



School Sisters of Notre Dame

TRUST & DARE

a publication for family, friends and supporters of the School Sisters of Notre Dame







Trust & Dare

Trust & Dare is a publication for family, friends and supporters of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in the Atlantic-Midwest Province, Central Pacific Province and Province of Africa. It is coordinated by SSND Collaborative Communications.

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Dear Friends,

2023 is a threshold year for the School Sisters of Notre Dame. On October 24, we will celebrate 190 years since our founding in Germany. We look back over 190 years of blessed history: a history marked by the fruits of our mission of unity through our ministry "enabling others to reach the fullness of their potential as individuals created in God's image and assisting them to direct their gifts toward building the earth." (*You Are Sent*, C22) We remember gratefully the more than 20,000 women who preceded us in SSND and their passion for and dedication to the mission of Jesus to unite all in God's love. We remember the many people we encountered who were blessings to us.

This year also marks the Year of the Chapter for SSND. We will have a General Chapter from October 24, the anniversary of our foundation, to November 17, the anniversary of the beatification of foundress Blessed Theresa. At this Chapter, elected delegates from the five continents on which we are serving will engage in a communal discernment of how and where God may be calling SSND as we move into the future. The delegates will hold in sacred trust information on the needs of our world, our mission to make one, prepared reports and the wisdom shared by our sisters across our congregation. Prayerfully reflecting upon these, they will set a direction for SSND for the next six years. A Chapter is a sacred event, a challenging event, a joyful event.

We stand at a threshold, looking back over our shoulders gratefully at all that has been. We turn to look forward to an as-yet unknown future. We trust that the direction set by the General Chapter will embolden us to step into the future trusting in the presence of the Spirit.

In this issue, you will read how SSND influenced the lives of students we taught in the past. You will also learn how sisters today are continuing to build community.

We thank you for your support and prayer for SSND around the world and pray that you will be rewarded with great peace and joy.

Mary Fitzgerald, S.S.N.D.

Sister Mary Fitzgerald
Provincial Councilor
Atlantic-Midwest Province



On the Cover 1. Some of the early SSND pioneers who came to North America, including Mother Caroline Friess (center). 2. Sister Therese Marie Dougherty provides a blessing of the hands at Notre Dame Maryland University. 3. 1907 summer school participants at St. Mary's Convent in Kitchener, Ontario. 4. Sisters who professed first vows in Province of Africa in 2012. 5. Sisters leaving Ss. Peter and Paul Church, Mankato, Minnesota, during the 1958 SSND Educational Conference. 6. Sisters Yolanda Latessa (left) and Veronica Horvat assist in making pillows for a children's hospital. 7. Sister Olivia Simko and a group of high school girls during a bake sale. 8. Sister Edna Chepkoech with children at an orphanage in Ghana.

UNITY

Sustains Us

190 years ago, Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger founded the School Sisters of Notre Dame. In 1833, there was no way for Blessed Theresa to know that in just 14 years, the sisters would be called to America. She did know that for SSND to continue to grow and thrive, they must remain unified in God and in purpose. This unity is what led to the success of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in America and what furthers our mission to this day.

By the 1960s, there were 7,000 SSND from North America in educational ministry. Although the majority of sisters are no longer teaching directly in schools, their legacy lives on through our alumni community. Many of the schools founded by the sisters maintain a wonderful relationship with us, and the spirit of SSND shines through their work each and every day. The alumni taught by sisters carry the charism of SSND out into the world, spreading the light of our mission to their colleagues, families, businesses and communities.

In this age of digital connection, we aim to reconnect communities so that sisters and students, alumni and new friends can convene together. With the care and concern of our alumni and their loved ones, we respond to the cries of today with the same intention and values that inspired the founding of SSND.



Your gifts support our communities of sisters, such as the sisters of the Charlesgate community in Baltimore, shown here celebrating Jubilee together. (Left to right) Sisters Cora Lee Middleton, Ann Scholz, Linda Stilling, Eugenia Forbeck, Rose Federici and Marie Rose Gustatus.

Please know how grateful we are for your continued interest, prayers and partnership with us. Whether you were taught by the sisters, know a sister personally, or simply want to see the mission of the School Sisters of Notre Dame succeed in effecting positive change, your support sustains our sisters and our ministries.

