“All things work together for good, for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose.”

Romans 8:28
Dear Friends of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur,

With joy, we, the SNDdeN Congregational Leadership Team designate February 2, 2024 to February 2, 2025 as a Year of Grace and Blessing. A spark fell from the heart of the good God into the heart of Julie, "A woman who knew how to believe and how to love." That spark burns today through her Sisters, Associates, Collaborators and Friends in Mission and all persons with whom we walk every day. This great gift encourages us as a Congregation to recognize and celebrate the goodness and wonders of God in us, our ministries and our mission. We invite you to join us in this Year of Grace and Blessing.

Our world is fragmented by wars, climate change, and social, political and economic crises. In this reality, we are blessed as our good God calls us to renew our life and commitment, and to accompany one another by listening with our hearts. From this listening in the Spirit, we are able to radiate goodness and light, to let God’s grace transform reality, creating new paths of life and peace.

Lent is a time of grace and blessing in our hearts. The Pope invites us to return to what is essential, in an interior journey, to discover that God loves us with eternal love. May this inner pilgrimage prepare us to celebrate the Resurrection at Easter in different ways which generate life in abundance.

Friends, we are grateful for your generous support for the mission of Notre Dame around the world. We are daily in communion with you through prayer.

Gratefully,

Sr. Amarachi Ezeonu, SNDdeN
Sr. Mary Johnson, SNDdeN
Sr. Miriam Montero, SNDdeN
Sr. Lorraine Connell, SNDdeN

On The Vulcania ~ (left to right) Sisters Eleanor Joseph Delaney, Claire Marie Murphy, Genevieve Mary O’Driscoll, Mary Daniel Turner, Alice Gertrude Keating, Loretto Julia Carroll, Magdalena Shelley and Anne Louise Schlitt.

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Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

We Rejoice in 175 Years in New England

By Nancy Barthelemy, East-West Province Archivist for New England

On November 10, 1849, three Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur arrived in Boston from Cincinnati, Ohio to take over the St. Mary's Parish School in the North End of Boston, MA. As was common then, the Sisters wore lay dresses for travel. Aware of the anti-Catholic sentiments in the United States, the Sisters had good cause for wishing to remain anonymous. Their habits were stowed safely away in a valise. In the confusion of a bustling train station, they left their bags unattended for a short time, just long enough for them to be stolen. The next morning, they wore white bonnets and shawls to attend St. Mary's Children's Mass and Sunday School. The level of noise and confusion among the teachers and, consequently, the children offered the Sisters their first view of the big challenge ahead in choosing as a priority education at all levels.

First School with Childcare in MA

With the influx of Irish immigrants desperately seeking work, word spread to nearby cities of the success of those first Sisters at St. Mary’s. In 1852, the pastor of St. Patrick’s Church in Lowell asked Sisters to open the next Notre Dame school. Those Sisters faced an enormous challenge. Most of the city’s 11,000 Catholics worked in the local textile mills. It did not take long for Sr. Desiree Erculisse, the Superior of the Community, to realize that many children were unable to attend school because they cared for their younger siblings while their parents worked. After “much scheming,” this wise SNDdeN opened what was surely the first childcare center in the United States in 1853. Sister Desiree’s outreach to immigrants and those living in poverty soon became legendary in Massachusetts.

In 1853, the Sisters opened the Boston Academy on Lancaster Street, (moving to Berkley Street in 1862 and the Fenway in 1914), and they opened the Academy of Notre Dame in Roxbury in 1854. They were invited to Salem parishes on the North Shore of Boston beginning in 1855. Schools in Lawrence, East Boston and South Boston soon followed. In 1867, they moved into western Massachusetts to found the Holy Name School in Chicopee. Five years later, they took over the parish school at St. John’s in Worcester and in 1877, they opened Sacred Heart School in Springfield.

Sisters Open Night Schools for Day-Laboring Children

Recognizing the prevalence of child labor, the Sisters opened Night Schools in several cities to educate children who might wish to learn after their day’s work. In Boston, they also opened an Industrial School to teach various skills to girls as an alternative to mill work. In addition to their schoolwork, the Sisters began Sodalities, not only to offer religious education to girls and young women, but also to raise funds for those in need.

