

VOL. XXVII NO. 2
WINTER 2022

Vision & Challenge

A publication of the Sisters of Notre Dame, California | One Heart • One Hope • One Mission

Congratulations to our Jubilarians





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SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME
Have ministered in California since 1924, bringing hope to humankind through education, faith formation, spiritual development, pastoral ministry, health care, social outreach ministries and missionary service. For more information, visit www.sndusa.org, and follow the link to Los Angeles, California.

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Pandemic restrictions were followed for all photography during that timeframe.

Please remember to recycle your copy after reading.

A Message from *Mission Advancement*

Dear Friends,

“I thought you were a teaching order...” This query from a donor invited me to explain the breadth of our mission and various ministries, both locally and around the world.

“Is this all there is?” I distinctly remember this query while conducting a phonics drill--as a first-year teacher, teaching first grade at St. Timothy’s School in Los Angeles. Today’s students are probably drilling phonics on video games!

These ideas create a backdrop for the contents of this issue of *Vision & Challenge*. To paraphrase our *Constitutions*, “Consecrated for mission...we serve people, especially those who experience poverty in its various forms, through education and other ministries.... We place special emphasis on spiritual development so that we may help others to grow in faith and confidence in God...”

Teaching is usually associated with classrooms. But as we adults learn how to benefit from Siri, Zoom and live-streamed liturgies, we realize that there is so much more to education. This publication highlights some of our educational and outreach ministries, and various forms of poverty we hope to alleviate—especially the spiritual poverty of those whose faith is weak.

So yes, we are a teaching order—with seemingly infinite opportunities to share our faith and confidence in God, and to work for the transformation of society. And no, although phonics is an important skill for young readers, it is not all there is!

To each of you who support us through prayer, encouragement, and financial resources, we trust that you will feel inspired by these pages. We are deeply grateful for your partnership and ask God to reward you for being part of our awesome mission!

Gratefully,

Sister Mary Lisa Megaffin, S.N.D.

Sr. Lisa Megaffin, S.N.D.
Director of Mission Advancement Services



In a recent Zoom meeting, the needs of the East African missions and possible funding sources were discussed by (top row) Jen Coito, Sr. Lisa Megaffin, and Sr. Christine Syombua and (bottom row) Jodee McElfresh, Sr. Kellen Muthoni, Sr. Therese Marie Nabakka and Sr. Colette Theobald.

With Hearts as Wide as the Universe

This fall, Sr. M. Kristin Battles and Sr. M. Kathleen Burns made an extended visit home to California from Rome, Italy where they currently serve in leadership for the General Council. A Global Update and Reception was held in their honor, marking the first time that guests were invited to Notre Dame Center in over 18 months due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. They were joined by Sr. Mary Ann



Donna Howard, Sr. M. Kristin Battles, Sr. Patricia Beirne, RSM, and Sr. Suzanne Krawczyk, RSM were happy to see each other.

allow newer members from diverse backgrounds to communicate across cultures as well as within language groups in order to envision and build for the future of the congregation.



Michelle Bubnis (who traveled with her husband Charlie from Texas) chats with Sr. M. Kathleen Burns.

Philippines, Vietnam, South Korea, East Asia, and Indonesia), Brazil, and India.

Recently Sr. Kathleen and her team received a grant to provide tablets for each novice that could be loaded with the resources needed for the coursework. In Bataan there is no internet access, so the formator is limited to what she has in the house. Delivering tablets loaded with all the resources and documents needed was a huge help. In addition, the sisters in the international novitiates spend time learning English or increasing their language skills. Sr. Kathleen has been able to curate content, modify verbiage to make it more accessible for sisters whose first language is not English, and ensure greater consistency in the contents of the SND formation programs around the world.

Attendees, both virtual and in-person, were inspired by the many ways that the congregation is growing around the world.

The full presentation is available at sndusa.org/globalupdate

(Right) Sr. Kristin toured an HIV Center sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame.

What is the Global Missions Fund?

The Sisters of Notre Dame are present in 17 countries around the world. There are nearly 1,700 sisters spreading the Gospel in a variety of ways. In particular, Global Missions supports the education of sisters and their ministries in East Africa (Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania), India, and Papua New Guinea. These are just a few of the ways your gift makes a difference.