There are many ways you can support SSND. Some donors give monthly or annual cash gifts, while others provide stock and appreciated assets. Still others provide for future gifts by making a legacy gift on behalf of their family and the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Like other gifts, a legacy gift can be used to support our sisters in retirement and in active ministry. Legacy gifts include bequests, life insurance and retirement plan gifts and trusts of various kinds.

▶ ***If you have any questions about making a gift or if you would like additional information, contact the Development Director for your province.***

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No matter how much it storms and rains our congregation will stand together and continue to flourish as long as we persevere in Holy Love.”

Blessed Theresa of Gerhardinger, Foundress, Letter 714, May 30, 1847

The SSND Impact *THROUGH THE DECADES*

For nearly two centuries, the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) have made Christ visible by sharing their love, faith and hope with others. Their foundress, Blessed M. Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, and the women who joined her, chose education as the best way to show God’s love to the world and thereby create a better world through the transformation of persons. While the SSND mission has taken sisters to additional fields outside of education over the decades, they have never wavered in their commitment to deliver quality education. SSND have opened academies, institutes, high schools and colleges, which have offered a high-quality education to thousands of young people.

In 2023, School Sisters of Notre Dame celebrate 190 years of trusting in God and daring all so that the world can be transformed. To honor this tradition, alumni, former colleagues and friends share their personal stories of how School Sisters of Notre Dame have impacted their lives.

1940s

**Edmund B.
Wutzer**

At 4 years old, I was taken to St. Peter the Apostle School in Philadelphia to be enrolled in kindergarten. I was at first turned down because I was too young, but then called back as they needed more students. As a result, I spent the rest of school typically one of the youngest in my class.

The stories are many. In eighth grade, I was waiting in the back of the classroom for my seat assignment. Sister Adrian had the first three rows for boys, one vacant row, and then three rows for the girls. When she called on me, she said, “I heard about you from the other sisters. You will sit in the first row in front of my desk.”

There were many incidents where I had to be disciplined, but the last straw was when I moved the classroom clock 15 minutes ahead. “Sister,” I said, “It is time to go. Look at the clock.” Sister Adrian looked up, let us out of the classroom and realized there were no other students in the hallway. One of my classmates turned me in. For punishment, she put me in the first row with the girls. I was so embarrassed, particularly when one of the Redemptorist priests wanted to know why I was sitting with the girls. After class, I got on my hands and knees and pleaded with her to change my seat. I promised her I would be good. She took pity on me and assigned me to the last row where I sat by myself.

I express my gratitude for the wonderful start in life that the School Sisters of Notre Dame provided for me. I can’t thank them enough. My memories and thankfulness to the SSND are endless.



1950s

Norene T.
Alexander



St. Mary's Commercial High School in Detroit was unique in that it was only a two-year high school – 11th and 12th grades. It featured a business curriculum with an emphasis on secretarial job skills (shorthand, typing, business English, bookkeeping and office machines). Because of the dedicated efforts of the School Sisters of Notre Dame over the years, St. Mary's enjoyed a very good reputation among the professional people whose offices were located downtown at that time.

Sister Ambrose taught 11th grade and Sister Muriel taught 12th grade. Because it was so small, the school always felt more like a family. The sisters related to the students and created a positive learning environment. They worked together to ensure we would have the skills necessary to have successful careers when we graduated. In addition to book learning, they shared their knowledge of the business world with us.

I have always felt fortunate that Sister Ambrose and Sister Muriel were assigned to St. Mary's when I was a student. Their positive influence and encouragement prepared me for a successful career. I enjoyed many years of employment, first as a stenographer with the FBI and then a few years later as a secretary with General Motors at their Technical Center in Warren, Michigan. I spent 40 years with General Motors until my retirement in 2001.

I am very thankful for my Catholic school education, in particular the influence of the SSND in my life.

1960s

Mary
Zellmer



From my 12 years of Catholic schooling, all staffed by the School Sisters of Notre Dame, there are a few things that stand out:

- There was consistency with prayer in the classroom, emphasizing that prayer was an important part of daily life.
- We all had value and special gifts and these gifts were to be shared and used for good.
- Growing in faith was a life-long process.
- When you follow the rules, life is better.

