acreage of the property. In 2013, 74.6 acres of the land bridging the ocean marshes was sold in a Land Trust to the County Greenbelt Society. Also more recently, the Province leased some acres for a farm in collaboration with the Three Sisters Project in the Town of Ipswich. This enables the town to keep the ecological balance in helping with the produce to reach out to residents in the area and those in need in the Food Centers. This farm occupies about 15 acres at the front of the property of Jeffrey’s Neck Road.

“Truly, the Lord is in this Place”

Today this chapel and the thousands of Eucharistic Liturgies celebrated here have also energized and inspired those in Education, Formation, Leadership, Spirituality, Health Care and more. This is and will continue to be a place of transformation and healing to people for many years.

This holy place symbolizes also our Notre Dame ministry as contemplatives in action, and gives testimony to all our Sisters who are “building of a dwelling place of God,” with and for others. Through our Mission with Associates, Mission Volunteers, Co-Workers and Partners in Mission, our lives and works continue from here to proclaim the goodness of God today and for future generations and throughout the globe! This sacred place give witness to an ONGOING LOVE STORY of the Gospel Mission, the Mission of the Church and our Congregation.
Needed Winds of Change
By Sr. Joan Burke, SNDdeN

Remember our surprise at hearing the name of the person chosen to replace Pope John Paul II: Jorge de Bogolio! a prelate from Argentina! And again, shock/surprise in learning that a Jesuit had chosen the name Pope Francis after the Poverello of Assisi! Amazing details soon came to light: he had lived in an apartment, cooked his own meals, rode to work as an Archbishop in a commuter train! he spent his free time with people living in poverty of the barrios! Our imaginations were stretched…

The New York Times compared his first official letter The Joy of the Gospel (2013) to Martin Luther King's “I have a dream speech.” Pope Francis challenged his priests “to smell like their sheep” and compared the Church to “God's field hospital for the sick and marginalized.” And then in 2015, he published another document that called his flock, and the whole world community to wake up to Care for our Common Home. While for some, the dramatically different style of Francis, preferring the title "Bishop of Rome" to Pope, signaled a radical shift that seemed all too much, especially for some highly placed ecclesiastical leaders. A few of them who even dared to suggest he was a heretic!

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and Laudato Si’

For SNDdeN, Francis's style was reminiscent of that of St. Julie Billiart, our Foundress. When her sisters were on retreat, Julie became the house cook. She cautioned her sisters not to picture themselves going to heaven in a carriage; they were to walk! She herself, in her 50s and 60s, walked hundreds of miles visiting her sisters in Northern France and Belgium. While crisscrossing the countryside, and during rest stops, she wrote letters to her sisters, chiding them to be certain they had sufficient bread and wine (!) in their larders. She also urged them to delight in the wonders of nature all around them. Despite living surrounded by the violence of revolutionary France, the villagers described her as the “smiling Saint.”

No wonder Francis's call to the entire Human Family to unite and engage with others in addressing climate change resonated with SNDs, as also their Associates, their students and Alumni. Like St. Julie, Francis in his letter, Care of our Common Home (its opening words in Latin, Laudato Si’ from the beginning of Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Sun), invited us to be attentive to the “Cries of the Earth” and the “Cries of the Poor.”

A group of committed Christians soon culled from the document seven key agenda points:

1. Response to the cries of the Earth and those of the poor
2. Ecological economics
3. Sustainable lifestyles
4. Ecological education
5. Ecological spirituality
6. Community resilience
7. Empowerment

Climate justice challenges all sectors of the Church to make a seven-year commitment to address these goals across the various sectors: families, parishes and dioceses, schools and universities, businesses and farms, religious congregations, and hospitals and other health care facilities. SNDdeN were ready to respond. They had already made social justice a key dimension of all their ministries.

Laudato Si’ Action Platform

The Roman Office for Integral Human Development offered to facilitate action-oriented plans for participating entities and serve as a clearing house for resources. This became known as the Laudato Si’ Action Platform (LSAP). Across the congregation SNDdeN were eager to join with others to build an international grass-roots movement to address the urgency of the climate justice agenda. They recognize the commitment and leadership of the world's youth who have become impatient, even exasperated, by the slow response of governments and corporate actors. To effect enduring change, it is crucial that everyone take dramatic steps recognizing the existential threat, and shouldering their responsibility for the problem and undertake needed solutions.