EAST AFRICA

The missionary focus in East Africa (Uganda, Tanzania, and Kenya) is to educate impoverished children and teach women skills that empower their lives. In addition to our work in Uganda, SNDs in East Africa are ministering to the semi-nomadic Maasai people and establishing an international novitiate to form the newest SNDs joining the community in East Africa.

INDIA

Originally a mission of the Chardon Province, there are now more than 300 Indian Sisters of Notre Dame who serve in schools and medical centers. Four SND doctors and more than 25 SND nurses minister in areas of India where hospitals are hours away. They also minister in a leper colony, a prison, and a program for the eradication of tuberculosis.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

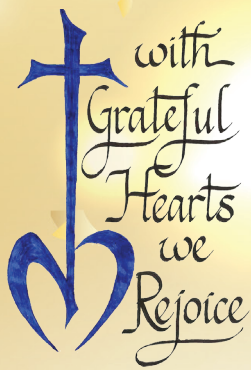
Sisters are involved in ministries of education and catechesis, pastoral care of AIDS patients, vocation awareness programs, and women's empowerment. Sr. Rose Bernard Groth received the Logohu Medal from the Australian Government in recognition of her incredible work in education and pastoral care for those suffering from HIV/AIDS.

Your gift supports the day to day needs in these countries, and empowers sisters to be leaders in their communities.

LEARN MORE:

[SNDUSA.ORG/MINISTRIES/#GLOBALMISSIONS](https://sndusa.org/ministries/#globalmissions)





On Saturday, Oct. 1 nine Sisters of Notre Dame celebrated 410 years of consecrated life at a festive liturgy in St. Julie Billiard Church. A reception followed at La Reina High School & Middle School.

Sr. Rebekah Kennedy opened the liturgy with these words in a Call to Worship:

If you listen carefully to today's Scripture readings, you will hear about two things that most women, I believe, are interested in—clothing and jewels, specifically a mantle and a pearl. Now it is not that the women who are celebrating 40, 50, 60 and 70 years of jubilee are not thankful for these things, but over our many years in mission to the Church we have been gifted with clothes and jewels that don't have a price tag and are not on display in Tiffany's windows. We, the jubilarians, have welcomed the call to be clothed with the mantle of religious consecration in serving all God's people whether in a classroom, a parish office, on an airplane, in a coffee shop, in a soup kitchen, in a family gathering or even on a Zoom call!

And we are grateful that you, our family, friends, and religious community have joined us today because for us, you are that pearl of great price, that treasure in the field that Jesus speaks of in the Gospel. So please pray, sing, and rejoice with us today!

And these are highlights from their grateful hearts...

Sr. M. Deborah Giles | 40 Years



Who is your favorite saint or inspirational person, and why?
Mohandas K. Gandhi—he lived the Gospel.

Who is one important mentor who has accompanied you on your life journey? What made that person a good mentor?

Sr. Fredricka Marie Kollsmith was my (very young!) 8th grade teacher and has always been one to encourage me, challenge my thinking and tell me the things I need to hear whether I want to hear them or not!

What was one particularly meaningful experience you had in your ministry, and why was it meaningful to you?

Someone with 3 severe mental illnesses, on maintenance

therapy, told me she tried to live a trinitarian life: to know the Father's will, to be a more active member of the Mystical Body of Christ and to be ever responsive to the promptings of the Spirit. I was so touched by this person's faith, patience with the burden of mental illness and profound spiritual practice. This person lives in my memory as a gift of God.

Sr. M. Frances Wahl | 40 years



Who is one important mentor who has accompanied you on your life journey? What made that person a good mentor? Sr. Mary Ann Hanson is a special companion to me. She lives out her love and concern for others, is prayerful, supportive, a good listener, and she loves Notre Dame!

Briefly describe your vocation story.

• Relational • Love • Service • Eucharistic • Gospel • Other-centered

What was one particularly meaningful experience you had in your ministry, and why was it meaningful to you?