My Catholic education gave me the foundation for my faith. With about 60 students in my first grade class at Holy Rosary in North Mankato, Minnesota, a very patient 25-year-old Sister Paulanne Gruber taught us our basic prayers. Repetition. Repetition. Repetition. In second grade, Sister Donna Marie taught us about having a conscience, the Ten Commandments and the Sacrament of Confession. I still try to say the Act of Contrition every night.

At age 64, in preparation for a mission trip to Guatemala, I was tutored by Sister Joanne O'Connor of the Good Counsel Learning Center, where I tried to recapture some of the Spanish I had learned almost 50 years earlier in high school. I wanted to learn words and phrases that had to do with building houses. But first, Sister Joanne said I had to learn my prayers. She gave me a couple of sheets with all the basic prayers – in Spanish – proving that prayer is important no matter where we go in life.

1970s

Donald G.
Burke



A year after I graduated from Boston College, I was hired for an open English teaching position at Mission Church High School in Roxbury, Massachusetts. In September 1975, I began a teaching career that would last for 45 years. I became a good teacher because of all the SSND with whom I worked.

Starting out as a teacher, I was guided by the new administrative team of Sisters Joan Doyle and Miles Ferrick, and, of course, the heart and soul of the high school who did all for the students, Sister Alice Catherine. I also taught with veteran sisters like Sisters Mary Martin, M. Evangelus, Ethel Francis, M. Lotharie and Margaret Concepta. A few years later, Sister Jacqueline Colabella and Sister Mary Foley would be the new administration. They would be joined on staff by Sister Ruth Haley, Sister Judith Caron, Sister Eileen Shea and the sweetest and most caring teacher, Sister Michaela Durkin.

How lucky I was to grow as a teacher with these SSND. I was equally blessed when the students dedicated the 1979 yearbook to me.

I was blessed to have been formed in faith and character by the many people of mission who touched my life.

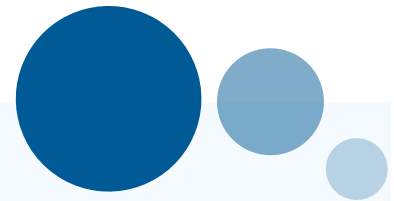
1980s

Linda
Lohrfink



I attended St. Mark School in Catonsville, Maryland, before going on to high school at Archbishop Keough High School in Baltimore. I feel very fortunate that I was able to attend Catholic schools for 12 years. I went on to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree in medical technology and worked as a medical laboratory scientist for over 33 years. Catholic school definitely prepared me for a successful college education. I am thankful that my parents provided this education and for all the SSND and lay teachers throughout my school years.

But my appreciation for SSND began long before I attended school. Before I could even walk or talk, I had the distinct honor of having an aunt who was a SSND. Sister Mary Arnold (later Sister Ann C. Lohrfink) dedicated me, prayed for me and taught me the love of music with piano. She later arranged a home Mass where I received my First Holy Communion, and she also served as my Confirmation sponsor. I spent weekends at the convent and every holiday with Aunt Ann until January 2016!



1990s

Theresa Bebaaku
Dery, PhD



I was born in the historic city of Cape Coast, Ghana – the heartland of the missionaries’ three Cs – Christianity, commerce and civilization. God graciously brought Sister Mary Ann Matachinskas to both mediate and complement my parents’ effort in giving me a good education.

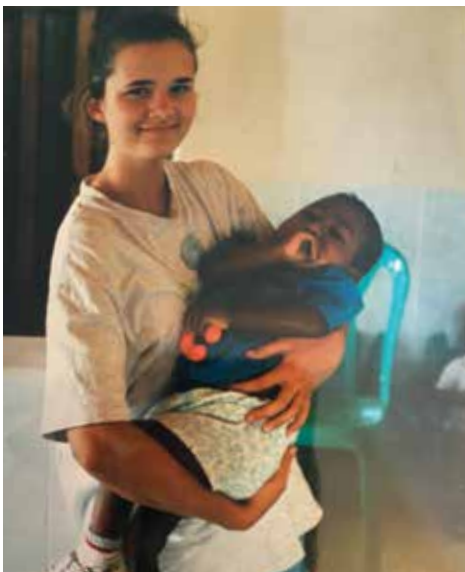
Currently, I am a medical physicist and research scientist at the Radiological and Medical Sciences Research (RAMSRI) of the Ghana Atomic Energy Commission (GAEC), lecturer at the School of Nuclear and Allied Sciences (SNAS), University of Ghana and a married woman. My life may have taken a different trajectory without the critical role played by Sister Ann. I registered my first and earliest encounter with her when I enrolled at Mary Queen of Peace Catholic School for my basic education. Since that historic meeting, Sister Ann’s influence over my life has been not only indelible but also transmissible to the next generation.