By Sr. Joan Burke, SNDdeN

Pope Francis accepts gift from an indigenous person.

Pope Francis join Laudato Si’ young adults for a "Selfie."
Action Plans for SNDdeN Provinces

The East-West Province in the US is developing a plan to focus their efforts on:

1. Education
2. Land use and exploitation
3. Adopting sustainable life-styles and practices

The Ohio Province already has fine-tuned their plan to focus on fossil fuels, clean water and plastics. The over-all aim is to develop a deeper understanding of our ecological responsibility and join others in ‘walking the talk’ and build a movement resulting in systemic change. Groups of NDdeN Associates have also organized educational sessions and demonstrated their own eagerness to commit themselves to the agenda of the Laudato Si’ Action Platform.

Climate change – like most of today’s challenges - is no respecter of arbitrary human borders. As the Covid-19 pandemic so tragically demonstrated, “No one is protected until all are protected.” During the last thirty years many political and corporate leaders chose to deny and turn a deaf ear to the warnings and mounting scientific evidence. They can no longer feign being deaf and dumb to excuse the consequences of their irresponsible inaction. All of us must join arms to live the change that is needed and pressure those maintaining the status quo to respond to the

Cries of the Earth and the Cries of the Poor ~ of all peoples of this planet, our Common Home.

Come, join us...

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

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur serve in a variety of ministries on five continents. We welcome women from many cultures to bring the Gospel Mission through education, health care, parish ministries, catechesis, social services...etc. In our world torn by inequality and divisions in society, we make known the goodness of God to give hope to this generation in our time.

For more information contact us at: INQUIRY@sndden.org
Centre for Disabled Children in Kenya

By Sr. Mary Akinyi, SNDdeN

As Program Coordinator of Songa Mbele na Masomo Children’s Centre, I do my ministry in this community based centre which opened in 2009 and began operations in 2010 in the Mukuru Slum, in Nairobi City.

The Mission of Songa Mbele is to reduce illiteracy, dependency and improve health care among children, living with disabilities and vulnerable children, in Mukuru Slums. The teachers provide education, promote health care and development.

The Centre has an annual Exit Program for the transition of children to other schools/institutions which offer more specialised programs for the children. Depending on their differing conditions and ages, children are transitioned to mainstream, special schools or skills centres.

Children with severe disabilities stay longer at the Centre and they undergo therapy services with a physiotherapist and an occupational therapist. There is also a feeding program whereby we feed children with the help of the caregivers and teachers. The children eat a balanced diet with high nutritional value in order to boost their immunity.

A fun day for children - DISABILITY IS NOT INABILITY.

Discrimination Against Children with Disabilities

In African towns and cities, a child with disabilities is sometimes considered as a curse or shame. Some children with disabilities are often discriminated against and are hidden in their houses while others are abandoned by their families who consider them as burdens. Some parents deny them basic rights to healthcare, food, education and even the right to play and interact with other children. This leads to stigmatization and they grow up, withdrawn from their peers. These children cannot fit in regular schools and have no options or opportunity for education or well-being. They are unable to explore their talents or abilities.

Due to the extreme poverty that has engulfed Mukuru Slum, the parents are unable to meet the special needs of their children. The children living with disabilities have a huge risk of negligence, abuse, malnutrition, and opportunistic diseases. Most parents are single mothers who were abandoned by their families or spouses and they have nobody to help them take care of the children, as they seek work in casual jobs. Therefore, left with no other alternatives, some mothers lock their children in the house, and risk their lives in leaving them alone. In order to save the situation, Songa Mbele takes care of these disabled children during the day, as the parents look for jobs to provide an income for putting food on the table. Without the Centre, the households with children with disabilities in Mukuru Slums would face double challenges as they search for employment, while leaving children alone at that time. The conditions of the children would also deteriorate extremely. This explains the great need to continue operations with the Songa Mbele Na Masomo Children Centre as it offers opportunities for the children living with disabilities and supports their parents in managing daily conditions and needs.

