Vol. 2 | 2023

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Central Pacific Province

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD THROUGH EDUCATION

Spirituality

In this issue: Jubilee 2023

Sister Debra Marie Sciano, SSND

"I cannot describe my interior peace; now I am in Jesus; he may do what he wants with me and him I can trust. 'Remain in me; I remain in you.' On him I will build."

~Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger
Letter #1, March 16, 1822

Dear Friends and Supporters,

I am pleased to announce we are preparing to install our new Provincial Council on June 10. I am humbled to share that I have been elected to continue as Provincial Leader. As we prepare for a change in our province leadership, I want to thank our outgoing council members – Sisters Dawn Achs, Christine Garcia, Anna Marie Reha and Lynne Schmidt. We appreciate your prayerful presence, hard work and commitment. I am happy to welcome back Sisters Mary Kay Brooks and Helen Jane Jaeb. Your experience and energy will support the new Council. I am excited to share our new council members – Sisters Joan DiProspere, Sandra Helton and Regina Palacios.

What an amazing group of women leaders! I look forward to working with all of them and hope you can meet them soon. Look on the back page for your invitation to the online installation service on June 10.

In the January 2024 newsletter issue, you will get to know our new Provincial Council with photos and biographies.

The theme for this issue is spirituality and the many ways our sisters and associates live out their personal and communal spirituality, including a compilation of thoughts about Spirituality in Leadership from our current Provincial Council. What a wonderful way to wrap up their years of service and prepare for whatever the future will bring.

As always, you, our family, friends and supporters, are in our thoughts and prayers. Thank you for all your prayers, love and support, especially during this time of transition. We pray for you every day and ask that you do the same for us.

With peace, blessings and gratitude,

Debra Sciano, SSND

Debra Sciano, SSND
Provincial Leader

ON THE COVER:

Sister Joyce Kolbet playing piano for Mass at St. John the Baptist Parish, Mankato, Minnesota. Photo submitted by Sister Joyce Kolbet.

School Sisters of Notre Dame

Central Pacific Province live and minister in 47 dioceses, 22 states, the U.S. territory of Guam, and the countries of Ghana, Italy, Japan, Kenya and Nepal.

Contact Resource Development or inquire about finding a sister at missionadv@ssndcp.org.

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Spirituality and prayer life for School Sisters of Notre Dame

"Presence to and for one another, through our prayer, dialogue, and ministry, we become a community of one mind and one heart." ~ You Are Sent, C 7

Below is a reflection by Sister Joyce Kolbet, of Mankato, Minnesota. Sister Joyce shares the importance of music throughout her life, how music deepens her spirituality and is a form of prayer.

Music: A vital organ

A reflection by Sister Joyce Kolbet

Throughout my life I have experienced music as food for my soul and a way of bonding with others. My dad was a guitarist and loved to sing. Mom was a pianist and very involved as a cantor and choir member at our home parish. It was a given that my sister Kay and I would learn piano and organ from childhood.

One of my attractions to the SSND was my weekly piano lesson with Sister Therese Marie Merth. Beginning in grade three, I rode my bike to the convent each Saturday for my lesson. Sister Therese Marie, then age 20, warmly welcomed me into the sisters' home. The "piano parlor" was directly across from the small chapel where I often noticed the other sisters quietly praying. I was struck that my lessons never seemed to disturb them. Years later some of the sisters told me they made my music their prayer. By that time, this was a life lesson I had already discovered.

Musicality runs in the family. (L to R): Sister Joyce Kolbet playing piano with her grandnephew, Walker. Photo submitted by Sister Joyce Kolbet.

Whether as a teacher, campus minister, hospice chaplain, vocation minister, pastoral associate or in my current ministry with caregivers and older adults, music is one of my vital organs (no pun intended). Accompanying and song-leading for weekend liturgies and funerals at my local parish, playing piano for SSND celebrations, singing at the bedside of a dying loved one, playing or singing familiar tunes with caregivers and their spouses with dementia – all of these ARE my prayer and an integral part of my spirituality. Music helps me embrace the sacred within and around me – receiving ALL as gift from my Creator.