She became my academic mentor, counselor, religious educator, cheerleader and inspiration – all seamlessly fitting the indexes of a life coach. She had a mothering spirit embodied in her faultless sense of empathy toward my multiple childhood vulnerabilities. While a resident in Cape Coast, Sister Ann committed me to the care and guidance of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. The SSND nourished my faith in Christ against the turbulence of early adolescent life.

In sum, Sister Ann was an altruistic and selfless friend who embodied Proverbs 18:24. We all need a Sister Ann who complements her mentee’s flourishing.

2000s

Jess Paddock
Lepage



My connection with the School Sisters of Notre Dame runs deep. My mom started teaching at Notre Dame High School in St. Louis in 1980. When I was a kid, I would go up to the high school with her during the summer to help prepare her classroom for the upcoming school year. Additionally, we’d go as a family and get our photo taken each year at Fall Festival and take home one of those circular photo buttons. I even made my musical debut as Gretl in the Sound of Music when I was in third grade. The high school is situated right next to the SSND motherhouse, and we would go there for ice cream socials. I also took violin lessons from one of the sisters in the motherhouse for years. We celebrated at Jubilees and honored lives well lived at funerals.

The sisters were a part of our lives and still are today. I eventually attended Notre Dame High School, and during my sophomore and senior years, my dad and I took mission trips to Honduras with a construction crew, doctors and dentists. On our first trip, we stayed with local SSND, which made our experience that much more meaningful. When I prepared for college at the Culinary Institute of America, I needed additional cooking experience, so I worked at the motherhouse in the evenings making buffet dinners for the sisters. I grew up on that campus and it was, in part, one of the reasons I am who I am today. I am so grateful to have spent the first 18 years of my life being surrounded by independent women who have a sense of community. Women who are empathetic and tenacious when it comes to doing the right thing. They have instilled in me values I have used as I raise my own family.

2010s

Medrine
Rono



I am an alumna of St. Francis Girls High School in Kiptere, Kenya. When I look back at the years I spent at St. Francis, I cherish every moment. Not only did I excel academically, but I also grew up to be a well-rounded girl physically, socially, psychologically and spiritually. The values taught from our school motto, mission and vision kept me striving to become a better person in society. Learning about myself and my abilities and talents was, and still is, the greatest gift I received. I treasured the mentorship through our interactions with the sisters, especially during life skills lessons, which empowered me as a young girl. The sisters' (especially Sisters Jacinta Kanini, Magdalene Akpan, Sarah Chepkorir and Millicent Awuor) understanding and welcoming nature always motivated me to learn from them, and they were always present to us, ready to guide and challenge us in a loving way. Through their example, I learned to work hard, collaborate with others, reach out to those in need and the importance of prayerfulness. I can't forget our school mother "Mati Caro" who played a big role as our parent challenging us to be responsible women wherever we would go.

Today I am a third-year student at the Tomboya University in Homa Bay studying biology and chemistry to become a teacher. I am where I am today thanks to the SSND at St. Francis Girls High School.

2020s

Josephine
Ugba



I am a final-year student at Notre Dame Secondary School (NDSS) in Mkar, Gboko, Benue State, Nigeria. As a freshman, I was timid and afraid. NDSS was a very new environment with unfamiliar people, but because of the kindness, love and attentiveness of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, it eventually felt like home.

My fears born out of stories I heard about boarding schools vanished. Everything was done in an orderly fashion and on time. It was a bit of a challenge to adjust at first, but now I am more apt. Our school encourages us to join societies and clubs, which I did, and it has had a positive impact on me. One of my favorite SSND is Sister Uzoamaka. She was our form teacher and religion instructor. She was our mother, sister and friend. As a little freshman, Sister Uzoamaka taught me politeness, obedience and good manners among other characteristics. I enjoyed listening to her stories and advice. When she left NDSS for a new ministry, I felt sad but was consoled by the fact that all she taught me is a part of who I am now, and I honor her by living it out.

