



In Mission

2018

Puerto Rico

Serbia

Brazil

Guam

Poland

Sweden

Austria

Japan

Peru

England

Czech Republic

Nepal



Canada

Ghana

Paraguay

Kenya

Italy

Hungary

Belarus

United States of America

Romania

Guatemala

The Gambia

Sierra Leone

Honduras

Nigeria

South Sudan

Slovenia

Argentina

Germany

Bringing all to oneness



United in mission

Sister Roxanne Schares,
General Superior

In mission 185 years, School Sisters of Notre Dame have responded to urgent needs, directing their entire lives for that oneness for which Christ was sent. As we mark this anniversary of the founding of our congregation on October 24, I am delighted to introduce our newsletter *In Mission*. This is a new collaborative initiative of our international, multicultural, multilingual congregation.

The congregation has grown since its humble beginnings in Bavaria, Germany in 1833, when three young women began to live community life, dedicated to addressing the needs of their times through education. Urged by deep faith and courage, our founder Blessed M. Theresa Gerhardinger risked meager resources to respond wherever she was called. In her spirit, we discern and respond to God's call expressed in our times. Today, diverse in background, culture, and language, we live and serve in 30 countries on five continents, united in mission.

Especially sensitive to youth, women, and those who struggle with injustice and poverty, we educate with the conviction that the world can be changed through the transformation of persons. As educators in all that we are and do, we recognize our obligation and opportunities to develop a world vision and a sense of global responsibility.

Urgent and critical global concerns of our times demand that we witness to unity in diversity and dare to respond boldly in unsuspected ways. Risking innovative responses, our sisters cross borders, foster inclusion, explore greater collaboration, strive to live mission interculturally, and enkindle hope. In all of this, we are mutually enriched and challenged to ever deeper communion.

Communion with the Triune God impels each of us into the heart of the world to transform it with peace, hope, and love. May these stories of our life in mission inspire and give witness to God's universal love, love that gives everything.

In Mission 2018

Publication of the
School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND)

Contact us.
We would love to hear from you.

Generalate, Rome, Italy
gerhardinger.org

**Province of Latin America
and the Caribbean (ALC)**
provinciaalc.org

Province of Africa (AF)
ssnd.org/africa

Atlantic-Midwest Province (AM)
atlanticmidwest.org

Central Pacific Province (CP)
ssndcentralpacific.org

AF, AM, and CP Collaborative site
ssnd.org

Bavarian Province (BY)
schulschwestern.de

Hungarian Province (MG)
iskolanoverek.hu

**Province of Austria-Italy (OR-IT)
including the Czechoslovakian
Province (CE)**
ssnd-austria.org
skolskesestry.cz

Polish Province (PO)
ssnd.pl

Slovenian Province (SI)
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We are grateful to the sisters and lay colleagues who translated from the original languages to English, and from English to each of the province languages. Thank you!



Mission

We are sent in the power of the Spirit
to continue Christ's mission,
to be transformed and to transform our world,
bringing all to that oneness
for which Jesus Christ was sent.

You Are Sent, Constitution, 48

Transform lives, transform the world

by Caelie Haines

The Caroline Center, named after Mother Caroline Friess, is an education and career skills training center for women sponsored by the Atlantic-Midwest Province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. It is located in Baltimore, Maryland, United States of America.

Caroline Center's 15-week programs train women for employment as nursing assistants or pharmacy technicians. The programs are scholarship-based, tuition-free and offered three times a year. Students must meet certain qualifications and successfully complete an interview before being accepted. Last year the Center implemented an online application; 880 women applied for the 90 available slots.

Additional life-skills education sets the Center apart. There is also a strong emphasis on job placement; students have the opportunity to do clinical rotations during their training. Caroline Center recently added an academic and career advancement program to encourage graduates to advance their careers.