Meaningful experiences really vary! I find it so powerful to be on retreat with young people and share my love of the Lord with them. So often it is something they haven't experienced on a deep level.

I also find great meaning in sharing the scriptures with participants in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults. Most of the time I am unaware of how meaningful the sharing was until later when they come to me and tell me that they heard something the Lord wanted them to hear. It is when I share and get out of the way of the Lord that his mission can be accomplished. It is not about me, it is about the Lord.

Sr. Mary Amy Hauck | 50 Years



Briefly describe your vocation story. A homing instinct, a knocking on my heart's door

Who is one important mentor who has accompanied you on your life journey? What made that person a good mentor? My most significant mentor was our novice

directress, Sr. Mary Damien May. Through her instructions I really learned how to "navigate" in Notre Dame. Her goodness, as well as her integrity, continues to inspire me.

What was one particularly meaningful experience you had in your ministry, and why was it meaningful to you?

That would be when I was provincial superior. Sr. Mary Margaret Droege of Kentucky and I explored the feasibility of opening a foundation in Uganda. We traveled extensively and finally came to the little village of Buseesa. Welcomed by the entire village with song and dance, I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit. I knew from that moment that the Buseesa mission would become a reality. It was for me a deep experience of God's care for this future foundation and especially, the villagers.

Sr. M. Domnic Jones | 50 Years



Who is your favorite saint or inspirational person, and why?

I have loved St. Dominic since junior high. I so appreciate his devotion to Mary, his personal care for his community members, and his willingness to sell his personal possessions to give to the poor and enslaved.

Briefly describe your vocation story.

• Call • Response • Struggle • Prayer • Perseverance • Peace

What was one particularly meaningful experience you had in your ministry, and why was it meaningful to you?

The two years I worked with mentally challenged women at Marian Homes in Walnut and Anaheim were particularly meaningful. Some of the residents needed a lot of help with personal care, several had jobs, while some went to special needs day care programs. Their challenges were varied, including Downs Syndrome, schizophrenia, scoliosis and legal blindness. Everyone from the three group homes gathered for monthly birthday parties. The most popular house had a pool—so I had to take a lifeguard class! Overall, the residents' simple approach to life taught me what is most important.



Many of the SND Associates from the California region attended the jubilee.

Sr. M. Rebekah Kennedy | 50 Years



Who is one important mentor who has accompanied you on your life journey? What made that person a good mentor?

Sr. LaReina Kelly was not only a good friend but a good educational leadership model for me. When I was a junior high teacher and she was principal, she would ask me to

do some pretty crazy (I thought) art projects for the junior high students, like papier mache African masks and bowls of fruit! But we did those things and loved them!

Briefly describe your vocation story.

• Parents • Ohio • Route 66 • South Gate • St. Helen's

Who is your favorite saint or inspirational person, and why?

St. Oscar Romero is an example of a cleric who examined his life of privilege and chose to be one with the poor and persecuted.

How has your spirituality changed over the years? My approach to Mary has changed. I grew up picturing the young teenager saying yes to God and giving birth. Now I choose to relate to the mature Mary who remained dedicated to her Jewish faith but was able to allow her faith in her Messiah Son to grow.

Sr. M. Joan Schlotfeldt | 50 Years



Briefly describe your vocation story. I felt a conviction that God was calling me, and I wanted to respond.

Who is one important mentor who has accompanied you on your life journey? What made that person a good mentor? When

I was a student at Notre Dame Academy, Sr. Marilynn Palenchar was the first person to ask me if I ever thought of being a Sister of Notre Dame. Over the years, I experienced her prayer, encouragement and support. Later, when she was my principal at Notre Dame Academy, she mentored me as a beginning teacher.

Who is your favorite saint or inspirational person, and why?

One favorite inspirational person is Pierre Teilhard de Chardin because he combined a profound spirituality with a deep knowledge of the magnificent cosmos created by God.

Sr. M. Joanne Wittenburg | 60 Years



Who is your favorite saint or inspirational person, and why?

That person is St. Therese of Lisieux. The more I have read about her life as a Carmelite, I have come to realize that many of the challenges she faced are similar to those I experience. I have found it very helpful to

understand and pray over how she handled them.

