Trinity Washington University
Witnesses Authenticity in Living the Mission

"...and you will be my witnesses... to the ends of the earth..."
Acts 1:8
Dear Friends of Notre Dame de Namur,

In June of 2012 the Congregational Leadership Team drove from Namur, Belgium to Normandy, France. After visiting the American cemetery, and slowly processing what we heard, read and saw, we stopped for lunch in one of the restaurants close to the cemetery. The waiter, overhearing some of our conversation, inquired about our presence at the site. He also asked us if we intended to visit the German cemetery nearby at LaCombe. We responded that the German cemetery was not in our itinerary. He told us that from what he gathered about us in the brief time he was serving us, he wanted us to visit the German cemetery. He told us the experience would be different, and he asked for our promise to go to the cemetery. With that promise, we drove to the cemetery.

We immediately noticed a different scene from the pristine, manicured American cemetery. Then we saw and read a plaque in the visitors’ hall.

Until 1947, this was an American cemetery. The American remains were exhumed and shipped to the US. It has been German since 1948, and contains over 21,000 graves. With its melancholy rigor, it is a graveyard for soldiers not all of whom had chosen either the cause or the fight.

With a somber pause, we held the last sentence close to heart, sensing an immediate surprise and awakening from a life-long bias and prejudice against German soldiers.

This copy of Good Works does not highlight bias or prejudice; but each article illustrates the pinnacle of education, namely liberation from bias and prejudice. Education calls forth from each of us acceptance of and openness to the sacred humanity of all of God’s creatures. The educator is in relationship with each person in formal and informal learning; with clients in canonical and legal justice systems, in securing protection for the oppressed and immigrant, and in the smallest effort to preserve and save our common home, Earth.

May our mutual goodness strengthen and support the Beloved Community!

In God’s Goodness,

Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader

SNDdeN in Ministry

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In God’s Goodness,
Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN
Congregational Leader

Front Cover:
Sr. Ann Howard, SNDdeN meets students in front of the Trinity Chapel as they leave on a Campus Ministry experience in Selma, Alabama and there cross the Edmund Pettus Bridge.
Trinity Washington University
Witnesses Authenticity in Living the Mission

By Ann Pauley, Vice President of Advancement and Media Relations

Patricia McGuire, President of Trinity Washington University, draws inspiration from the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) everyday: “The best – and still most revolutionary at Trinity was the idea of the Sisters to found this college. All of us at Trinity owe a huge debt of gratitude to the Sisters for their vision, courage and steadfastness in ensuring the vitality of Trinity’s mission.” President McGuire, who is in her 33rd year as Trinity’s leader, added, “We look forward to their moral and spiritual influence, wise guidance and passionate commitment to social justice as we work together in advancing the mission of Trinity in the years to come.”

When the Sisters founded Trinity College in 1897, it was indeed a revolutionary idea: To create the nation’s first Catholic college for women, guided by the SNDdeN charism and values. Amidst controversy and opposition, the Sisters were undeterred and persisted in their vision. On August 20, 1897, Trinity was chartered by an Act of Congress.

In 2004, Trinity College became Trinity Washington University to reflect its growth and its breadth of academic programs.

History and Heritage
Throughout its history, Trinity has been a catalyst for change, continuing its revolutionary idea of educating women, while meeting the needs of its diverse student body and staying true to the values of the Sisters.

On November 22, 2020, President Patricia McGuire unveils the portrait of Sr. Margaret Claydon, SNDdeN, beloved President Emerita. RIP, February 1, 2020

In 2022, Trinity plans to celebrate, in 2022, the 125th anniversary of its founding, the university draws on its rich history, its strength today and its bright future.

“Trinity at the present moment is flourishing with the vision of our Foundresses,” said Sister Camilla Burns, SNDdeN, Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies at Trinity and the former SNDdeN Congregational Leader.

