“If today you hear GOD’s voice...” Psalm 95
Dear Friends of Notre Dame de Namur,

Laura Schroff, author of *An Invisible Thread* provides the reader with her story of the connection with Maurice Mazyck. Their destined meeting grew into a treasured friendship. Laura’s story illustrates the simplicity of the following proverb:

*An invisible thread connects those who are destined to meet, regardless of time, place, and circumstance. The thread may stretch or tangle. But it will never break.*

Chinese Proverb

The stories in this issue of *Good Works* are some of the “invisible threads” connecting you and others with us in a fabric of our Congregation. The threads of your love and support, interwoven with all our ministries of education, advocacy with immigrants and refugees, provisions for clean and safe water, and health care, enable Sisters, Associates, Volunteers and colleagues to continue the mission of Notre Dame de Namur.

We remember you and thank God with you for the *Invisible Thread* that God initiated and upholds with everlasting LOVE!

We journey with you through Lent to Easter, renewing the fundamental, permanent, unbreakable union each of us has with God who called us to life and sustains us with every breath. Let us celebrate the “ties that bind” us to God and to each other!

Easter Peace!

*Sister Teresita Weind, SNDdeN Congregational Leader*

*An Invisible Thread*, Laura Schroff and Alex Tresniowski. Howard Books. © 2011
The Mission Widens in South Africa

By Sister Marie McLoughlin, SNDdeN

ow in our 102nd year, the growth and development in St. Peter Claver School in South Africa are quite extraordinary. The Mission of our Sisters widens with dedicated administrators, staff and teachers committed to holistic education and the unfailing conviction that God is good. The long-awaited dream of establishing a high school on the site of the former Notre Dame Convent in Kroonstad, which closed in 1972, became a reality. In January 2018, the new academic year started with 320 pupils enrolled in Grades 7–12, and with 32 teaching and support staff in this High School building. There are 150 pupils enrolled in the Intermediate Section, now housed also in the renovated building. This expansion of the school responds to the parents expectations for continuing the education of their children. In Maokeng township, outside Kroonstad, there are 190 children in Grade R and Grades 1–3.

Serving with our Co-workers, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) are involved in the daily activities of the various sections of the school: Sr. Marie McLoughlin is Chaplain and Counsellor to the Senior classes; Sr. Gertrude Izuchukwu teaches Religious Education in the Intermediate Section and Sr. Chantal Kisimbila is the Financial Manager in the Foundation Phase of the School. Sr. Brigid Rose Tiernan sits on the Board of Governors, as Representative of the SNDdeN owners.

New School

In 2016, two members of the Congregational Leadership Team, Sisters Teresita Weind and Patricia O’Brien, came from Rome, Italy to participate in blessing the newly renovated school. With the addition of new classrooms, Grade 7 students moved in early 2017 from the Primary School in Maokeng township to the High School campus, at the site of the old convent. As hoped, this move had positive consequences, and already is providing the learners with the strong foundation necessary to meet the demands of the Independent Matriculation Examination which they will write at the end of Grade 12. St. Peter Claver is the only school in Kroonstad, and one of four in the Free State Province whose students take the school-leaving examination.

Instead of preparing our school-leavers for the state-run school leaving certificate, we chose the Free State Province examination because the values on which it is based are more in keeping with our Notre Dame educational tradition. The examination by the Independent Examination Board (IEB) demands creative and independent thinking on the part of those who take the exam, and it is much more demanding on the teachers. The pupils write the examination through the medium of English, and also write their home language, Sesotho, at the same ‘home language’ level.

During 2017, we explored a further development and consulted the parents and guardians of learners in Grades 4 through 6 about a plan to move the learners of these 3 Grades also to the site of the old convent.
Near the end of the Centenary Year of the Foundation of the School in 2016, a final celebration extended our Mission significantly to Co-workers. The Pilgrimage to the heritage places of our foundresses in Belgium and France became a special journey. The purpose of this pilgrimage was two-fold: to conclude together the Centenary Year and to render thanksgiving to God for these 100 years. The participants prepared carefully with monthly group meetings, focused on the significance of pilgrimage, the story of our foundresses, the values and history of the SNDdeN Congregation. Co-workers, Associates and Board members saw this pilgrimage as an opportunity to deepen their knowledge of the roots, spirit and ethos of Notre Dame and to strengthen their commitment for carrying the message of God’s goodness into the future.

A particularly moving event during this pilgrimage took place in the convent chapel in Cuvilly, France when two administrators at St. Peter Claver School, Zunelle De Ru (Head of the School) and Veronica Phadi (Head of Foundation Phase for the School) made their first commitment as Associates of Notre Dame.