In October of 2022, I had one of these sacred experiences when dear friends from Good Thunder, Minnesota, where I had served in music and pastoral ministry, and SSND friends and classmates drove to my home parish in Cresco, Iowa, to assist with music ministry for my mother's funeral. At the age of 85, Sister Therese Marie was among them to play the piano for Mass. What a beautiful tribute to mom and a treasured gift to me. Music was the thread that united us and made God deeply present at this tender time in my life. ●

The Mankato Riverblenders, a barbershop chorus, selected Sister Joyce Kolbet to receive the **Award of Harmony**. The person selected, "creates harmony in our community and makes a significant contribution to all of us by what they have done." Since 1980, they have recognized outstanding community leaders, business people, educators, volunteers, artists and musicians. ●

Pictured are many of those who attended the concert and award presentation in support of Sister Joyce Kolbet (front row, center), this includes SSND, Good Thunder parishioners, VINE colleagues and St. John the Baptist priest. Photo by Jerry Groebner.

Praying with intention

by Lynnette Downing, Communications

Sister Mary Gilda Sturino told her parents that she wanted to be a School Sister of Notre Dame (SSND) when she was 13 years old. She entered the SSND after high school and professed her vows in 1945. Sister Mary Gilda will celebrate her 99th birthday in August 2023.

Praying the rosary is a tradition instilled by Sister Mary Gilda's mother. She and her siblings would pray the rosary in English and her mother would answer in Italian.

Sister Mary Gilda prays the rosary daily at Trinity Woods, Milwaukee, where those in attendance join her. When praying the rosary, her intentions are focused on the SSND benefactors and always for peace in the world, knowing that people should never resort to war.

Sister Mary Gilda is retired.

Sister Mary Gilda Sturino, of Trinity Woods, Milwaukee, prays with intention. Photo by Lynnette Downing.

When SSND retire, their ministry is described as Prayer and Presence. When asked about her Prayer and Presence, Sister Mary Gilda shared these thoughts, "Prayer and Presence are the secrets of life. It is being aware of God's presence in my life; I am then to be God's presence in the world. Anything that happens is a gift from God. We are all called to be God's presence in the world. I put my hands together and ask, 'Lord, help me to receive what you have prepared for me today.' I know that this conversation, the bingo games, everything that is in all actuality God's presence." Sister Mary Gilda added she is very grateful for her life and all of God's gifts. ●

Q: What does my ministry of Prayer and Presence mean to me and how do I live it?

Sister Louise Benecke

The ministry of Prayer and Presence calls me to make God's love visible by my very being. This jubilee celebration of 70 years of vowed life is my prophetic witness to God's steadfast loving presence and providence in my life. Grateful, I share His love by seeing and honoring God's presence and goodness in all persons; my sisters in community, all residents living here in The Sarah Community, all family members, friends, my sisters and brothers all over the world. It is a time to embrace and share as one in universal communion—the mystical body of Christ. ●

Image by Pixabay.

(L to R): Sister Louise Benecke visits with Sister Reina Marie Quiroz at The Sarah Community, Bridgeton, Missouri.Photo by Colleen Kelly.

Q: What does my ministry of Prayer and Presence mean to me and how do I live it?

Sister Therese Marie Merth

It means to live **into** the presence of Jesus, not only during my prayer time, but to let that presence permeate my relationships throughout the day. It brings me the responsibility to try to live more and more in this present moment, realizing that God is **here** in this person, this event, this situation, and I am called to be a channel of that love of God. ●

Sister Marylyn Irrgang

My ministry of presence means that I become present to the person(s) and events of each day as opportunities of grace. My ministry of prayer supports my availability to **BE** for others, by sharing life experiences with attentive listening to the other. A delightful time for this happens in the dining room sharing a meal, where friendships develop and grow. ●

All photos on this page are provided by a School Sister of Notre Dame at the Benedictine Living Community, Shakopee, Minnesota.