In 1965, hundreds of Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur celebrated the blessing and opening of the new Notre Dame Academy in Hingham, MA – the merger school of all our Academies founded in Boston and Roxbury (Lancaster and Berkley Streets, the Fenway, Roxbury and Grandby Street).
In 1924, they were invited far beyond the borders of the USA to Japan to take over a girls’ school from the Sisters of the Infant Jesus. In 1931, they joined England and Belgium in opening a Notre Dame school for poor children in Rome, Italy. During WWII, Sisters in both missions endured severe hardships to survive in those war-torn areas. In 1946, the Sisters were invited to be administrators and teachers at Star of the Sea School in Honolulu, Hawaii. In 1958, there were 1,257 Sisters in the MA Province. Fifty years after the Sisters opened St. Teresa’s in Providence, Rhode Island, they expanded their Missions into Connecticut, beginning with Assumption Parish in Westport in 1941. Almost every year afterward, they opened new schools across the state. The next fifty years brought another 24 Notre Dame schools in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

In 1952, St. Teresa High School students in Providence, Rhode Island enjoy the visit with the SNDdeN Belgian Mother General and her General Councillor from Rome. Left to right: Sr. Anne Denise Neylon, Principal, Mère Josépha de St François Van den Eede and Sr. Maura Lynch.

**Expanding Schools and Ministries in New England**

In 1891, the Sisters broke new ground by expanding beyond Massachusetts to open St. Teresa’s in Providence, Rhode Island. By 1900, there were 32 Notre Dame Schools in New England. In each of the parishes where the Sisters taught, they were responsible for Religious Education as well as many pastoral duties. With the rising enrollment at the original Notre Dame Academy on Berkeley Street, the SNDdeN purchased land on The Fenway in Boston in 1912. This new building housed first Notre Dame Academy, Boston in 1914. With the need for a Catholic College for Women in New England, the Sisters opened Emmanuel College on The Fenway to 27 eager young women in September 1919.

**Vision for Health Care**

With the labor of teaching hundreds of children, many Sisters needed not only rest, but medical care. And so, in 1900, the Sisters opened Notre Dame du Lac in Worcester, which was to be a rest home for the Sisters. In 1930, the Leadership in MA Province bought Villa Immaculata in Leominster, also as a place of rest for Sisters who had contracted tuberculosis. Among the Sisters who recovered there were Sr. Loretto Julia Carroll, Provincial Superior later in the MA and CT Provinces, and the first American Superior General in the Congregation. Sr. Vincent de Paul Curran, who found healing in the mountain air Leominster, created the magnificent art work in the new building and chapel opened in 1962 in Ipswich, MA.

**Missions Around the Globe and in More States**

Sisters from the Massachusetts Province became known as great educators in New England. In 1924, they were invited far beyond the borders of the USA to Japan to take over a girls’ school from the Sisters of the Infant Jesus. In 1931, they joined England and Belgium in opening a Notre Dame school for poor children in Rome, Italy. During WWII, Sisters in both missions endured severe hardships to survive in those war-torn areas. In 1946, the Sisters were invited to be administrators and teachers at Star of the Sea School in Honolulu, Hawaii. In 1958, there were 1,257 Sisters in the MA Province. Fifty years after the Sisters opened St. Teresa’s in Providence, Rhode Island, they expanded their Missions into Connecticut, beginning with Assumption Parish in Westport in 1941. Almost every year afterward, they opened new schools across the state. The next fifty years brought another 24 Notre Dame schools in Connecticut and Rhode Island.

In 1951, they opened a parish school in Exeter, New Hampshire. Soon after they began schools in Salem and Nashua, NH. During those years, 15 more schools were also founded in Massachusetts in new cities, as well as in communities where they had served for decades. When some schools closed in the mid to late 20th century, the Sisters maintained their presence in those communities by opening new missions focused mostly on the needs of immigrants which continue to this day.

In 2019, Emmanuel College held a major Liturgy and Banquet to rejoice in the 100th Anniversary of Higher Education on the Fenway in Boston! Ad Multos Annos!
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) became Pioneers in America in the early years of independence, even before the Civil War, begun in 1860. The Belgian Sisters in Namur had feared that a country with 80 years of independence would be civilized enough to protect women from another continent. In 1840, four Belgian Sisters arrived in Cincinnati Ohio to open a school. A visiting Bishop, meeting these SNDdeN in 1845, begged them to come to Boston to help in educating hundreds of immigrants flowing into the city. In November 1849, the Sisters in Cincinnati had enough Sisters to send some from Ohio to Boston. The SNDdeN became the first Religious Congregation to arrive in Boston, after the 1834 burning of the Ursuline school and convent. Today, we celebrate these pioneers and the sacrifices they made to build a strong educational system during these 175 years in New England, and in living out their mission to “Proclaim the Goodness of God”.