What do you love most about being an SND? As we say in our renewal of vows, “the love and support of my sisters” means a lot to me. There have been times when most of the sisters have been away from our community, and there were only two or three of us home. Although I may have been doing something by myself, I always knew there was someone else there.

What was one particularly meaningful experience you had in your ministry, and why was it meaningful to you?

In 1998-1999, I spent a year in Ukraine teaching at the Theological Academy and Seminary in Lviv. It was my first experience living in a foreign country and worshipping in an Eastern Catholic Rite. The people had only been free to practice their faith openly for about 10 years. Particularly among the young adults, there was a great enthusiasm for all things religious. It certainly made me appreciate my own faith, and especially my religious life.

Sr. M. Antonine Manning | 70 Years



What was one particularly meaningful experience you had in your ministry, and why was it meaningful to you? As a young

sister I wondered if I would ever get to visit Rome where our Motherhouse and Generalate is located. Well, when I was 50 years old I got my wish. I was called to

be the English-speaking secretary at the General Chapter of 1980. The meeting lasted about a month with work sessions Monday through Friday. This left the weekends for sight-seeing: St. Peter’s, the major churches, the Colosseum, the catacombs and more.

I even returned to Rome for a formators’ meeting some years later. A group of about 20 sisters from various provinces visited countries associated with our congregational history--Germany, The Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and France.

All of these trips strengthened my faith immensely as well as my gratitude for my vocation to the Sisters of Notre Dame.

Congratulations to our 2022 Jubilarians

Sr. Florette Marie Adams, Sr. Betty Mae Bienlein, Sr. Kathleen Burns, Sr. AnnCarla Costello, Sr. Marie Paul Grech, Sr. Judeen Julier, Sr. Jolisa Lazaro, Sr. Regina Robbins, Sr. Joann Schlarbaum, Sr. Karlynn Werth

Laird Wilson: *Gospel witness par excellence*

To say that Laird Wilson has been a Gospel witness at La Reina High School & Middle School is a gross understatement. As an alumna parent, energetic volunteer, founding trustee, and Plant Manager since 2007, Laird touched thousands of lives before his recent retirement.

At his retirement celebration, Laird commented “La Reina is a college prep school. But in my world, CP stands for commitment and passion. Commitment is a state or quality of being dedicated to a cause or activity. Passion is a strong and barely controllable emotion. I strongly believe that those two things

are intertwined...our graduates clearly understand you must be committed to something and that you need to make it a passion. I hope that I have been able to model this and that my actions have spoken louder than any words I might say.”

Laird has also been a partner with the SNDs at Notre Dame Center. Whether it was giving advice during a plumbing crisis or facilitating SND activities such as jubilee receptions or the Nun Run, Laird’s commitment and passion made an incredible difference.

Thank you, Laird!



Laird Wilson receives the standing ovation of the La Reina staff and students.

NOTRE DAME ACADEMY

Dear Sisters,

...WORDS OF GRATITUDE FROM NOTRE DAME ACADEMY ELEMENTARY STUDENTS ON THE OCCASION OF THE SCHOOL'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY

Since 1946, the Sisters of Notre Dame and many lay colleagues have provided a Catholic environment of educational excellence at Notre Dame Academy Elementary School in Los Angeles. A celebration of this anniversary was held on Sunday, September 12 and Lilliam Paetzold, an alumna and current President of Notre Dame Academy Schools of Los Angeles summarized it quite simply—NDA is in our DNA! Each SND received a sunflower, a congregational symbol inspired by St. Julie Billiart, with a personal message of gratitude from a current student. Their words reveal the lived reality of the SND educational vision, and its impact on generations of students.

