New Generation Meets St. Julie Billiart

“...that their hearts may be encouraged, as they are brought together in love...”

Colossians 2:2
Dear Friends of Notre Dame de Namur,

Daniel James Brown, editor and historian, is the author of THE BOYS IN THE BOAT. His Documentary renders an inspiring account of concentrated, determined, selfless collaboration of Washington State University’s Rowing Crew.

The short stories in this issue of Good Works are also living examples of collaboration. Our Sisters, their colleagues, and partners share a common aim, purpose and vision rooted in the Gospels and common mission of Notre Dame de Namur. Teachers and Health Care providers work together tirelessly, day after day, offering a broad spectrum of education and information adults and children need to “have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Collaboration thrives when the common aim, purpose and vision of life are clear. The rowing crew collaborated to “bring home the Gold” from the 1936 Olympics. In the process, the boys grew into the needed balance of using their individual gifts and strengths, along with humility and selfless cooperation for the sake of teamwork.

This edition of Good Works features educators in schools and health care centers whose ministry exceeds a single event’s gold prize. Notre Dame de Namur’s international collaboration reflects the words of St. Julie, “Teach them what they need to know for life”, a life that will always include stewardship and giving back to the community so that others grow, thrive, and participate in the life-giving cycle of giving-receiving-giving.

Collaboration is inclusive, enabling all people to move forward together as global citizens.

Thank you, dear Friends, for your focused collaboration with Notre Dame de Namur. Thank you for your prayer and support that enable ministers to “stay the course”, and those with whom we minister to exercise her/his right to live humanity to the full!

In God’s Goodness,

Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader

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In this fall semester, Notre Dame Seishin University (NDSU) in Okayama, Japan will offer a new course called Christian Study VII which explores the theme of “Living the Spirit of St. Julie Billiart in a Global Society.” This special course consists of lectures by five Sisters of Notre de Namur from the U.S. and will be conducted as online hybrid classes. The President of the University, Sr. Aoi Tsuda, SNDdeN and I, Professor Shusuke Kobayashi, are coordinating the course.

**Purpose of Course**
The purpose of the course is twofold. It is designed to give students an opportunity to become familiar with the spirit of St. Julie, and universal values beyond time and place, that is, the pleasures of living in the grace of God and serving people in need. The course will also help students consider problems in our global society and then reflect on how they could contribute individually to the solution of such problems.

**Educational Philosophy for Students**
How did we come to conceptualize this course? We want our students to broaden their perspectives and widen their hearts by fully understanding our educational philosophy and its background. Our school is one in a long line of educational missions of St. Julie. Her Charism, which was God’s gift and blessing, has been passed on and is living today in educational practices all over the world.

Students will come to realize that our school is and has been a part of a world-wide network to which they themselves are linked. This course is only one example, we may say, in which the Congregation has been engaged through various kinds of social justice work, in accordance with Catholic Social Teachings. We intend and hope that this course will teach our students the value of thinking and acting globally and in working for others.

**COVID Invades Plans for Face–to–Face**
Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have adopted online lessons. For this course, which involves participants on two continents, we decided to make the most of this style, connecting our school in Okayama with lecturers in the U.S. and our students at home, via the internet. Lectures have been pre-recorded and can be viewed on an on-demand basis, and students can send questions to the lecturers. We intended to have real-time classes as well as face-to-face discussion sessions in actual classrooms where students can exchange with each other their ideas inspired by the lectures. Now, with the escalation of the pandemic everywhere, we are unable to have these classes. We are proceeding with every lecture and class online.
Themes of SNDdeN Lecturers

Six Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have collaborated so frequently with us at NDSU in preparing this course. Now, prior to the series of lectures, Sr. Aoi Tsuda offers us an introductory lecture. Then the lectures follow and explore three major themes sequentially.

The initial theme is “The Spirit of St. Julie and the Missions of Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.” Sr. Lorraine Connell (Massachusetts, SNDdeN General Treasurer) explains the Congregation’s Hallmarks and the Jubilee Fund. This will give the students general ideas about the Congregation’s missionary activities. Then, from theological and historical viewpoints, Sr. Judith Merkle (New York) discusses the implication and manifestation of St. Julie’s Charism in the 21st century.