Sisters, Co-Workers and Partners, living the Mission at St. Peter Claver, belong to the Notre Dame family and exclaim constantly:

“God is good.” And the journey continues…
Collaboration for Future Leaders

By Sister Mary Donohue, SNDdeN

Sisters Academy of Baltimore is a success story in progress for girls in Middle School, Grades 5 through 8. In 2002, Sr. Suzanne Hall, SNDdeN and Sr. Delia Dowling, SSND, current School President, presented to four Religious Congregations the need for a middle school for girls from southwest Baltimore, Maryland (MD). From the outset, the Sisters of Bon Secours, Sisters of Mercy, School Sisters of Notre Dame, and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have given energy and a strong commitment to Sisters Academy. Each Congregation’s particular charism contributes richness in this collaboration for children. We unite as Women Religious to do together what we could not do alone. As educators in a major city in the United States, we are mirroring and making known God’s goodness to a new generation of young women.

In 2004, the school opened to offer an excellent education to talented and motivated girls, so that each individual would reach her full potential. Within this nurturing community, students learn study skills, set goals, and develop leadership skills. For the current academic year, Sisters Academy has enrolled 71 students: 51 African-Americans, 15 Hispanics, 1 Asian, 1 Native American and 3 students from mixed races. Students come from some of the poorest, most depressed neighborhoods in Baltimore City, from communities plagued with high unemployment, drug addiction, crime, and lack of opportunity. Women Religious govern and sponsor Sisters Academy, while generous individuals, foundations, corporations and partners provide funding for families to ensure a tuition-free Catholic school in the heart of the city.

Success Story

The vision for graduates of Sisters Academy is that they become well-educated, self-assured, spiritual, committed young women and leaders who make a positive difference in their community, in our nation and our world. Our strong Graduate Support Program follows every girl throughout high school and college years. Since the first graduating class in 2008, 100% have completed high school, 93% attend college, post-secondary school, or serve in the military. By May 2017, alumnae from the first two classes have graduated from college and are beginning their career path, a significant milestone for them and for Sisters Academy.

From the opening of the school, many Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) have served as teachers, secretaries, volunteers and as Members and Directors. Currently, Sr. Mary Donohue, SNDdeN serves on the Board of Members, and Sr. Rosemary Donohue, SNDdeN (they are not related!) serves on the Board of Directors. Annually, each Religious Congregation celebrates a special day. Students remember St. Julie Billiart on April 8, the anniversary of her death in 1816. SNDdeN share stories of Julie and the Congregation with the girls on this day.

With St. Julie, I see that Sisters Academy does “teach the children what they need to know for life.” It is a joy to serve this school, through all its milestones: choosing a name for the school, purchasing the building, welcoming the first fifth grade class, rejoicing with the first graduates, and successive classes, and seeing alumnae complete college to embark on successful careers. One fifth grader expressed well the student perspective: “The first time I came here I was frightened. Then everyone welcomed me as a family member.” SNDdeN give our strong commitment to this mission for young women; we value creating a lasting family of welcome and accomplishment in collaboration with Congregations sharing this Mission.
Reaching the Borders for Refugee Women and Children

By Sisters Denise Curry, Therese (Tracy) Dill, Mary Alice McCabe, SNDdeN

During more than 200 years as a Congregation, we, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have been and are a strong presence in service to immigrants and refugees around the world. In the United States, with an increasing persecution of immigrants living in this country and the denial of entry to asylum seekers, our Sisters search for new ways to help peoples suffering under inhumane US immigration policies. The CARA Pro Bono Volunteer Project, established by the Catholic Legal Immigration Network (CLINIC) with 3 other immigrant advocacy organizations provides a new opportunity to serve immigrant peoples.

In 2017, three of us, Sisters Denise Curry, Mary Alice McCabe and Therese (Tracy) Dill spent a week as CARA Project volunteers in Dilley, Texas at a “Family Residential Center” under US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). This privately-owned facility houses 2,400 refugee women and children. It is a detention center, filled to capacity with mothers and their children, fleeing from persecution in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala. These mothers make this dangerous flight toward the US border in a desperate attempt to protect their children from violence and even death. In fact, these innocent women and children entering the USA find themselves in a prison which treats them like criminals and terrorists.

Volunteer Service

The CARA Project offers sensitive and compassionate legal assistance to these families. Spanish-speaking mothers prepare for interviews with ICE asylum officers in which they tell their distressing stories of persecution from either gang-related or domestic violence. As volunteers, we found a number of ways to help at the center. As interpreters in Spanish, we gave in-take talks for helping the women to understand the steps and to feel relaxed and safe in this asylum process. Meeting with each woman individually, we listened to her story and assisted her in preparing for her interview with an ICE asylum officer. We also assisted with the office work that needs to be done in order for the CARA lawyers and paralegals to provide legal services for the women.