The goals of Caroline Center have remained consistent over the years. "We have always looked for where the jobs are, with good pay and room for advancement," says Sister Patricia McLaughlin, SSND. Sister Pat recently retired after 22 years as Director of Caroline Center. Under her guidance, the program's focus shifted with the changing needs of the times from teaching women manual skills such as upholstery to preparing them for careers in the healthcare sector. As a result, thousands of women, including approximately 6,000 during Sister Pat's time, have passed through Caroline Center and on to a better future.



Photo: Courtesy of Caroline Center

Sister Pat chats with students outside of the Center.



Meeting needs in a changing world

By Sister Dorothy Zeller

Good Counsel Learning Center in Mankato, Minnesota, United States of America, completed 51 years of one-to-one tutoring of children and adults. Originally named the Reading Center, the focus in 1967 was on improving literacy among children. Over the years, other subjects were added, and we began to tutor adults.

At first, the majority of tutors were School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSNDs) who tutored after a full day of teaching or during their summer vacation; lay teachers were hired as needed. Today, tutors include semi-retired SSNDs who appreciate the opportunity to use their energy and years of classroom experience.

In the past 10 years, the Center clientele has expanded as the people and needs have changed. Today, Somali, Sudanese and Vietnamese families add a new dimension to the Center and to the Our Lady of Good Counsel community. The immigrant students share their community with us through their dress, food and culture. We recognize anew the charism of Mother Theresa who brought Sisters to the United States to teach the children of German immigrants. We are honored to continue in her footsteps.



Photo Credit: Heidi Sampson, Mankato, Minnesota, USA

Samaya and Sister Therese Ann Zanmiller work on essay writing.

Lessons learned while educating boys

by Sister M. Andrea Ivanics

Svetits Institute is our 122-year-old school in the Hungarian Province, in Debrecen, Hungary. Before 2012, it was a girls-only school. We now also educate boys at our kindergarten and primary school, as well as at our high school.

In 2012, at the age of 50, I embarked upon the education of a class of boys and girls following the educational principles of Mother Theresa: high standards, motivating teaching methods, personal attention, love, understanding, acceptance, and close contact with parents.

I cannot claim that everything went as expected; however, the experience has been one of the most beautiful gifts of my service as a teacher.

What did I learn during the past six years?

1. Boys and girls are able to create real community, a true model of unity in diversity.
2. The emotional world of boys is as complicated as that of girls.
3. The different capacities and interests of the sexes need different programs.
4. Ongoing learning and methodological renewal is an obligation.
5. Humor is a great means of education.

Six years ago the Lord called me to educate boys along with girls. I am grateful for this call! I have been enriched.



Photo Credit: Albert Drenák, Debrecen, Hungary

S. M. Andrea, center, with several young men at the graduation ball.

We exclude no one from our concern ...

You Are Sent, Constitution 24

Inclusion of persons with disabilities

by Sister Yvonne Nosal

The School Sisters of Notre Dame began the "Rumo Norte" Project in 2002, with the goal of professionalizing and empowering people with disabilities. The Project is located in the heart of Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil.

The General Coordinator is Sister Dulce Maria Boniatti, SSND. She is assisted by Ms. Liziane Silva who coordinates the various pedagogical aspects of the Project.

Rumo Norte offers 43 workshops, including braille, Spanish, handicrafts, computing, art, massage therapy, dance, theater, and posture rehabilitation. There are also groups such as a women's group and a therapeutic group.

Approximately 193 people, the majority of whom are blind, make use of the Rumo Norte project services.

The sisters and staff have created a welcoming atmosphere at Rumo Norte. It is a safe environment where each person feels at home with oneself and with others.



Photo Credit: Sr. Yvonne Nosal, Lima, Peru

Sister Dulce Maria and Liziane

In the heart of the world

by Sister M. Eresta Mayr

“Pilgrimage places are the hidden capitals of the world.”

Konrad Adenauer, first Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany

Since 1849, School Sisters have lived and worked in Birkenstein, an important pilgrimage place in Bavaria, Germany. Mother Theresa herself founded this mission. When the grade school was transferred to a larger town in 1966, the mission of Birkenstein changed.