“I marvel at its authenticity in living the dream in such a full and vibrant way. Sister Julia McGroarty, the Foundress of Trinity, said we should keep to the tradition and adapt to the times. That is Trinity today and it is a privilege to be here.”

Trinity today is thriving and is a national innovator for gender, racial, economic and social equity in higher education. Trinity enrolls more than 1,800 students in its undergraduate and graduate programs, and 95% of the students are Black/African-American, Hispanic and multi-racial, representing a broad range of global communities. Reflecting the university’s historic and ongoing commitment to women’s education, 94% of Trinity’s students are women. More than 80% of Trinity’s students reside in D.C., Maryland and Virginia. More than half of Trinity students are residents of the D.C. – Trinity proudly educates more D.C. residents than any other private university.

Reflecting the circumstances of poverty and marginalization that afflict communities of color, the median family income of full-time Trinity undergraduates is about $25,000; 80% are eligible for Pell grants. Slightly more than 100 Trinity students are undocumented immigrants.

“Trinity lives the Gospel, Catholic social teaching and the Mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur every day,” said Sister Mary Johnson, SNDdeN, Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Religious Studies. “Because Trinity is in solidarity with some of the most vulnerable young people in society, Trinity is strengthened, and that strength in turn benefits the students. That commitment to these students has made Trinity a powerhouse, a model of what higher education should be.”
SNDdeN in Ministry  HIGHER EDUCATION/SOCIAL JUSTICE

“The students of Trinity are the leaders we need in all of the institutions of this society,” added Sister Mary Hayes, SNDdeN, Trinity Archivist. “Their voice, their experience and their strength are crucial for transforming the unjust structures that undergird our society.”

“What I love about Trinity is that students who arrive here really value this opportunity to learn,” said Sister Ann Howard, SNDdeN, Director of Campus Ministry. “Many of them work to support themselves – and their children. They are serious about family values and open to hear about God’s goodness. I marvel at the capabilities of these women today who proclaim, fearlessly, their expectations of fullness of life, equality, justice. God’s goodness is alive and well in the learning and living of the students at Trinity.”

Billiart Center for Social Justice

Sisters Mary Johnson and Camilla Burns created the Billiart Center for Social Justice in 2013 to continue the mission and influence of the SNDdeN at Trinity through lectures, discussions and opportunities to put the idea of social justice into action. The Billiart Center rests on four pillars: scholarship, spirituality and religiosity, and service – pillars on which the identity of Trinity rests as well. The Center explores contemporary local, national and international social and economic issues which affect the lives of women, particularly in the religious and political spheres.

The Billiart Center is one of many initiatives launched by Trinity over the past decade.

Programs and Initiatives

Trinity established the School of Nursing and Health Professions in 2010 to support the rapid growth of the nursing program, launched in 2006, and the expansion of new degree programs in other health fields, which today include occupational health and public health.

In 2012, Trinity became the university partner at THEARC, a unique nonprofit center in southeast Washington, D.C, serving some of the most impoverished communities in the city. Trinity is the only university to offer degrees East of the Anacostia River.

In 2014, Trinity was one of the first institutions to partner with TheDream.US, a national program that provides scholarships to Dreamers with DACA status. Trinity currently enrolls more than 100 Dreamer Scholars.

Trinity launched its Inclusive Excellence Initiative in 2017 to increase the retention and success of women of color, women from low-income areas and first-generation students pursuing science majors. Supported by a $1 million grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, this initiative builds on Trinity’s strength in science for more than a century and is now being expanded across the curriculum.

In 2019, the Trinity Global Leadership Initiative was created, a signature program to emphasize global issues throughout the curriculum supported by a grant from the Andrew Mellon Foundation.

These special Clare Boothe Luce Scholars in STEM Program resemble other “Trinity students...citizens of the world, hailing from a remarkable range of nations, speaking dozens of languages and sharing an amazing mosaic of cultures,” said President McGuire... “Our goal is to insure they have the values and perspectives, knowledge and talents to be effective citizen leaders in whatever pathways they follow after graduation.”
In fall 2020, Trinity launched its boldest, most revolutionary initiative, Trinity DARE: Driving Actions for Racial Equity. “There's a lot of talk about racial equity, but there needs to be more action,” said President McGuire when she announced the initiative.