To serve the increasing numbers of asylum seekers at Dilley, the Project needs more volunteers: lawyers, paralegals and interpreters. Volunteers meet hundreds of mothers and children, thin, exhausted, and frightened, who have been walking and hiding for weeks. The women and children remain in detention in Dilley until ICE determines their fate. In the interview, the ICE asylum officer listens to the woman’s experience and decides whether or not the persecution in her country of origin is “credible” enough under US immigration law to allow her to seek asylum and stay in the US. The woman must tell her story of having been terrorized and traumatized, in a convincing manner. She must show that she has fled for her life and that return to her country would mean death. The stories are very disturbing: gangs kill family members, kidnap children, force men and teenage boys into gang “membership,” extort monthly payments from well-off and poor alike, abuse and rape girls. In domestic violence cases, women are beaten, treated as property, held captive, and receive death threats.

Continued
SNDdeN in Ministry

REFUGEES/IMMIGRANTS

STORIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA

In El Salvador: There is a knock on Marta’s door. A gang member demands: “We need your daughter to sell drugs for us. You have a day to decide.” Marta knows that weeks before, a neighbor’s son who refused a similar demand ended up dead. Marta’s brother who also refused recruitment was killed 2 years ago by the same gang. So Marta and her 13 year old daughter quickly pack and flee, before sunrise, toward the Mexican-USA border in a desperate hope to plea for asylum in the USA.

In Guatemala: Brenda hears that strange men in a black car are kidnapping little girls at the door of the local schoolhouse in the remote area of Guatemala where she lives. Mothers are frantic and the police do nothing to help. Brenda, a single mother, decides she has no choice but to flee with her little girl. She faces the dangerous flight to the Mexican-USA border and asks for asylum.

In Honduras: Manuel, a 15 year old, is forcibly recruited into a gang but manages to escape a few weeks later and go into hiding. The gang threatens to kill his mother, Carla, if she does not reveal his whereabouts. Carla’s family tells her to flee for her life. Within days she is on her way north to the border, with Manuel, when they get the horrifying news that her house had been burned down.

Future For Women And Children

A positive evaluation from the asylum officer is required for a mother and her children to be released from detention and sent on to their destination in the USA.

A negative evaluation will send the mother and children into the deportation cycle, which in most cases, means a “death sentence.” CARA lawyers always appeal negative evaluations and do everything to give these women and children a chance at a new life.

A week with these mothers and children is an experience that shakes one’s heart and soul in a unique way. We meet brave women from both cultures: Central American women struggling against all odds to protect their families, and North American women, volunteers, pro bono lawyers and our own Sisters committed to social justice and basic human rights for immigrant families. At this time, more Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are preparing for volunteer service at this detention center in Texas during the current year 2018.

Come, join us... as a Sister (Vowed Member), an Associate or Mission Volunteer!

At the Eucharistic Liturgy in Tambogrande, Peru, Sr. Miriam Montero Bereche, SNDdeN (left), Canonical Moderator for the Peru/Nicaragua Province, witnesses the signing of the official document for the Final Vows of Sr. Consuelo del Rosario Zapata Crisanto, SNDdeN (right), by the priest.

For more information contact us at: INQUIRY@sndden.org
In Kisumu, Kenya, I am engaged in research, teaching and community service at the Tropical Institute of Community Health and Development (Tropical Institute). In collaboration with Community Health Extension Workers and Community Health Volunteers, we form a partnership to reach out to vulnerable communities. We mobilize and organize communities into Community Units to ensure dialogue, referrals and feedback mechanisms for communities linked to the health sector. At the Tropical Institute, we consider this partnership as working together for individuals and institutions in sharing resources, ideas and experiences to support, enrich and attain high quality outcomes in health care for all involved.

To revitalize Comprehensive Primary Health Care in Kenya, we collaborate with workers, volunteers and Community Units to enhance community participation in health care service delivery and health care outcomes. Together with other partners, we collect data and follow up indicators such as immunization coverage, Ante Natal Care (ANC), use of Insecticide Treated Nets for mothers and children under 5 years, vitamin A uptake, health facility delivery, and treatment for safe water. We post results of these indicators on community chalk boards located in central places within the community. We discuss this data in a forum of community dialogue which leads to community action days for ongoing health care.

Realizing that the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, through a Congregational Mission Fund, give financial support to vulnerable households, unable to access clean water, I requested financial aid from the international Mission Office in order to purchase water commodities for one Community Unit in Kisumu County.

From funds received, I was able to purchase the water treatment commodities of PUR water packets and aquatabs. Community Health Extension Workers helped to identify Kadero and Okok, Community Units attached to Gita Sub-County Hospital, as the villages, which could benefit most from these commodities. Kadero has 25 villages and Okok comprises 14 villages.

In April and May 2016, there was a cholera outbreak, resulting from contaminated water, in these Community Units. In following up the water treatment indicator, with the Community Health Workers, we began to raise awareness in these communities on the importance of household water treatment. It is also a priority to make the use of these commodities of PUR water purification packets and aquatabs a priority in these villages.