Living among the SSND over the last six years has made me a more civilized, modest, polite and courageous woman, ready to join in making a positive difference in the world, sharing the wholistic education I have received from the SSND.

Do you have a story you would like to share? If so, please contact communications@ssnd.org.



Sister Vera Nnenna Owoh says watching the children at St. Joseph's Preschool in Sierra Leone learn and grow makes her whole world shine.

Connecting In New Ways

UNITING ACROSS EDUCATION

The experience of war, Ebola, mudslides and the COVID-19 pandemic in Sierra Leone has brought about many adverse effects, both physically and mentally, on its citizens. To help address these concerns in some of the country's youngest residents, the School Sisters of Notre Dame established St. Joseph's Preschool in Bumbuna, Sierra Leone, seven years ago.

"I love that I can help support parents by caring for and nurturing their children, and at the same time offer many great learning experiences to the kids," said Sister Vera Nnenna Owoh, school administrator at St. Joseph's. "Watching how children learn, grow, and develop makes my whole world shine."

Today, the preschool serves 140 students between the ages of 2-6. In addition to traditional studies such as learning the alphabet, basic math, creative arts, and rhymes and rhythms, the school provides important psychosocial support to children and their parents, or – in many cases – guardians.

Challenging financial situations have led many residents to abandon their farming systems for more lucrative mining jobs. This often means they have to leave their family behind.

"Many of our students live with single parents, while some are left with grandparents or relatives," explained Sister Vera. "There are even cases where some children are left with neighbors because of the desperate situation of a parent. It is becoming a painful reality to see the growing number of children and young people roaming the streets of Bumbuna. At a very young age, kids are already exposed to risks and other forms of exploitation. At a tender age, many children are already going through rough times in their lives. This explains why many children come to school with multiple needs to be addressed."

Poor economic conditions also make running St. Joseph's difficult at times. The preschool relies solely on parents' contributions to support its teachers and provide the materials and resources needed for daily instruction.

Despite these obstacles, Sister Vera finds great joy in her ministry at St. Joseph's and in integrating her life with the local community.

"The unexpected moments of laughter the children bring into my world are worth every minute of being at St. Joseph's," said Sister Vera. "Having a preschool like St. Joseph's, where the holistic formation of students is of great importance, gives hope to the young and the future generation." ●

Connecting In New Ways

BONDING ACROSS FAITHS

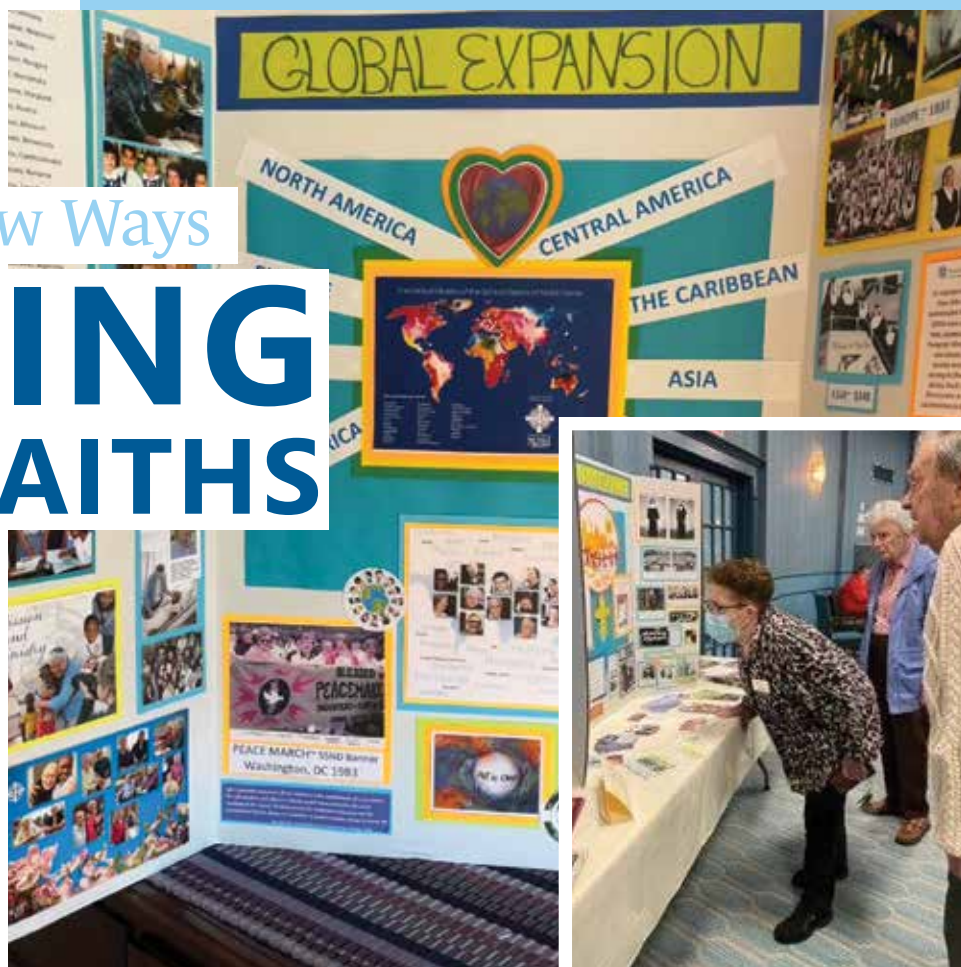
In August 2021, the School Sisters of Notre Dame began the transition of moving from their beloved Villa Notre Dame in Wilton, Connecticut, to residences at The Watermark in Bridgeport, Connecticut.