The second theme is “Global Society and Christianity.” Sr. Marie Ann Prefontaine (Massachusetts) introduces the topic of Catholic Social Teachings, focusing on its eleven foundational principles in the time of globalization. Then, Sr. Jean Stoner (California) brings in the topic of current global realities and examines seven “ethical coordinates” which can guide us when we try to move forward together as global citizens into the future.

The third theme, “The Global Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur” is exemplified by Sr. Amarachi Grace Ezeonu (New York) in her ministry as the Congregation’s Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Representative at the United Nations. She explains several global issues on which the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur focus at the UN, such as migration, anti-trafficking and extractive industries.

International Collaboration

It is our great pleasure and honor to have as lecturers the Sisters serving in the United States who are specialists in their fields, in universities, as super educators and as experienced NGO Representatives at the UN. Our connections with them is a valued asset for which we are deeply proud as a Catholic University in Japan.

We hope that this new endeavor will be followed by further international and intercultural collaboration at our University, and that it will also strengthen our ties with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur all over the world.
Engaging the Global Reality in Living Our Mission

Sister Jean Stoner currently serves as Chair of the Board of Trustees at Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU) in Belmont, CA. NDNU, the first California institution of higher education to grant degrees to women, is celebrating its 170th Anniversary this year. Sister Jean Stoner, SNDdeN is one of the Lecturers in the course on “Living the Spirit of St. Julie Billiart in a Global Society,” offered by Professor Shusuke Kobayashi at Notre Dame Seishin University (NDSU) in Okayama, Japan.

In 2014, Boston College Professor Kenneth Himes, OFM, identified forward together into the future by looking at guideposts along the path. Their Mission internationally. Sr. Jean’s lectures demonstrate ways to move in the right direction. They are:

1. Catholic Social Teaching
2. Hallmarks

Catholic Social Teaching
1. Option for the poor and vulnerable
2. Global solidarity
3. Care of creation
4. Dignity of decent work
5. Dignity of the human person
6. Call to family, community, and participation
7. Rights and responsibilities

Hallmarks
1. We proclaim by our lives even more than by our words that God is good.
2. We honor the dignity and sacredness of each person.
3. We educate for and act on behalf of justice and peace in the world.
4. We commit ourselves to community service.
5. We embrace the gift of diversity.
6. We create community among those with whom we work and with those we serve.
7. We develop holistic learning communities which educate for life.

In this NDSU course, Sr. Marie Ann Prefontaine introduces Catholic Social Teachings (CST). Then, Sr. Jean matches these seven themes from CST with the seven Ethical Coordinates and our seven Hallmarks of a Notre Dame de Namur Learning Community (Hallmarks). She gives a powerful tool for prioritizing global realities and local actions.

Finally, Sr. Jean shows the students some examples of ways that the three sets of themes can interface through personal and group engagement.

Equity for Systemic Change
She uses a graphic to demonstrate equity as persons, groups and organizations who work for systemic change.

ACTION: Work for equity, not just equality, and for structural change

Martyred SNDdeN: Human Rights
In 2008 Sr. Dorothy Stang SNDdeN received posthumously the United Nations Award for Human Rights because of her action for Justice to protect the rights of people living in poverty in Brazil. She was murdered in 2005 by wealthy landowners who infringed on the personal property rights of the people in Anapu.

ACTION: Work for human rights in your neighborhood and across the globe

Networking as a Powerful Tool
Sister Jean encourages students to make connections and act collaboratively for systemic change in a Global Society. Margaret Wheatley, from an article on Using Emergence, reminds us of the power of networking:

In spite of current ads and slogans, the world doesn’t change one person at a time. It changes as networks of relationships form among people who discover they share a common cause and vision of what’s possible… Rather than worry about critical mass, our work is to foster critical connections… Through these relationships, we will develop the new knowledge, practices, courage, and commitment that lead to broad-based change.