Even though clean water is still a critical issue, these commodities have gone a long way in reaching some of the most vulnerable households unable to access clean water. In sustaining and expanding this project, we intend to reach more households in the area. Obviously, this project continues to go a long way to reduce diarrheal diseases and water borne diseases in this community. The community in Kisumu appreciates the support of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and their generous donors who contribute to this safe water project.
SNDdeN Priority for Children

By Sister Jacinta Ojilimmobe, SNDdeN

In 2004, the Sisters rang the first school bell in Awkunanaw, Enugu State, Nigeria. Opening with only a few pupils, Notre Dame Nursery and Primary School has grown in numbers, like a mustard seed grows into the biggest shrub. To the joy of parents, we educate now 1,130 pupils in our school. As Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) around the world, the Nigeria Province gives priority to educating little children and students on the elementary level. We focus on children living in poverty.

With our Co-workers, five Sisters serve in this school: Sisters Francisca Aneke (Head Teacher), Saratu Barko (Religion Teacher), Maria Umeh (Bursar), Lucy Anaele (Assistant Bursar), and Jacinta Ojilimmobe (Head of Nursery).

In 2008, the Sisters, recognizing the necessity of teaching girls, expanded the school to include a Secondary Level, now known as Notre Dame Academy, Awkunanaw. A total of ten Sisters serve in both schools.

Our Nursery and Primary School aims at quality education to children, from babies to 11 years-old. We form the whole person for life: spiritually, academically and socially. Parents, valuing this full education and excellent teaching, send their children to our school, for early and ongoing formation. These little children grow and develop as persons, in relating with each other and their teachers, as we nurture their different qualities, talents and attitudes. With joy, these little ones identify letters, numbers, objects, play with toys, recite rhymes, colour art works, watch some educative videos, play in the recreation park, eat their food and even take a siesta.

In Primary classes (elementary level), besides the regular program of studies in languages (English, Igbo, and French), history and mathematics, subjects include: Christian Religious Knowledge, Music, Cultural and Creative Arts, Social Studies, Home Economics, Basic Science, Geography, Agricultural Science, Computer Instruction. Parents expect success in examinations for admission into secondary schools. We teach catechesis to prepare the children for First Holy Communion and Confirmation. At the morning assembly, the pupils read and meditate on the Scripture of the day. On feasts, the children reflect on lessons they learn from the stories in Scripture for their spiritual and moral formation. During the Advent season, elementary students have a retreat day. At the beginning and close of the term, the children’s choir sings at Eucharistic liturgies. Some children have also demonstrated artistic talent in special art projects. In practical Home Economics, children learn to cook and bake different kinds of food, as another skill for life. A computer company provides instruction in technology for the children.

Without many books, children are able to access varied subjects on the Internet!
Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur

Invite You to

Support Our Mission

Your donations support and sustain our worldwide Mission on five continents.

The Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) is a charitable institution with 501©3 status in the United States. Contributions support our Mission in a variety of ministries across the world.

How to support our Mission?

- Give Charitable Gift Annuities
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For more information, please contact:
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Ipswich, MA 01938 USA
coan@sndden.org

Website: www.sndden.org

Care of Creation and Whole Person

Our pupils learn to care for the earth by avoiding any kind of environmental pollution, by disposing properly of any waste materials. They are conscious of protecting and nurturing our environment. Our school discovers and encourages children who are gifted in athletics, dancing and public speaking. The school organizes biannual inter-house sports competitions and also inter-school sports competitions. They have won many trophies in past matches for the whole metropolitan city of Enugu. At times the dancing group entertains at school functions. Students enjoy and benefit from educational excursions. Students learn assertiveness and self-confidence. Most pupils are able to stand up in the public arena and deliver messages or read without anxiety. We see the beautiful development of our children.

Challenges

Many challenges face us today in attempting to accommodate the increased number of children requesting entrance to our school. We teach also a few children with special needs, since there is not any education for theme in the area. Another challenge springs from families, living with limited resources, even food and shelter. We do not deny an education to children living in poverty who have no other options. We thank our Religious Congregation and donors who contribute to SNDdeN Mission Support and enable us to reach out to give priority to children in need.

“Let the children come to ME…” Matthew 19:14

Sr. Lucy Anaele, SNDdeN takes time to help students needing assistance.
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.

SNDdeN Mission

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.

Africa
Democratic Republic of Congo
Congo Brazzaville
Kenya
Nigeria
South Africa
South Sudan
Zimbabwe

Asia
Japan

Europe
Belgium
France
Italy
United Kingdom

Latin America
Brazil
Nicaragua
Peru

North America
Haiti
United States
(23 states and the District of Columbia)

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