Through the Centre we promote children’s rights to education, affection, good health and other basic needs.
Five Younger Women Religious Share Significant Insights
By Sr. Angele Lewis, SNDdeN

On September 27, 2022, the International Union of Superiors General (UISG) offered a global webinar on “The Economy of Francesco: Bringing a Soul to the Economy.” This webinar features the testimonies of five younger women religious experiences of the September 24 meeting in Assisi, Italy, where Pope Francis and young people signed the #Economy of Francesco Pledge.

SEPTEMBER 24TH IN ASSISI: THE PLEDGE

The Pope and young “economists, entrepreneurs, changemakers, students and workers, called here to Assisi from every part of the world, aware of the responsibility that rests on our generation, commit ourselves today, individually and all collectively to spending our lives so that the economy of today and tomorrow becomes an economy of the Gospel…”

The pledge contains 12 integral directions to resolve. The one-page document acknowledges: “We believe in this economy. It is not a utopia, because we are already building it. And some of us, on particularly bright mornings, have already glimpsed the beginning of the promised land.”

Pope Francis spoke these words after signing the pledge: “Sustainability, after all, is a multidimensional word. In addition to the environmental one, there are also the social, relational and spiritual dimensions.”

Let this be… “A map for the journey ahead. Three directions: look at the world with the eyes of the poorest, do not forget about the workers, and translate values into concrete works.” ~ Pope Francis, September 24, 2022

SEPTEMBER 27TH WEBINAR

Patrizia Morgante, UISG Communications, was the moderator and provided a general introduction to the Economy of Francesco (www.francescoeconomy.org) with the assistance of Sr. Shelia Kinsey (www.SowingHopeforthePlanet.org) and a lay woman, Marion Delpon, who advocates for victims of human trafficking (www.TalithaKum.org).

“It is not easy to be young today. We must find creative ways to participate in today’s challenges. We are not alone: we are called to build, all together, something new starting from the Economy of Francesco.” ~ Marion

Two SNDdeN Among Five Sisters Represent the UISG in Assisi
- Sr. Mary Pabor Nanadeinotuemi, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
- Sr. Juliana Khaisia Shivonje, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
- Sr. Claudia Maria Mundo, Franciscan Sisters of St. Philippa Mareri
- Sr. Anu Anet Lepcha, Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary, known as the Loreto Sisters
- Sr. Mariana Eva, Congregatio Jesu Sisters

“We are invited to use Finances as a source of wealth adapting them to the needs of all people.”
~ Sr. Mary, SNDdeN, Nigeria

“As women, in society we must challenge current policies by promoting sustainable relationships.”
~ Sr. Juliana, SNDdeN, Kenya

“Francesco’s economy is this: it is a family economy where there is no room for wars, but there is room for diversity where everyone gives their contribution and enriches all who are listening.”
~ Sr. Marina Eva
“Pope Francis’ invitation to the International Congregations of Women and Men to become part of his climate initiative has allowed the religious orders to invite their educational ministries to engage their students in this project. Two of our Sisters, (Juliana and Mary) from Kenya and Nigeria, took part in the group of several hundred people who traveled to Assisi to interact with the people who live in local villages in that area. After their time together, a zoom meeting opened their project to the wider audience of all the religious congregations and allowed us to hear about their experience and go forth to continue the initiative locally.”
~ Sr. Maria Delaney, SNDdeN, USA

“Youth are not the future, but the PRESENT. They are called to make a positive change.”
~ Sr. Teresa Anyabuike, SNDdeN, Nigeria

“And they said one to another, did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures?” (Lk. 24:32)
And I am grateful, energized, and challenged to learn about the Economy of Francesco.”
~ Sr. Angele Lewis, SNDdeN, USA

This webinar attracted over 200 participants throughout the two-hour program. Comments ranged from surprise, awe, possibility, dreaming God’s dream, look what happens when one is welcomed, accompanied, promoted, and integrated!

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur also commented and shared hopes from this webinar

Support Our Mission

Your donations support and sustain our worldwide Mission on five continents.

The Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) is a charitable institution with 501©3 status in the United States. Contributions support our Mission in a variety of ministries across the world.

How to support our Mission?
- Give Charitable Gift Annuities
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For more information, please contact:
Sister Leonore Coan, SNDdeN
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur Congregational Mission Office
30 Jeffreys Neck Road
Ipswich, MA 01938 USA
coan@sndden.org

Website: www.sndden.org
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur 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
Peru

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

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• Share in our hope
• Rejoice in God’s goodness

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