Reaching Out to Educate Immigrants
The Sisters initially endured primitive living conditions in run down houses where they usually shared space with their schools. The pollution in the growing cities and the unsanitary environments and poor food led to many health issues. After setting up a school in the North End of Boston, the Sisters immediately established day and night schools throughout Boston to accommodate the growing population. The immigrants provided a labor force for the local industries, and neighboring cities and towns welcomed them. The Sisters followed the working class by opening schools in these many mill towns. The SNDdeN extended their teaching to those towns and cities not only in Greater Boston but also north and west of the city.

Harassment of Catholics
In this time of religious persecution, the Sisters became the victims of the “Know Nothings,” vigilantes, attacking Catholics. In the 1850s, they experienced two major confrontations with this group. First in Lowell, a group accosted the Sisters to frighten them enough to force them to leave the city. These men backed away when confronted by a strong-willed Irish woman, who emerged as the Sisters’ protector. In Roxbury, 24 men forced their way into the Academy of Notre Dame convent under the guise of making sure that no students were being held captive. The local newspaper publicized this invasion and took the side of the Sisters by criticizing the group’s constant harassment of Catholics. This publicized incident served to turn the local populace against the perpetrators. The Know Nothings began to fade away.

Expanding Dioceses into New England
When the Sisters arrived in the North End, Boston was the only Catholic Diocese in New England. During the 1800s and 1900s, new Dioceses evolved and Bishops invited the SNDdeN to establish schools throughout New England. As more women answered the call to become Sisters, SNDdeN opened schools in Rhode Island and Connecticut. Later, New Hampshire, Maine and Vermont welcomed the Sisters into leadership positions in schools and parishes. In these 175 year history, the trust and perseverance of the Pioneer Sisters, enabled them to face obstacles and challenges and to remain courageously where they were need. The SNDdeN are still the longest serving Religious Congregation of Women in the Archdiocese of Boston.

The Sisters’ 175 year legacy lives on in St. Patrick School in Lowell (1852), in all the merged Notre Dame Academies of Boston, (begun in 1853, now in Hingham), Academy of Notre Dame Tyngsboro (begun in Lowell in 1854), Emmanuel College (1919) in Boston, Notre Dame Academy in Worcester (1951), Cuvilly Arts and Earth Pre-School, (1973), Julie’s Family Learning Program (1974), Notre Dame Cristo Rey High School (2004) in Methuen. We have also Notre Dame Long Term Care Center in Worcester (present on site since 1900). Countless Sisters still serve in schools, parishes and social service agencies throughout New England.

We invite ALL to join in the celebrations of the 175 Anniversary in MA and CT during 2024!

For more info visit: www.snddeneastwest.org/175NE

Story of Paciotti Mission

For 84 years, 1931-2015, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur educated thousands of children on the site of our former school in Paciotti, Rome. God called our foundress, St. Julie Billiart, to spread the news of God’s goodness to the ends of the earth through the ministry of education, especially among children who were disadvantaged by poverty in any of its many manifestations. Our Italian Sisters with others from Belgium, Britain and the United States gave quality education to little children, middle schoolers and adolescents for more than 70 years.

“We are called to share our charism and mission as they energize collaborators and friends, and inspire new forms of association.” CALLS 18th General Chapter (2021, p. 3)
Living the Charism of St. Julie Billiart

By Lynne Clarkin, ANDdeN, Associate for 49 Years

In September 1970, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) entered my life in Ipswich, MA. St. Joseph's Parish sent all teachers to the SNDdeN convent to learn “how” to teach catechetics from our instructor, Sr. Catherine St. Andrew Griffiths. Never having met a “nun” before, this new experience brought Sisters into my life as friends. Answering an ad weeks later in the Ipswich Chronicle, I signed up for Art Classes in the evening at the convent. Leaving my four young children at home in bed, I met Sr. Vincent de Paul Curran, who opened a whole new world of creativity and spirituality to me! What an introduction to the goodness of God shining through these Sisters! No wonder I fell in love! That was only the beginning of learning and being a part!