“There's a lot of talk about racial equity, but there needs to be more action,” said President McGuire when she announced the initiative.

“Through Trinity DARE, we commit to taking specific actions that can improve the lifelong economic and social opportunities of our students and their families. For more than 120 years, Trinity has pursued a commitment to equity for women. Today, with a majority of African American students enrolled, and a substantial proportion of Latina students, Trinity affirms that our historic mission includes racial equity in keeping with the Catholic social justice teachings that infuse all teaching and learning in our campus community. Trinity DARE reflects Trinity’s significant leadership in promoting racial equity particularly for students in the Washington region.”

Sister Mary Johnson said that this initiative is consistent with President McGuire's commitment to racial and economic equity at Trinity and in the community over the past 30 years. “Long before this current moment of awakening, Pat acted on the call of the Gospel to meet the moment.”

In tandem with launching new academic and programmatic initiatives, President McGuire places a priority on creating first-class facilities for students. In 2016, Trinity opened the Payden Academic Center, featuring state-of-the-art science and nursing labs, light-filled classrooms for all disciplines, faculty offices, study spaces and a new technology hub for the entire campus. The $32-million, LEED certified building is designed to ensure Trinity's academic excellence, climate for collaboration, research and innovation, and ability to grow and keep pace with scientific and technological advances for generations to come.

Like every college and university, Trinity has been impacted by the COVID pandemic. Trinity faculty and students made a quick pivot in spring 2020 to remote learning. Students who needed to stay in residence on campus could do so and Trinity’s full range of academic and student services were available to all students. President McGuire communicated directly and frequently with students, faculty and staff, and surveyed the community many times to get input for the summer and fall semesters.

President McGuire placed a high priority on the health and safety of the Trinity community. She also insisted that plans going forward had to consider the economic consequences of the pandemic on students, faculty and staff: “Our plans must find a way to provide aid to those with acute needs and to reassure others that we will take care of them.”

In fall 2020, Trinity's enrollment increased by 8%, when many colleges and universities experienced a decline in enrollment because of the pandemic. Trinity continued to provide emergency grants to students facing financial challenges and Chromebooks were distributed to students who could not afford laptops.

Even as Trinity pivoted to virtual learning in spring 2020, President McGuire was already looking to the future: “History reveals that many eras of darkness and crises are followed by times of growth and powerful change, a true renaissance. As we approach Trinity's 125th Anniversary, in our plans for Trinity's future leverage, what we have learned in this very challenging era is to create a stronger, more resilient and creative university to serve future generations.”
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Ministry is centred on the love and healing of Jesus Christ

SNDdeN Serve in UK Diocesan Tribunals: Interviews

**IN FOREFRONT WITH THE CHURCH**

In 1983, the *New Code of Canon Law* was a milestone for involvement of lay people in the Diocesan Tribunals of the Church. This *work concerning mostly marriage annulments*, was formerly restricted to priests. The new Code decreed that one of these Defenders of the Bond and Judges could be a qualified lay person. Normally, three persons judge a Petition for a Declaration of nullifying marriages. Sisters facilitated this lay canonical involvement in Diocesan Tribunals. Many Religious Congregations, then revising Constitutions, had Sisters studying Canon Law. The *Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN)* joined the forefront of this apostolate. Then in 2015, Pope Francis issued a document, *Mitis Iudex*, decreeing that in the panel of three Judges, two could be qualified lay people. This was a major step forward.