Since then, pilgrimages are our focus. Our ministry now is that of sacristan. We sisters are responsible for the chapel and the environment of the pilgrimage place. What is unique about our service as sisters? Where and how are we “in the heart of the world”?

With our religious habit, we are known immediately as sisters. We are approachable “all the time”, not only during “office hours”. We are asked to pray for all intentions. However, not only petitions come to us; we also hear about answers to prayer. Pilgrims feel the need to share and speak about what they have experienced.

During my 30 years as sacristan, my service has included the chapel tour. People often ask for an explanation; they leave with an understanding of the theological and spiritual richness of our chapel.

It is the best service that the congregation could have given me: to be sacristan at Birkenstein, in the “heart of the world”.



Photo Credit: Sister M. Luzilla Klein, Birkenstein, Germany

Sister M. Eresta explains the chapel.

Through our ministry, we and those to whom we are sent are mutually enriched.

You Are Sent, Constitution 25

Education provides access to the world

by Trudy Hamilton

Founded 32 years ago, Notre Dame School in Bandipur, Nepal began with 50 students in a goat shed. Today, the school has 820 students. The school’s success is partially based upon the emphasis on inclusion; almost half of the students are female. Many students have gone on to graduate from universities around the world.

Sister Barbara Soete has taught in Nepal since 2006. She chose to minister in the small, remote village of Bandipur after hearing stories from her sibling, Sister Andre Maureen Soete, who served in Japan for many years and had spent a year in Nepal. “It was a place of great need,” said Sister Barbara.

Sisters share their faith if asked, but their faith is primarily expressed by the way they live; education is their top priority.

“We take poor children who would have no choice but to accept work as manual laborers in a limited environment and we give them access to higher learning across Nepal and the world,” said Sister Barbara. “That’s amazing.”



Sister Barbara with a student in Bandipur, Nepal.

Photo Credit: Ken Buslay, Germany

A big day for little Theo

by Kurt Haspel

Two-year-old Theo is a bright little boy. He likes farm animals and is very eager to build things with his Duplo building blocks. But Theo does not laugh as much as other children, and he seeks the secure arms of his father. What Theo misses most, however, is his mother. Theo's mother recently died of cancer. Since then, Theo and his father have been completely on their own.

Students of the SSND school in Freistadt, Austria learned about this sad fate and, of course, wanted to help immediately. As part of a class project, they baked fragrant biscuits and prepared regional delicacies. Thanks to the dedication of the students, this charity project generated a sizeable sum of money, money that Theo's father needed.



Sister M. Antonia with little Theo and dad.

Photo Credit: Teacher Monika Hons, the SSND High School in Freistadt (HLW Freistadt), Austria

After all the biscuits and delicacies were sold, the students invited Theo and his father to the school. The afternoon spent with little Theo was a very touching experience for everyone present. It was a great opportunity for everyone involved to get to know Theo, and also to feel the joy of giving. This feeling will remain in the memories of the students of our SSND school for a long time.

Sister M. Antonia Pichlbauer, site manager in Freistadt, observed, "As our founder Blessed M. Theresa Gerhardinger said: 'The little that you have, share freely with hungry and freezing children.' We School Sisters are still following this advice today."

*Only by love will we win the love of the children
and draw their hearts to God.*

Blessed M. Theresa, letter 4405

Empowering children

by Sister Marjetka Jeralič

We began our Antonina* Kindergarten in our house in Ilirska Bistrica, Slovenia in 2009.

We now have 48 children in three groups with six teachers. I serve as the director of the kindergarten.

We believe that we are called to a life of service as educators. We foster the development of children, helping them to reach their full potential and use their gifts to transform the world.



Sister Marjetka with one of the groups.

Photo credit: Courtesy of the Kindergarten Antonina Archives

*Blessed M. Antonina Kratochwil SSND, is a Polish Martyr of World War II.

Our mission: to make one

By Sister Sarah Chepkorir

About a year ago, Sisters Petronella Muteshi, Judith Sambu and I were warmly received at St. John the Baptist parish in Likuyani, Kakamega Diocese, Kenya.

