



“We ... act in collaboration with others for the dignity of life ...”

By Sister Maria-Theresia Knippschild, SSND (Bavarian Province)- Shalom European Branch

The Directional Statement and the *Shalom* – Focus and Commitments, 2018-2021, continue to shape the initiatives of *Shalom* and the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Europe and worldwide especially since the outbreak of the pandemic.

Lockdown/Shutdown - What does this mean for individuals? Kindergarten and school closure, distance learning/home-schooling, curfews, home office, extensive use of technology, temporary work, unemployment, loneliness, dying alone, and few human contacts. In short: a complete shutdown of public and private life and, in some cases, the loss of human dignity.

In order to counteract this, the sisters of the European Provinces asked for and received creative options. Being engaged with the poor and the homeless was important. We did this by providing a daily meal, by giving vacuum flasks and everyday masks or by donating clothing. It even involved the giving of basic everyday items by the sisters in Belarus. At the same time, we also saw the problems of children, adolescents, parents and SSNDs. In Pfaffenhofen, Austria, sisters generously shared their apartment with disadvantaged children and organized distance lessons. Others wrote letters daily to the youngest students at school. In addition to video lessons, they took time for personal conversations. In all of our kindergartens, the teachers planned projects for the children and their families in order to keep in touch and tell them, “You are important to us. Do not forget that all the sisters include all of your concerns in their personal and community prayers.”

One thing became very clear in this time of the pandemic: the dignity of life must not be forgotten. This pandemic has shown us, School Sisters of Notre Dame, what it means to be women of peace, hope and love in the heart of the world.



*Sister Judit Nötstalles SSND helping
Shahad with her homework.*

Season of Creation/Jubilee for the Earth

By Connie Guerrero, Associate – (Central Pacific Province) Shalom Asia/Oceania Branch

The Season of Creation is an opportunity to reflect on the biblical meaning of Jubilee. It invites us to renew harmonious relationships with our Creator and all creation by living in compassion and solidarity. COVID-19 is revealing how deeply we are interconnected. In a post-pandemic world, we will need an integral approach. “Everything is closely interrelated and today’s problems need a vision capable of taking into account every aspect of the global crisis” ([Laudato Si’, 137](#)).

Jubilee is a time of restoration for the earth through radical new ways of living. It requires time to rest the land and restore ecosystems. This Jubilee for the Earth is occurring in a world of many crises, making us realize the urgent need to heal relationships with creation and one another for liberation and consolation. God has allowed us to experience “lockdown” as a rest, but also as a separation and a limitation on freedom. In response, many have focused on their gardens. In sharing the earth’s abundance with others they have experienced that “less is better”.



The Season of Creation calls us to re-evaluate economic systems that are based on constant growth at the cost of the Earth and of the poor. The prophets call the overconsumers to make restitution to those who suffer most.. It is a time for transformation, restoring balance to systems that sustain life. What must we do to keep Earth sustainable for the next generation?

Response at the Time of a Pandemic

By Sister Helen Galadima, SSND (Province of Africa) - Shalom African Branch

Shalom African Branch is active and committed to loving and caring for God’s creation. In new and creative ways, the sisters work at transforming their behaviors and choices as they educate, advocate and act in collaboration with others. The corona virus pandemic challenges them to be creative in carrying out their *Shalom* activities, being in solidarity with the suffering humanity and the world at this time. Sisters have expressed solidarity regularly and faithfully praying “A Prayer for The End of Corona Virus” especially at Mass. They are listening to news and reading relevant materials to educate themselves on the mode of the spread and prevention of the virus. They observe the recommended guidelines and disseminate the information among the people they collaborate with in ministries. They have made face masks for some poor people and shared food with them.

Sisters trust in God’s presence in the current challenging situation in the world. Therefore, living out the spirit of *Shalom* inspired them to be more charitable and sustainable. In some of their ministries, they have made their own hand sanitizers, facemasks and vegetable gardens.

They continue to adjust to everything possible to keep everyone safe in community and at work as they seek ways to honor our interconnectedness and respect for biodiversity and to respond to God's call to us for these times.