ACTION: To make a difference, build relationships and engage in networks
During the late 1990s, at International Union of Superiors General of Women meetings in Rome, the General Government Team (GGT), now called the Congregation Leadership Team, were impressed as they saw the influence and standing of Congregations with United Nations accreditation and began to investigate how the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur might obtain this status. Sister Ellen Gielty, General Moderator, started the long and detailed process of applying for accreditation. She had to demonstrate what the Congregation could offer to the UN and how it would promote the aims of this world body as outlined in the UN Charter. Her efforts bore fruit in 2001, and the GGT, after a search among the members, named Sister Joan F. Burke, SNDdeN (then serving in Nigeria) to serve as the first SNDdeN NGO Representative with an office in New York. Sr. Joan took up her assignment in 2002 and served as our UN NGO Representative until 2010 when she handed it over to Sister Jean Stoner, SNDdeN who served from 2010-2016. Sister Jean passed the baton in 2016 to Sister Amarachi Ezeonu, SNDdeN who is the current Representative.

The UN is a global body with membership of 193 nations and over 5,000 NGOs accredited to the Economic and Social Council of the organization. SNDatUN collaborate closely with other NGOs in our advocacy for the people and our planet through our presence and through our oral and written statements at UN meetings. Our endeavors at the UN complement the Congregation’s long-standing mission of providing quality education, healthcare, and other social services, especially for people living in poverty. In our fast-changing world with many emerging and complex social, environmental, and economic challenges, both our advocacy for systemic change and our efforts to provide social-psychological services for people are necessary for sustainable development.

Nowhere else across the globe is there a coming together of representative of governments from every country. Each – old and young, rich and poor, large and small, east and west, north and south – has an equal vote. We, SNDdeN, are present where this happens so we can continue to participate in ongoing advocacy efforts and engage others in the important work of systemic change. We clearly benefit from being at the UN because there we are part of collaborative strategies to address policies on a global level instead of trying to do this work on our own.
The UN benefits from our participation as a faith-based NGO since we bring our mission-oriented values, experience, and process skills to bear directly on the work of the member nations. As Kofi Annan stated to a group NGO representatives, “You are the conscience of the UN.”

Our global mission as an accredited NGO at the UN provides the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur an excellent opportunity to realize one of the mandates of our Constitutions:

“We work with others to transform unjust structures and systems as we participate in creating new ways of relating which enables all to experience more fully the goodness of God.” (Constitutions 23) It is also a fulfillment of St. Julie Billiart’s vision that “her sisters would go throughout the world, proclaiming God’s loving care for all peoples.”

We continue to be proud that the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are at the United Nations. Our NGO participation in the international action that occurs at the United Nations is a uniquely valuable public witness to St. Julie Billiart’s wanting her daughters to have Hearts wide as the world. In appreciation for twenty years of collaborative efforts with others in our global advocacy at the UN, we echo the words of the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld: “For all that has been, thanks. For all that shall be, Yes!”

Come, join us... as a Sister (Vowed Member), an Associate or Mission Volunteer, in our Mission!

With a lighted candle in hand, Sr. Gillian Wallace professes her First Vows as a Sister of Notre Dame de Namur. In the Cunningham Memorial Chapel on the campus of Notre Dame de Namur University in Belmont, CA. Sr. Patricia Chappell, East-West Province Moderator receives the Vows of Sr. Gillian!

“My journey thus far with the Sisters has... given me hope that what remains of my life might fulfill the purpose for which I exist. It feels so much easier to go deeper on the God quest and to work for social justice communally with like-minded people, rather than as an individual.” – Sr. Gillian Wallace, SNDdeN

For more information contact us at: INQUIRY@sndden.org
Sisters in the Congo-Kinshasa Province Collaborate in Education and Health Care

Julie Billiart Primary and Secondary School is a traditional Catholic school which the Archdiocese of Kinshasa entrusted to the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Located in Kisenso, one of the communes on the outskirts of the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, this school educates today about 1,000 students, boys and girls. The population in Kisenso are mostly people living in poverty, whose principal activities are small businesses and gardening.

Education in Kisenso
By Sister Patience Mpela, SNDdeN

Two Sisters collaborate with 21 lay persons at Julie Billiart Primary School in Kisenso. Sister Ernestine Nkuemu, SNDdeN is the Directress and Sister Godeliève Ziunga, SNDdeN is a substitute teacher. Their dedicated Co-workers are an Assistant Director, 18 teachers, a maintenance worker and a watchman.