Sister Emma Buresh

Loving God, thank you for the ways you have us take part in creation. The two lily plants brought from Our Lady of Good Counsel garden to Benedictine Living Community are spreading your joy and love! ●

Spirituality in leadership

"What good will all our work do, if we do not do as God wills?"
~Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger
Letter 4262, March 3, 1868

Spiritual leadership is characterized by spiritual values and principles. Spiritual leaders understand the importance of supporting employees in finding meaning in their work and caring for the whole person. The outgoing Provincial Council shared their thoughts on Spiritual Leadership as they wrap up their term.

Sister Dawn Achs

Spiritual leadership first and foremost demands that I have a strong healthy relationship with my God, and that I am willing to share and model that through my service and presence with others. ●

Sister Christine Garcia

As a spiritual leader, and as a woman consecrated to God and Christ's mission, it has been incumbent to be quiet, taking time for personal prayer to be attentive to God who is active in my life and in the life of each sister. For me, these eight years have given me opportunities to journey with my sisters in faith, hope and love, with a growing consciousness that love, empowering us to love is what is essential. God is Love. Love is the force that has called us, indeed, all creation to realize our oneness in God's love for all. Promoting unity is the call of all of us. As Blessed Theresa put it, "It is not so much what we do, but how we do it." ●

Sister Mary Kay Brooks

With the dear Lord what we do is less important than how we do it.

~ Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger
Letter 5203, December 3, 1876

I keep coming back to this quote of Blessed Theresa. In all the activities of my day, no matter how small, I want to shower each person, each flower, each animal, all of creation, with love and compassion. I don't always get it right, but I strive to see "the good" in every encounter. ●

Sister Helen Jane Jaeb

Spiritual leadership is living the Spirit's call and leading with a spirit of giving and receiving. Leading with a spirit of excitement! ●

Sister Anna Marie Reha

In our call to spiritual leadership, we humbly take the gifts that we have received and generously give them as gifts: mercy, forgiveness, gratitude, joy, hope, courage, counsel, vulnerability, faith and above all, love. I am grateful for the many gifts and graces that I have received these past eight years and hope that I have, many times in small and imperfect ways, been able to share in return. ●

Sister Debra Marie Sciano

In order for me to hear the word of God, to see the face of Jesus, to believe that I am redeemed, accepted for who I am with all my limitations and vulnerability, and trust that I am lovable and called to share the good news with others, I need to pray for a heart of flesh, to receive with open hands, with an open mind and with an open spirit. ●

Sister Lynne Schmidt

Blessed Are We. The title of this textbook series came from French theologians following World War II. Each moment of life is sacred, is holy. Even in difficult times I have grown and appreciated what I learned. All is **gift. All** is gift. This is the spirituality that sustains me in provincial leadership. ●

Spiritual direction is a profound experience

by Adam Schicker, Communications

Being a spiritual director was a dream of Sister Sandy Bay, but after becoming a School Sister of Notre Dame (SSND) in 1966, she worked as an English teacher in elementary and secondary schools. In 1973, she participated in a spiritual direction program. This set the stage for her life's work.

Sister Sandy said, "It was a profound experience for me of God's love. And I knew immediately I wanted to do this work. I wanted to be able to provide whatever I could to help other people have that kind of experience of God's love." Today, Sister Sandy is a Spiritual Director at Mercy Conference and Retreat Center located in St. Louis.

At Mercy Center, Sister Sandy works closely with people participating in retreats, providing spiritual guidance while helping them navigate life's obstacles. Sister Sandy said, "My role is to listen and accompany them. And sometimes I make suggestions."

Sister Sandy shared how spiritual guidance changed one woman's life, "This woman was in turmoil because she was adopted as an infant. She never knew her birth mother. It was still a deep wound. She wanted more contact with her mother, but her mother didn't want it. She had to accept that. The thought came to me to suggest she imagine the scene of her birth - that Jesus was right there with the midwife: She was born, the midwife handed her to her birth mother and then her birth mother handed her to Jesus, who then handed her to her adopted mother. This exercise brought the woman to tears and shifted her thought process to realize it was God's plan that she would be with her adopted parents, with whom she had such a wonderful relationship." ●

Sister Sandy Bay is Spiritual Director at Mercy Conference and Retreat Center in St. Louis. Photo by Adam Schicker.