**Story of Sister Ishbel MacPherson, SNDdeN**

My arrival on the Canon Law scene began in 1977 with a placement at Westminster Metropolitan Tribunal while working on my diploma in pastoral theology, including a course on Canon Law. Previously, I taught for 18 years and spent three years full-time as member of the *Movement for a Better World*. With my administrative work, I learned how to be an *advocate in a marriage case*. Then I continued as a full-time advocate for two years until I received a doctorate at St. Paul’s Pontifical University, Ottawa, Canada in January 1984, under the direction of the late Father Frank Morrisey, O.M.I. My original intention to stay for a year changed when I soon realised that having better qualifications would help other women to serve the Church in the Marriage Tribunals. In February 1984, Sister Enid Williamson, a Servite Sister and I were appointed in Westminster as Britain’s first lay Judges. This was the *beginning of a new SNDdeN apostolate*. Having joined in 1978 the Canon Law Society of Great Britain and Ireland, I attended the annual conferences. For those years, Sister Enid and I were the *only two women present*. The *Canon Law Society*, just as the Westminster Tribunal and other tribunals, welcomed, respected and appreciated our participation.

Now, for over 40 years, I have been involved with *marriage cases in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland*, even in retirement. Over the years, I have been a Judge, a Defender of the Bond and an auditor (interviewer). I have served in the establishment of tribunals, training of auditors and have given talks on canonical matters. My work has been mostly with marriages. I have facilitated also General Chapters and meetings of men and women religious and I am available for consultation on canonical issues.

**Story of Sister Rachel Harrington, SNDdeN**

Before becoming interested in Canon Law, I taught Latin and Classical Civilisation in three Notre Dame high schools in England, ending as a Senior Teacher in 1989 in St. Julie’s High School, Woolton, Liverpool. As an only child, I cared at home for my mother, coping with dementia. Unable to manage doing this alone, our British Provincial Team made a place for my mother in our SNDdeN health care facility. So grateful to them, I visited as often as possible, while following a two-year *Theology course with the Dominicans in Oxford* where I followed a module on Canon Law. Aware that Sr. Ishbel was working in that field, I asked to follow in her footsteps and I received permission. After gaining the qualifications necessary also in St. Paul’s, Ottawa, Canada, I began my ministry in Westminster where Sr. Ishbel had paved the way. I have worked as a Judge and Defender since 1997, except for six years serving on our SNDdeN Congregational Leadership Team. As a religious and a canonist, I have often helped other Religious Congregations with Canon Law issues.

Like Sr. Ishbel, I have worked for several of the Diocesan Tribunals in England and in Northern Ireland. I continue to do so from home, during these COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. I give talks and serve on the Vicar for Religious Team in the Archdiocese of Westminster. Active in the *Canon Law Society* of Great Britain and Ireland, I am the *first woman to be the Secretary*. Sr. Ishbel became the *first woman life member* some years ago: Attending my first Annual Conference, I realized that there were fewer than ten women canonists among 100 priests. Now, twenty-five years later, there are now as many lay men and women as priests.

**Shared Reflections on Ministry**

The apostolate of the canonist is always one of compassion, attempting to bring justice and peace to someone who is suffering. For canonists, this *ministry is centred on the love and healing of Jesus Christ* – a real privilege. Helping people whose marriages have broken down is a delicate and extremely confidential ministry. The Judge determines if true consent was given to the union or not because of psychological deficiencies or faulty intentions. Many tears are shed when an applicant speaks of the situation! Amazingly, the experience has often been a consoling and healing one for many. Lay people and priests on a panel of Judges brings a balance and deeper insights into decisions made. Many lay people contribute to the apostolate of the Diocesan Tribunals by taking evidence for the cases. Most do this at their own expense, some using distance learning Centres.
Ministry for Immigrants Now

In 2015, Pope Francis made it possible for two qualified lay people to be among the three Judges on a marriage nullity case. He also allowed a Petitioner to introduce a case in the Diocese where he/she was living. Previously, a Petitioner had to apply to the Diocese where the marriage had taken place or where the Respondent was resident. Large numbers of immigrants in the UK, instead of applying to their home dioceses, go to the Diocese where they live now. In London, cases are increasing involving people from USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Japan, and many countries in Africa and South America. Many cases involve always people from Poland, Italy, Spain and Portugal in a ministry “wide as the world.”