Story
This school administered and directed now by our SNDdeN, is the work of a Belgian missionary to the Congo and pastor of St. Ambrose Parish, Father Frans Vereecke. In 2000, this priest, greatly concerned for the large population and their children who live in this enclave, founded for the parish Saint Ambrose Primary School. Although there were schools in the area, there was not any school offering quality education for the children. Knowing the SNDdeN and having confidence in their reputation for quality education, this priest judged that it would be good to entrust the direction of the school to our Congregation. The school was renamed in 2007 to Julie Billiart Primary School and in these later years with the expansion, the classification of Secondary was added to the school's name.

Little children love the happy learnings at Julie Billiart Primary School.

Secondary School children appreciate their choices of teaching, biochemistry and commercial studies.
When the Sisters arrived, many parents wished to entrust their children to benefit from a good education in this setting. The school began with two classes (first and second grade). Little by little, other classes were added. This Primary School grew to a Secondary School with 18 classes today for all these children. The students have three options for studies: teaching, biochemistry and commercial. At the end of the secondary level, the students achieve positive results in the state exams.

**Sr. Odette Lukongi is the Directress of Julie Billart Secondary School;** she also teaches Religious Education classes. She works in collaboration with a faculty who are mostly lay people. She often shares with students the life and charism of St. Julie, and the international Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

Since the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic, the educational system has experienced upheaval. The academic calendar has changed and students do not have vacations at the scheduled times, now adjusted to local circumstances.

Parents, students and teachers are happy to have the presence and educational expertise of the Sisters and recognize that their Co-workers contribute so much to the school. Parents appreciate the formation and solid education for their children.

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**Mpese Health Center** is one of the health facilities of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) in the Congo-Kinshasa Province. Established in Central Congo in the Diocese of Kisantu, this Center is more than 100 km from Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

**Three Sisters collaborate with three Co-workers** to serve a large population, with inpatient and outpatient medical care. This Health Center provides for Mpese and the surrounding area some relief to the population who are so far away from any medical referrals and lacks transport to reach the hospital. The Staff at the Center treats sick children and adults alike, does pre-natal consultations for pregnant women, delivers the newborns in the region, and enables pre-school consultations for children before school age. It also cares for those with diabetes and other chronic illnesses.
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur
Invite You to
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(c)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
- Remember Sisters in your will
- Contribute gifts of stocks
- Send gift envelopes and more
- Contribute online

For more information, please contact:
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Website: www.sndden.org

SNDdeN in Ministry

HEALTH CARE

Sister Aline Matsanga is the Director of Mpese Health Center and a qualified nurse. She receives nursing support from Sister Nadine Miesi, also a trained nurse and Sister Hélène Lugungu who is an experienced mid-wife.

Three qualified Co-workers, a nurse, laboratory technician and a mid-wife collaborate with the Sisters in this Center for care and wellness of many people in this area. All personnel, in order to upgrade their training and skills, benefit from additional training organized by the SNDdeN Office for the Coordination and Capacity Building of Medical Works, an organization in the Nselo Health Zone.

The majority of the population are farmers whose livelihood results from agricultural produce. Their socio-economic situation does not allow the people to receive appropriate health care. Sometimes, they are only able to pay for medical care and treatments with the produce from the crops in their fields.

The Sisters and lay nurses are the care-givers not only at the Health Center. They even go to the villages to do consultations with the elderly, who are not able to come to the center. The do not have money for transportation and health-care costs. The Sisters provide free medical services for many people living in poverty. They also go into villages for pre-school consultations for children who need any medical follow-up.

It is impossible to know the far-reaching impact of these six health-care workers and these twenty-four educators in this part of the Congo! They bring the life and spirit of St. Julie Billiart and the Mission of the Congregation through such a vibrant collaboration.

Ah! Qu’il est bon, le bon Dieu!

Sr. Aline Matsanga weighs a little child who has come for treatment at the Health Care Center.

The people, suffering from multiple illnesses and fractures in the villages have great difficulty in reaching hospitals and clinics in the region, without adequate transportation and the treacherous roads.

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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
Japan
Nigeria
South Africa
Zimbabwe

Europe
Belgium
France
Italy
United Kingdom

Latin America
Brazil
Nicaragua
Peru

North America
Haiti
United States
(19 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