Paving the Way for Growth

By Kathleen Bonnette, SSND Staff (Atlantic Midwest Province) Shalom North American Branch

If there is one thing we have learned during this pandemic, it is how to master Zoom conference calls! Like many people, we have been confined to our houses, unable to connect with one another physically. We have had to adapt. But adaptation is not always a negative thing; it often paves the way for growth. For example, while we sadly had to move our annual in-person branch meeting to a virtual platform, our practice with online communication inspired us to attempt new ways of reaching out to our network, and doing so has expanded our audience!

We have strived to adhere to the [International Shalom Network Focus and Commitments](#) (2018-2020), and in addition to collaborating on our monthly newsletter and advocacy campaigns, Shalom North America hosted two webinars this past year: “[Responding to Our Climate Crisis on the Anniversaries of Earth Day and *Laudato Si'*: For the Dignity of Life and the Care of All Creation](#),” featuring Dr. Mary Evelyn Tucker; and “[Human Trafficking and a Legacy of Racism](#),” featuring Jennifer Reyes Lay, Executive Director of U.S. Catholic Sisters Against Human Trafficking, and Melanie Thompson, Youth Outreach Coordinator for the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women. We also created a virtual “[Prayer Room for Peace](#)” for the U.S. election season. These initiatives reached thousands of people, and we are grateful for this silver lining of the pandemic: the opportunity to practice new ways of sharing the *mission in the spirit of Shalom*.

Virtual Life in the Digital Era

By Sister Sarah Unwaunyin Tanjo, SSND and Sister Beatrice Chepng'eno, SSND (Province of Africa)

In this digital era, our lives are virtually connected through technology. Because of Covid-19, we address most of the needs of our world through this method of communication. The problems and opportunities with this approach was one of the topics at the 2021 UN Conference organized by the UN Commission on Social Development.

During the session on “*The Role of Digital Technologies, on Social Development and Well-being of all*”, the presenter demonstrated how technology can assist in the delivery of health care: easy online communication between doctors and patients, shopping for medical supplies, research and study. This is a reality for some people with technology and internet access. They have the greater advantage of independence, knowledge, and connection to the larger society. The major challenge, however, is that not everyone has equal access to it. The inequality of access leaves many behind, especially the most vulnerable and marginalized, often in remote areas. “We cannot allow a new digital citizenship to be the privilege of the few. Digital technologies must be used as both emergency tools and those that provide opportunities for all

the world's people in efforts to create more inclusive, equitable societies" said Maria Del Carmen Squeff, Chairperson of the UN Commission for Social Development.

In 2016, many African governments launched nation-wide rollouts of digital literacy programs. They distributed laptops and tablet devices to public schools with the aim of ensuring that all children received an education that equipped them with the 21st-century skills, including digital literacy. As a result, there was increased school enrolment, student alertness, and attendance.

Since it is most likely that technology will remain an integral part of our lives, there is no need to ask whether it is good or bad; we need to ask about how we will use it. We appeal for equitable distribution of this resource as we encourage one another to use it critically, sustainably and responsibly.

Rebuilding in Solidarity

By Sister Rosa María Tróchez SSND, (Province of Latin America and the Caribbean) Shalom Latin American Branch

Honduras faced greater misery with the Covid-19 pandemic and the two hurricanes (Eta and Iota). Three months after the hurricanes, the people were still living on the roadsides waiting for help with their most basic needs (food, water, housing...). Many people, in their desire to survive, left the country in gigantic migratory caravans.

What they witnessed in these tragedies is the unconditional response from the common folk, yes, people helping their people. It is reminiscent of the bible passage: "Feed them yourselves".

SSNDs working with the people on the local level have organized themselves to find ways to make life more bearable, more humane. Removing the mud and debris from homes so as to make them safe is a slow process and it draws on the skills of all of the members of the local community. Working together to rebuild their society is helping them understand effective ways to rebuild their country.



The international economic relief has been a great blessing and fills them with deep gratitude. The solidarity among them will continue to deepen the hope of living as daughters and sons of God.

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Prophetically, we commit to educate, advocate, and act in collaboration with others for the dignity of life and the care of all creation.

(Love Gives Everything, SSND Directional Statement)

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