Origins in New England

In June 1975, the Ipswich Province invited interested women and Sisters to a meeting at Emmanuel College in Boston, MA to explore the possibility of beginning a Program of Association in Notre Dame de Namur. SNDdeN desiring to accompany these 12 women included both Sisters Catherine and Vincent de Paul and more SNDdeN from other communities in MA! In another beginning, all 12 of us met St. Julie Billiart, her charism and her Mission.

Sister Sponsors and Guidelines

For two years, we studied the Guidelines for Associates. Our Sister Sponsors reflected guided us as we studied the charism and Mission of St. Julie and found ways to make known God’s goodness in our daily lives. What a wonder-filled blessing! Who are Associates of Notre Dame de Namur (ANDdeN)? We are both women and men, married or single, who are called by God to identify with and to live St. Julie’s charism, in partnership with the SNDdeN. Sr. Vincent de Paul became my Sister-Sponsor as well as my art mentor and friend. She designed the Associate symbol which I still wear proudly. Of the “original” Associates, who made an Act of Consecration on May 22, 1977, receiving this AND symbol, only two of us are still alive and living the charism. Theresa Swain is an Associate of Prayer and I am still active in multiple ways.

Associates’ Early Projects

In 1985, the Sisters and Associates in the Ipswich Province created and designed together a Perpetual Calendar (now out of print) with the sayings of St. Julie for each day of the year. These “words” of St. Julie from that calendar are still posted daily on First Class (SND News).

Also, in 1986, Sisters were asking for a medal of St. Julie. At the request of the Province Leadership, I had an opportunity to honor our SAINT who has blessed us all, Associates and Sisters! The medal cast made its own design! I drew a cross imbedded on earth and cut out the piece of paper, laying it on my table. A breeze flipped the paper over and voilà, there was the portrait of St. Julie! This medal, struck in silver, has been used in past years by the Associates of California and formerly as a medal for Postulants in Kenya.

SNDdeN International

In 1990, the SNDdeN General Chapter met in Ipswich with Sister Delegates from all the Provinces! The General Chapter welcomed Associates from the local area as observers. I was so excited that I signed my name to “observe” one morning. I was the only observer when Sr. Ellen Gielty, General Moderator, invited me to introduce myself to the Assembly! I managed to say my name and an Associate from Ipswich! Being present at this holy and unique gathering touched me deeply, to the center of my being! The Holy Spirit inspired me that afternoon to take a full sheet of watercolor paper, a large lamp shade to draw the

Theresa Swain and Lynne Clarkin, ANDdeN, first Associates in the USA, celebrate 49 years as Associates in 2024!
circle and watercolor paints to design the Chapter Mandala, a visible prayer! On the following morning, Sr. Jan Bohn presented the Mandala to the Sisters in the Chapter, as a symbol of unity among Sisters and Associates, together in prayer. All the DELEGATES signed the Mandala which still hangs in the Social Hall at Ipswich, as a global sharing in God's goodness!

Many Sisters and Associates of Notre Dame have touched my life over these many years! We pass on a legacy together! During my Associate lifetime, almost 50 years, I have connected with Associates and Sisters mostly in the in the Northeast and in California, where I lived for almost 13 years! I have connected also with a thriving community of Associates in Alabama. The Ipswich facility houses international offices, so that Sisters from many continents meet there at times. I had the opportunity to get to know and even entertain at holidays Sisters from different Provinces, states and countries. Also, the Associate Coordinators from many states have come for meetings or retreats.

In the East-West Province, we are over 400 Associates and growing by leaps and bounds! There are also Associates in many States in the USA, as well as in Brazil, Kenya, and Nigeria. This partnership opens the way to reach a broader population, expressing God's goodness as daughters and sons of St. Julie! Each Associate, making a commitment, has a unique calling. Yet, we are ONE in our relationship with the SNDdeN internationally. A sense of belonging, being part of a wider world with the Sisters, Associates, Co-Workers and Partners in Mission has become a reality in my life as an Associate.