It comes as no surprise that in their new home, the approximately 60 SSND were quick to make friends.

“Our apartments are mixed in among all the residents, which is good for getting to know them and for them to be comfortable with us,” said Sister Kay O’Connell. “I think we’ve just naturally done a good job of being friendly to the residents and staff. What they say to us is that we have really made a difference to the spirit of community within the house.”

Through all the socializing, it became clear there was a lot of mystery and misinformation about women religious and the School Sisters of Notre Dame who had moved in. So the sisters decided to do something about it.

“The residents were asking us questions all the time,” Sister Kay explained. “They wanted to know more about the community.



Residents at The Watermark in Bridgeport, Connecticut, view display boards that highlight SSND history.

And very early on we thought about giving a presentation about what SSND is, because with all the residents of all the different faiths and everything, we had no clear idea what their impressions were of sisters. So we highlighted our Foundation Day.”

The School Sisters of Notre Dame was founded by Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger in Neunburg vorm Wald, Bavaria, on October 24, 1833. The congregation continues to celebrate this momentous occasion every year on this day.

In 2022, a committee of SSND at The Watermark used Foundation Day as an opportunity to invite residents and staff to a special presentation about the School Sisters of Notre Dame. Sister Kay wrote the script, while Sister Pat Hammond gathered pictures to coordinate with a PowerPoint production. The story, which spanned the history of SSND from 1833 to the present, was shared by Sisters Shawn Kavanagh and Virginia Stasium. Throughout the presentation, Sister Bea Ste. Marie wove in insights about the transition that all Watermark residents have experienced in leaving behind their homes, some cherished memories, and a lifestyle they held dear. Her remarks focused on the reality that everyone has a similar story to share and the hope that as all residents continue to get to know each other, everyone’s lives will be enriched.

After the formal presentation, residents could view the large display boards, which gave highlights of the SSND story, created and artistically displayed by Sister Justine Nutz.

At the end, the sisters all raised their arms and sang their beloved SSND blessing for the participants in the room. All could feel the spirit of community and unity.

“The presentation was very well attended,” Sister Kay added. “It was a very nice time of unity with everyone.”

The sisters have also done their part to honor the faith beliefs of the other residents. There is a large Jewish population at The Watermark, and some sisters go to

the Rabbi’s talks and Shabbot on Friday nights. Others attend talks by a Protestant minister who regularly visits.

“The sisters attend for enrichment and openness to other faiths, and just to be with their neighbors,” noted Sister Kay. “And they go to card games, lectures and trips. Sisters, according to their abilities or interests, try to go to almost everything. We’re doing what we can to join our new community. People are pretty well integrated. It’s a very social atmosphere.”