Another apostolic aspect of tribunal work for personnel is dealing with non-Catholics. When a previously married and divorced member of another faith or none wants to marry a Catholic, their former marriage has to be examined to determine whether they are free to marry in the Catholic Church. This is a sensitive area of the tribunal service and extremely rare that applicants have any complaints about the way in which their application was handled. Some are so impressed by the seriousness with which the Catholic Church treats marriage that they are moved to seek instruction.

Sisters Valued for Extraordinary Ministry

The Catholic Church in the United Kingdom and beyond values Sisters Ishbel and Rachel. As women, they have insights which even the most intuitive clergy can never have – a gift recognised even by their clerical male colleagues. These Sisters recognize and comprehend the emotional trauma which inhibits some female Petitioners from expressing themselves clearly. The renowned efficiency of these two Sisters is a cause for amazement and some amusement in their expertise in managing so many cases all at once. They reach out promptly, with immediacy to people so that there is no delay in resolving marriage cases. Although stories of participants in marriage breakdown are often heart-rending, Sisters Ishbel and Rachel know that their ministry enables a future marriage in the Church and a possible happy ending in a return to the Sacraments.

The Diocesan Tribunals value their extraordinary contribution.
Sisters Assist Nicaraguan People after Hurricanes

By Sisters Sandra Price, SNDdeN

We, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) in Nicaragua work to help alleviate some of the most critical needs, at all times and in many dangerous situations. We are now in the fourth month since two powerful hurricanes devastated north east and west territories of Nicaragua. Many people are unable to rebuild their homes blown away by the hurricanes. The government and many groups and families, parishes and international aid groups were quick to respond to the thousands of displaced families. But as in every disaster, there is never enough assistance. The farthest, and most isolated families still wait for help.

The rain continued for days after the second and most damaging hurricane, not heavy rain, but a very wet rain. With roofs blown off and zinc roofing rolled up by the wind like giant cigars, everything inside the poorly-built houses was soaked. Schools lost all their books and materials. Clothes soaked in water and mud did not dry out for weeks.

Hunger Follows Crop Devastation

And then there was the worst...hunger. The crops and seed stored for replanting were ruined. Supplies from the last crops harvested were destroyed. In the weeks following, even wild animals forgot their fear of people and came desperately looking for food. Not even the birds could find food. We will never know how many animals died in what were once beautiful forests. One campesino related coming upon a monkey whose hand was pressed by a huge tree that fell on him. The man was unable to move the giant trunk and there were only two options, leave the monkey to die of hunger or cut off his hand. He decided the most humane choice was to release the monkey by severing its hand. When the monkey was free, he ran off into open field that had once been his forest home.

Generous Gifts Provide Relief

Many generous people and groups in Nicaragua have given what they were able to contribute. The first emergency supplies which arrived in the week after the second hurricane are now depleted. From Matagalpa, Sr. Rebecca Trujillo, SNDdeN sent funds received from some donors. The SNDdeN Congregational Mission Support Office provided more funding to assist our people in this dire crisis. Recently, we spent some time in identifying families who are without food, drawing up a budget, dividing and counting portions of beans, rice, corn cooking oil, sugar as well as soap for washing. Everybody has need also for washing supplies, especially for the children. We identified 32 families that we will be able to assist; we are buying 2,700 pounds of each: beans, rice and corn, 1,500 pounds of sugar, 27 gallons of cooking oil and 324 soaps. We realize that this is only a little bit that we are able to contribute to our people.