Our call as School Sisters of Notre Dame is “to make one” and the three of us came to Likuyani to continue this mission of Christ.

The people of Likuyani are of diverse cultures and tribes with a painful history and experience of post-election violence (2007-2008) which threw our country into turmoil and traumatized many. There was not only loss of lives and wealth, but also loss of trust in one another.

As we approached the country’s 2017 election, we intensified our efforts as peace builders and reconcilers. In our work with women, youth, and children groups in the parish, we continue to encourage all on the importance of coexistence as one family of God.



Photo Credit: Sister Joan Namulanda, Nairobi, Kenya

The parishioners at Likuyani Parish warmly welcomed Sisters Sarah, Judith and Petronella and presented them with gifts for their home.

*Where love, there is God and where God,
there is heaven - in our hearts, in our homes.*

Blessed M. Theresa, letter 949

Creating a loving home

by Sister Agata Wójcik

Our “Wiosna” (“Spring”) Children’s Home in Krzydłina Mała in the south-west part of Poland celebrates its 75th anniversary this year.

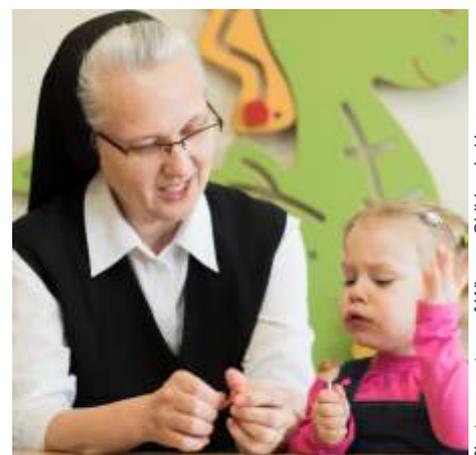
Five School Sisters of Notre Dame and 48 qualified lay staff ensure 24-hour care. They provide a nurturing atmosphere for children who have been abandoned in hospitals or deprived of parental care.

For these children, the sisters and staff are like mothers, accompanying them in getting to know the world and educating them. All this is done in the spirit of Mother Theresa.

Since the opening of the house in 1943, we have provided care for more than 3,476 children (about 46 each year). 924 of these children have found a home with loving families.



Sister Agata Wójcik



Sister Ewelina Zdunek

Photos courtesy of Wiosna Children’s Home

Mission unfolding

In these stories we have touched upon just a few of the commitments of our sisters. The mission we are committed to is the mission of Christ, to bring all to oneness. The call of God continues to press upon the hearts of sisters and associates, lay colleagues and partners, collaborating in God's mission.

We have been at the forefront of education in a diversity of ministries, since the foundation of the congregation. Transformative education continues to be vital at this critical turning point in the sacred history of creation and humanity.

Our presence at the United Nations and our international *Shalom* network for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation connect us with others in actions that lead to reconciliation, solidarity with the oppressed, the promotion of human dignity, and collaboration for care of all creation.

Our life in mission is an integrated whole of prayer, community, and ministry. To learn more about how we live mission, we invite you to visit our congregational Facebook page @ssnd.global and our congregational website gerhardinger.org with links to each province website. Contact us at info@gerhardinger.org.

Our prayer is that each of us may be people of peace, hope, and love. For we all have been called and we all are sent.



Image of our founder used at her beatification ceremony.

Answering the Call

The congregation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame came to life when God's call found an answer in the hearts of people strong in faith, farseeing in vision, and courageous in action. ...

Their action was inspired by an apostolic spirituality destined to shape their own lives and profoundly affect those of many others. ...

The congregation continues today in the mysterious interaction of divine call and human response.

You Are Sent, Origins of Our Congregation

Do you hear God's call in your heart?

What needs do you see in our world?

How will you respond?



School Sisters
of Notre Dame

Transforming the world through education

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Please note: many articles in this newsletter have been edited to fit this format. The full articles are available on the congregational website, gerhardinger.org.