Added Sister Kay, “We feel God sent us here. God is preparing a new era of religious life. We feel we are fostering a new version of consecrated religious life.” ●



Sister Karen Walther (second from right) instructs sisters and Mount Mary University students on how to make paper flowers during a Sister to Sister gathering at Trinity Woods.

Connecting In New Ways

RELATING ACROSS GENERATIONS

Many people are accustomed to School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND) teaching in classrooms to transform the world through education. SSND in North America continue to find new ways to engage with students and teach in the broadest sense. One such program is called Sister to Sister at Trinity Woods, an intergenerational living community

nestled on the campus of Mount Mary University in Milwaukee. The complex houses retired SSND and other senior citizens, and undergraduate Mount Mary University single mothers and their children. Living on a university campus has created many benefits for the sisters who call Trinity Woods home.

"As sisters, many of us are still active and want to be engaged with people," said Sister Susan Ann Adrians, one of the Sister to Sister participants. "We are very interested in intergenerational relationships. When Mount Mary initiated Sister to Sister, we thought, 'Wow, this is amazing.' I think it had to do with the desire to really get to know young women who are engaged in life."

Fellow Sister to Sister participant Sister Karen Walther added, "One of the benefits of being so close to the university is everything is right there. We don't have to drive anywhere, which means sisters at any level of care can participate in Sister to Sister. One of the participants is 98!"

The Sister to Sister program launched in fall 2022 when two students came up with the idea. They approached Theresa Utschig, Mount Mary University Campus Ministry Director, who was very supportive and helped make the program a reality. The purpose of Sister to Sister is to provide learning opportunities, support and friendship between SSND and Mount Mary students.

"We are all about fostering community anywhere and everywhere, and Sister to Sister is one way of doing that," said Sister Karen.

The program pairs a sister and student together. In its first year, a dozen students and sisters met regularly throughout the school year. Gatherings involved an activity for everyone and time for personal one-on-one connections between students and sisters.

"Maybe [students] will talk about some of the struggles they're having in studying," said Sister Susan

Sister to Sister partners share a laugh at the spring gathering.



Sisters Susan Ann Adrians (left) and Karen Walther talk with participants during a Sister to Sister gathering.



Ann. "Some of them have struggled with family issues.

As the sister and student get to know each other, they share at a deeper level. I think maybe in some cases [students] can really open up to a sister who is not going to judge them, who will listen to what they have to say. A sister who will support them, who will enjoy their company and have fun with them."

Sister Susan Ann added, "We are human beings just like everyone else. And that's what I like them to experience. We're not above or below, we're equal with them."

Ministry at their doorstep

Outside of their Sister to Sister experiences, SSND at Trinity Woods have found other ways to minister and connect.

"There is a couple down the hall who moved in a few months ago," said Sister Karen. "I was talking to the husband, who said his wife has early dementia, and he's quite concerned about her. I have some resources from my parish work – activities to do with somebody with dementia, resources on area options here – so it's always education."

Sister Susan Ann, who is a licensed professional counselor, has had similar experiences.

"Often we have resources available that we know of," added Sister Susan Ann. "Recently our neighbor asked to talk to me, and I was with her for two and a half hours, where she shared her burden, and I could listen and be of support to her.

"It's really wonderful because there are so many occasions where we don't have to go out to do ministry. There is enough ministry to do right here." ●

Shining A Light On SSND

Catholic Sisters Week (CSW) takes place every March and shines a light on the spirituality, mission and community building of women religious around the world. It is a chance to recognize all that sisters are and do, with the hope that as more young women learn about Catholic sisters, they will choose to explore consecrated life more intentionally and discern God's call.

For CSW 2023, several sisters, associates and students were invited to respond to a set of prompts designed to help others learn more about SSND and religious life. Their responses were compiled into videos available for viewing at ssnd.org/catholic-sisters-week-2023. Here are some of the responses.



Clockwise from top left: Student Andino, Sister Pat Murphy, Sister Maria Gomez, student Anna Kate, Sister Juliana Wangao and Sister Margarida da Silva

What is the role of women religious today?

Sister Juliana Wangao

... to exude motherly love, motherly care, motherly warmth and especially motivating people to work towards positive social change.

Sister Rose Rita Huelsmann

... finding a way to transition humanity away from being a destructive force in our Earth community to becoming a benevolent presence.