Please remember SSND in your will

Make a planned gift to the sisters. Please contact Mary Kay Murray at 262-787-1037 or mmurray@ssndcp.org. Those who remember SSND in their estate plans are recognized as Blessed Theresa Society members, honoring their extraordinary generosity. Visit: www.ssndcp.org/planned-giving.

From the director of resource development

By Mary Kay Murray, Resource Development

As the sisters embark on 190 years as a congregation (and having just celebrated 175 years in North America), they have an abundance of blessings, beginnings and milestones to celebrate.

In June, graduations are celebrated around the country. When I think of the sheer number of graduates that were able to receive a diploma due to the extraordinary education they received from the sisters, it is truly mind boggling and amazing. By 1892, Mother Caroline, the North American Foundress, opened over 220 schools. Sisters have taught in 43 states and provinces throughout the U.S. and Canada, totaling over 1,000 schools. Though we don't have an exact number, we know the sisters have educated over 1,000,000 youth who have gone on to help others reach their fullest potential.

Throughout the past 190 years, SSND has adapted to fit the needs of the world they serve. **The values they've instilled in the students they taught are like ripples spreading to the families, communities, and world around us.**

I have heard hundreds of stories from former students of how a sister made them "who they are today," but it doesn't just end with one person. Those students became parents, grandparents, community and business leaders, educators, doctors and so much more. We will never be able to fully comprehend the impact. Instead, we rejoice that the sisters are still able to continue their service to others today. This work may look different to us now, but it comes from the same source of love, prayer and unity, and it still leads us to a brighter future together.

We are grateful that you continue to celebrate and support each of our milestones with us. In the words of Blessed Theresa…

"No matter how much it storms outside, our congregation will stand firm and continue to flourish as long as we persevere in holy love among ourselves."

If you have any questions, please contact Mary Kay Murray, resource development director, 262-787-1037 or mmurray@ssndcp.org. ●

2023 Women's Leadership Luncheons

In March, business leaders, friends, colleagues, students and sisters gathered in Milwaukee, St. Louis, Dallas and St. Paul, Minnesota, for the 2023 Women's Leadership Luncheons. The luncheons celebrated the theme, ***Learning Today – Transforming Tomorrow***.

- In Milwaukee, speaker Amy Lovell spoke of the power of faith, health and leadership.
- St. Louis featured Michelle Russo Steeg, who shared of her call to embrace the swerve of mental health.
- In Dallas, Dr. Rosemarie Nassif, SSND, spoke about the need to trust your cape.
- The luncheon in St. Paul featured Louise Blissenbach Stemp, who spoke of maintaining good mental health while living with uncertainty.

Did you miss the luncheons? Join us in celebrating our 2023 Women Honorees at: www.ssndcp.org/wll23-honorees! Learn more about the speakers by visiting: www.ssndcp.org/wll-23. Plan to join us next March for the 2024 Women's Leadership Luncheons. ●

Milwaukee Women's Leadership Luncheon.

St. Louis Women's Leadership Luncheon.

Dallas Women's Leadership Luncheon.

St. Paul, Minnesota, Women's Leadership Luncheon.

Jubilarians reflect on spirituality

The spirituality of Jubilee

by Sister Grace Marie Mueller

Welcome Jubilee! Don't limit it in any way. Enter into it, body and soul to celebrate, to empower all we are and hope to be, to fulfill that ever-present change of living out the wonderful presence and experience of Jubilee.

Multi-layered experiences through those 70 years bring powerful memories as well as many images of hope and blessings. How great it would be to enter all these images as life-changing realities. What a challenge and invitation to be…to be open to all God's messages and challenges though all our remaining days here on earth. It all brings strong vibes of gratitude and challenge.

Through all our years, life has been a gift - a treasure beyond our understanding. This "beyond our understanding" calls for a deeper meaning in our life. Has the concept of Jubilee been hidden away through all these many years-50, 60, 70? What a long, giving gift to share and enjoy!

Each Jubilee year, or experience, calls forth deeper, and seemingly, more complex and meaningful responses. Life is a deeper, more complex and powerful daily reality.

Sister Grace Marie Mueller. Photo by Colleen Kelly.