The happiest side of this time, our people celebrate being alive! No lives have been lost, and neighbors are helping neighbors to restore homes that were less damaged. The government has provided zinc roofing for many families; the sun is coming out more often and clothes are drying out. The generosity of so many people gives us hope. As SNDdeN, we are grateful for donor support sent from our Congregation. We give thanks to our God who is so very good.
When my ministry in Peru came to an end, I had the opportunity to participate in the Dominican Ecology Centre Sabbatical Programme in Wicklow, Ireland. The theme for the Programme was the “New Universe Story” and its implications for theology and spirituality in the light of the Pope Francis’ Encyclical: *Laudato Si, Care for our Common Home.*

Being involved mainly in pastoral ministry, I had not paid much attention to such momentous issues as our 13.8-billion-year history of the Universe, our amazing evolutionary story and what this means in relation to our faith and spirituality. Coming from our beautiful country of Scotland, I do love the beauty and wonder of nature and all creation.

*Laudato Si: Everything is Interconnected*

For me, exploring the themes in *Laudato Si* led me to a new understanding of our world, the universe, our connectedness with all creatures. I pondered on the *pervasiveness of God’s goodness in all creatures and the wonder and mystery of this sacred presence* since the beginning. Pope Francis says: “These ancient stories, full of symbolism, bear witness to a conviction which we today share, that everything is interconnected…” (Cf *Laudato Si*, #70)

The urgency of the future of our planet, also conveyed in *Laudato Si*, compelled me to share some of this new story as best I could in Scotland. A technologically-skilled friend, Liz Snodgrass, whom I had known through the Justice and Peace Network, shared my enthusiasm for these issues. Together, we developed presentations for parish and community groups, people interested and concerned for our world and the future of our globe.

**Challenges and Action**

The challenge for Liz and for me was finding ways to reflect on the issues that would inspire and motivate, rather than leave people in the depths of despair at the global destruction and havoc, caused by us humans. For our presentations, we decided on three main themes:

- **Who do we think we are?**
- **Where do we think we come from?**
- **Where do we think we are going?**

Our problem in planning was not finding resources but adapting them to sessions suitable for a retreat day or evening of reflection time.

**COVID-19 Interrupts Life**

We managed to lead a number of sessions in parishes before the dreaded COVID-19 sidelined our efforts and closed down the possibility of physical meetings. We are most at home with face-to-face sessions for creativity, participation and special sharing that happens in a group where trust has been established. We had to adapt the material to offer on Zoom sessions. *This online experience, though not ideal, resulted in access to different people and a wider more disparate audience through links with different networks.* We were able to participate in *Season of Creation Event* organized by Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF), and then gather followers for two further virtual sessions. Developing new topics, we plan to offer a monthly session.

Sister Mary Isabel Kilpatrick delights in being able to study Spirituality in the context of a new cosmology and to teach on Zoom the value in *Laudato Si, Care for our Common Home.*

In a Pre-COVID Parish meeting, Liz Snodgrass (right) converses with a participant who was modelling a stage of evolution to place in a cosmic spiral.

Sr. Mary Isabel teaching that gorillas are 99% and the primrose is 1% in connectedness to us.
Hope For Ministry

Since starting our project, we have become aware of many groups campaigning for Climate Justice, particularly in Scotland at this time preparing for the UN COP26 meeting to be held in Glasgow in November 2021. Our contribution is tiny but aims to enable deeper reflection and love for creation, so to act out of a more positive motivation for change and not just fear of impending doom!

We found inspiration through a process known as “The Work That Reconnects.” Joanna Macy and Chris Johnstone, in a book entitled, Active Hope: How to face the mess we’re in without going crazy,” write: “Our focus is on how we strengthen and support our intention to act, so that we can best play our part, whatever that may be in the healing of the world.”

Our goal for this educational ministry, even during this global pandemic brings us and others hope in our connectedness for healing the world.

COP26 What is it?

The ‘twenty sixth conference of the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change’ (or COP26 for short) will take place at the Scottish Event Campus in Glasgow from November 1 – 12, 2021 bringing governments from around the world together to discuss action on climate change. Since the first COP in Berlin in 1995 there has been slow and painstaking progress towards international agreement. Getting every country in the world to sign up to life changing commitments is not easy.

For more information contact us at: INQUIRY@sndden.org
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.