I experience a UNITY with all these “hearts, wide as the world,” and living out the charism of St. Julie and the Mission of the Congregation.
A dream came true for the people and for the Catholic Church! On 10 October 2023, a beautiful and joyful morning, the new Notre Dame Hospital in Awkunanaw, Enugu opened officially. Many people arrived at the hospital compound for the Liturgy and Blessing. Most Reverend Callistus V. Onaga, Bishop of Enugu Diocese, celebrated the Opening Eucharistic Liturgy in the presence of about twenty priests, many women and men religious, faithful lay people, and the students from our Notre Dame Academy in Awkunanaw. The Bishop commended the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) for “bringing health care to the doorstep of the local people,” and for their good works, in many ministries in the Diocese. After the Liturgy, the Bishop proceeded through the building, assisted by other priests in sprinkling the rooms, the equipment and the Staff, including the Sisters and their Co-Workers, in this special Blessing at the new hospital.

Quality Affordable Care for Low Income Families

The Mission of the new hospital is to offer affordable health care services for low income families, and particularly to deliver effective and efficient maternal and child care services to the community. Its vision for new life is to ensure that mother and child are safe and healthy from conception to delivery. As well as maternal and child care, the hospital services the medical/health needs of low-income earners by providing quality and affordable hospital care services for the general population in the area, especially for women and children. This is a great need because the nearest affordable medical hospital is located more than five miles from the residential areas. This hospital is also a referral/emergency healthcare for the students at Notre Dame Academy, Awkunanaw. The core values of this hospital are respect, compassion and commitment to the people.

“Good Health is Our Priority”

The management at Notre Dame Hospital includes Sisters and lay Co-Workers:

- Sr. Eugenia Osueke, SNDdeN, Administrator Head
- Mrs. Ude Juliet, Matron
- Sr. Juliana Aneke, SNDdeN, Accountant
- Sr. Ijeoma Okoye, SNDdeN, Pharmacist
- Mrs. Anosike Pamela, Head of Laboratory Department

On Staff, there are two physicians, five nurses, two lab technicians, two cashiers, two Medical Records keepers, three pharmacy technicians and three housekeeping personnel and two security officers who keep the compound safe.

Sr. Eugenia Osueke, SNDdeN, Administrator of Notre Dame Hospital oversees the smooth running of the hospital, with all the Staff in human and resource management. Her responsibility is to manage and insure that all the departments have what they need to be effective and efficient, in giving the best medical and health care possible, in 24 hours of service. The hospital administers different tests: malaria, typhoid, liver function, blood sugar tests, cultures and sensitivity, and includes also pregnancy and blood group, genotype and lipid profile tests. The hospital still needs an expensive electrolyte machine for testing.

Dr. Mamah Malachy, the head physician, began her practice in the newly-opened hospital in September 2023. She prides this well-organized and well-equipped hospital, as one of the best private hospitals in Enugu. She considers the hospital facilities as among the best in the South-East Region of Nigeria. The staff-management relationship and care of patients can be compared to heath care with and among family
members or good neighbors. With joy and pride, Sr. Malachy recommend Notre Dame Hospital Enugu to her friends and family.

**Sr. Ijeoma Okoye, SNDdeN**, the hospital pharmacist, assisted in this department by **Sr. Mary Olikagu, SNDdeN** respond to the demands of daily operations. They work with the pharmacy technicians and in collaboration with other healthcare givers for the smooth running of the hospital. They insure that patients receive **optimal pharmaceutical care delivery on a daily basis**.

The first patient whom we met in late September 2023 was a 27-year old pregnant woman who was in a difficult time in a painful pregnancy. In this pre-natal visit, they were to dispense routine drugs to assist her. **Sisters Ijeoma and Mary, like our Foundress, St. Julie Billiart**, give preference to women and children.

As well as ordering quality medications, the pharmacy department also provides services in drug dispensing and information services, medicine management, patient counseling and other Pharmaceutical Care activities to day patients.

A three-story building, formerly used as a hostel for the boys at Notre Dame Academy, and transformed later into the hospital. Since its opening, the Notre Dame Hospital has seen and treated more than two hundred patients/clients and has assisted mothers in safe deliveries of new babies.

**With our Co-Workers in Health Care and with all who staff or service Notre Dame Hospital in Enugu, we glorify our good God in thanksgiving for this new ministry in Nigeria!**
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
Kenya
Nigeria
South Africa
Zimbabwe
Japan

Europe
Belgium
France
Italy
United Kingdom

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

South America
Brazil
Peru

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have gone social…

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- 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