What do I find most rewarding about religious life?

Sister Lucy Waigwa

... the joy of being radically loved by a faithful God and sharing this love to all of humanity and indeed, all of creation.

Sister Margarida da Silva

Living with sisters that have the same desires and dreams about our world and what all the human family needs to be as a whole family of humanity.

How do I promote unity in my ministry and community?

Sister Joan Pikiell

... by reminding [others] of our commonalities - that we are all children of God. Regardless of where we are in the world or what situation we are in, ... we are loved, accepted, forgiven and embraced by our loving God.

Sister Maria Gomez

... by collaborating with my fellow colleagues so that we can best meet the needs of the patients.

What is the most important thing for people to know about SSND?

Sister Patricia Murphy

... that we are deeply committed to risk all we are and all we have for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ.

Sister Dorothy Zeller

SSND serve in over 30 countries, in parishes, schools and other ministries, extending ourselves outward to meet the needs not being met by others.

How am I inspired by SSND?

Anna Kate - Notre Dame Preparatory School

They show us every day that we are capable of transforming the world.

Andino - Notre Dame Girls Secondary School

Their commitment to prayer and total dependence on God in the governance of the school truly speaks a lot about their faith.





School Sisters of Notre Dame

in prayer, ministry and community



Sister Mary Jo Welter assisted by scooping rice at the Feed My Starving Children location in Chanhassen, Minnesota. The group packed 224 boxes with 36 packages of rice in each box.



Sisters gathered for a provincial assembly in Ghana in April 2023.



Intergenerational living is thriving at Trinity Woods, Milwaukee. Sister Martha Waligora shares a book with Mila and her mom Diana.

Sister Eileen Donohoe (left) and her neighbor enjoyed watching the coronation of King Charles III from their apartment in England.



Sister Maryann Ekam practices creative arts with her students at St. Edward's School in Bwaim, The Gambia.

Sisters Robert Marie Moser, Anne McCarthy, Leonora Tucker, Michaela Durkin, Justine Nutz, Theresa Lamy and Katharine Lawless help Jamie Shannon of the Development Staff package the annual Stewardship Report.





SSND Associate and ESL Coordinator Margarita Silva (center) and Sister Lucy Giacchetti (right) work with a student at Corazón a Corazón in Chicago, Illinois.

Sister Magdalene Umoh (second from left) was recognized as one of the most influential and prestigious women in Tonkolili and Bombali District in Sierra Leone.



Sister Dana Marie Heffner assisting 4-year-olds at St. Cecilia Catholic School in Houston.



Sisters Donita Mathis and Rose Cecile Espinos at the 2022 Jubilee celebration at Marian Village in Homer Glen, Illinois.

Sister Stella Anyanwu instructs a senior biology class at Notre Dame Secondary School in Mkar, Nigeria.



Sister Louise Benecke visits with Sister Reina Marie Quiroz at The Sarah Community in Bridgeton, Missouri.





MEET OUR SISTERS



SCAN ME



SCAN ME



SCAN ME

Sister Gilda Bruce
Orange, California

What do you love most about being a SSND?

I am inspired and loved by these women. I know we are each so much more because we do life together.

What is your current ministry with SSND?

I currently minister as a massage therapist. I am also one of the Associate co-coordinators for California. Before becoming a therapist, I taught for 21 years.

Sister Joan Pikiell
Timonium, Maryland

What do you feel is the most important thing for people to know about the School Sisters of Notre Dame?

The School Sisters of Notre Dame are women committed to living the Gospel in light of the ever-changing conditions of the world.

What do you like to do in your free time?

I enjoy watching almost any sport, but college basketball and football would be my favorite. I play golf whenever I get the chance.

Sister Lucy Waigwa
Bwiam, The Gambia

What inspired you to become a sister?

I was inspired to become a sister because I felt a strong love of God that begged to be expressed by giving myself totally to God and to the service of humanity.

Anything unique about yourself that not many people know?

I love mountain climbing. It gives one ample time to contemplate. It is also a test of endurance and a great opportunity to connect with God.

Learn more about each of these featured sisters, including video interviews, by opening the Camera app on your cell phone and pointing it at the QR code next to each picture. Then tap the pop-up banner or yellow QR code icon on the screen.