Seemingly the only possible response is blessing, gracias, thank you, "mil gracias derramando"- an endless experience actually! An amazing blessing! ●

The Meaning of Jubilee

by Sister Joyce Engle

For me, the chosen theme
is big words
and sounds esoteric.
For me, jubilee, at 80, is so simple:
gratitude, joy, forgiveness,
being together,
the shared hope
of someday,
global peace.

I look out my window to check:
No mountain to climb,
No ocean to cross,
No crowd of folks to love,
to check for needs, nor, gratefully,
to fear.

There's just grass
sliding down
a slanted "hill,"
trees waiting for spring,
and the remembered flap of wings
and pecks of bills
of my feathered friends.

Jubilee at 80 is not grandiose,
complex verbiage,
everyone/everything
In order.

Jubilee is the joy of our sisterhood,
the shared gratitude
of our faith
and our hope,
what we have learned,
what we await.

Happy Jubilee,
Profession class of 1963!
We're all still connected
in the memories
of our youthful determination
and the transforming
wrinkles of our joyful faces! ●

Sister Joyce Engle. Photo by Colleen Kelly.

Rejoice with our Jubilarians

75 Years

† Mary Angeleen Brill
Mary Catherine Dundon
Mary Joyce Merten
Mary Faith Parkinson
Mary Magdala Winter

70 Years

Louise Marie Benecke
Catherine Marie Brandt
Helen Bronner
Evelyn Dangel
Monica Grathwohl
M. Paulanne Gruber
Janis Haustein
Aloyse Hessburg
Mary Paul Holdmeyer
† M. Agnes Claire Krogman
Mary Alyce Lach
M. Yolanda Latessa
Grace Marie Mueller
Joyce Ploch
Carol Polzyn
† Sylvia Provost
Mary Ancilla Sakaguchi
Gladys Schmitz
M. Petrann Sieben
Dolores Marie Siebenmorgen
Mary Adelyn Vokal
Anastasia Wehner
Marion Welter

60 Years

Mary Hope Billing
Rosemary Bonk
Frances Buschell
Mary Ellen Doherty
Jean Ellman
Joyce Engle
Carol George
Joanne Hanrahan
Dana Marie Heffner
Ruth Hinderer
M. Gloria Hirai
Rose Rita Huelsmann
Mary Canisia Hyodo
M. Evangela Imamura
Susan Jordan
Nicolette Karcher
Miriam Thomas Kessens
M. Lauretta Rose Koscielniak
Dorothy Land
Rosalyce Mercurio
Reina Marie Quiroz
Barbara Rupp
Del Marie Rysavy
Shannon Marie Scallon
Lynne Schmidt
† Laura Jean Spaeth
Loriann Stanton
M. Anita Takagi
Margie Ann Thole
M. Jeannette Toyosato
JoAnn Volk
Sharon Waldoch
Jane Frances Wand
Marcia Mary Zofkie

50 Years

Dawn Achs
Catherine Bertrand
Linda Marie Bos
Jean Ersfeld
Jeanne Goessling
Patricia Gravemann
Patricia Gunn
Gayle Hurban
Madeleine Lane
Mary Ann Osborne
Janet Tanaka
Mary Martha Waligora
Karen Warren

40 Years

Anna Marie Reha
Elizabeth Ann (Betty) Uchytil

† Deceased

View Jubilarian profiles at:
www.ssndcp.org/jubilee23

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Our Mission

is to proclaim the good news as School Sisters of Notre Dame, directing our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent.

*You Are Sen*t, Constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame

Love Gives Everything, Directional Statement of the 24th General Chapter, 2017

Join us for upcoming events!

Season 3: Migration, We Stand in Solidarity, is now available!

Learn more at: www.ssndcp.org/podcast

Listen on Spotify Podcasts

Listen on Apple Podcasts

Hold the date!

You're invited to the virtual Installation of the School Sisters of Notre Dame Central Pacific Province Provincial Council at 4 p.m. CDT on June 10, 2023. More details to come soon via email, the website and social media. Please mark your calendar now and plan to join us in welcoming the new Council.