"We still have many traditions like singing our school song after every Mass, making sandwiches (for those in need) on Founders' Day, and praying to St. Julie every day. Notre Dame has helped me become a leader." ~**Taline**

"I have grown in my faith even though I am Coptic Orthodox. I learn a lot from your religion books... I am forever grateful." ~**Piskof**

"Without this school, I wouldn't have grown in a better relationship with God and my friends. Thank you!" ~**DYLIN**

"I really don't deserve your incredible kindness. Keep doing what you are doing. I bet God is very proud." ~**Morgan**

"I've attended this school since 4th grade and I have had a blast... Your school taught me to be responsible, innovative and an effective learner..." ~**Kamran**

"NDA has helped me to grow in virtues and taught me how I can lead others, as you did!" ~**Sanna**

"Every morning I always tell myself how grateful I am to be in this beautiful school...The school you've built for me and my peers really shows me what faith can do and how faith can inspire others to love." ~**Valextino**

"I've learned how to be an academically prepared student... and not procrastinate." ~**Kelsey**

"Now when I'm struggling, I don't just have my parents and teachers to go to, I know I have God." ~**ANMOL**

"NDA showed me that as long as we have God, anything is possible. Thank you so much!" ~**Andrena**

"Before me, my aunt and sister went to this school, they loved it very much. Thank you for bringing this school into my family." ~**Emerson**

"Thank you for building this school for me, my sisters, and my 3 alum cousins!" ~**Brena**

"My mom went to NDA, both the elementary and the high school, and is the reason I am here.... I am so blessed to be at this school." ~**Nessa**

"This school will always have a place in my heart. Thank you for 75 years of amazing service!" ~**Christian**

"You made this school possible. Specifically, the school you built helped me grow in leadership, empathy, kindness, religion, and responsibility." ~**Tessa**

"NDA has helped me become a morally responsible citizen." ~**Kyle**

"Thank you for keeping us safe... for giving me and every other student a caring and nonjudgmental environment to work in..." ~**Jacob**

"I love everything about NDA: the gorgeous campus, the exceptional teachers, and the warm welcome I received from my classmates. Without NDA, I don't think I could've achieved the level of happiness that I've reached at this moment. I am forever grateful..." ~**Camilla**

"I feel that NDA has made me become a way better person. For that reason, again, I thank you Sisters of Notre Dame." ~**Jonathan**

"...Back in the 70's, my father grew up in Cleveland (Ohio). He attended Catholic school all his life. Every year we visited Chardon for Christmas Mass. Now in Los Angeles, I follow in his footsteps. School was hard at my old school. I was born as a left-handed person so school wasn't really made for me. I joined NDA in 5th grade and the teachers have showed me that I can still succeed. So thank you." ~**Fletche**



Celebrating the 75th anniversary were (from the bottom) Sr. Julie Marie Arriaga, Sr. M. Joann Schlarbaum, Sr. M. Luellen Boeglin, Lilliam Paetzold, Sr. M. Judeen Julier, Sr. M. Rebekah Kennedy, Sr. M. Jolisa Lazaro and Sr. M. Frances Wahl.

The Grapevine

LA REINA CLASS RETREATS



Notre Dame Center hosted class retreats for La Reina's 6th, 7th, and 10th graders this fall. The students spent time in the chapel journaling,

praying, and experiencing Eucharistic Adoration. Many reported how much they liked this quiet, peaceful time before the Blessed Sacrament. Sr. Regina Robbins, Dean of Mission, shared that for many students the opportunity to come to the SND convent was a special experience in itself. All of the class retreats are designed to instill a "sense of the sacred and search for transcendence that leads to a deeper meaning in life"—a practical example of the Notre Dame Educational Principles.

NOTRE DAME ACADEMY COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

Through the recognition of the presence of God in each person and respectful listening, whatever separates us dissolves and a welcoming environment emerges. NDA provides curriculum, programs, opportunities and professional education that highlight the dignity of each person and respond to the needs of our time. By remaining true to our Catholic faith and to the educational principles of the Sisters of Notre Dame, our community is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These recent programs have put words into action.

The Black Student Union was inaugurated in 2021. BSU leaders created a series of videos called the "Black History NOW" moments that shared inspiring and educational messages centered on figures in the Black community. These were highlighted on the school's social media (and shared to the SND California Facebook page).

The Asian Pacific Island Desi American (APIDA) affinity group led an engaging session entitled "Colorism versus Racism in the Media" at the Media Inquiry Symposium. During Filipino American heritage month, the group presented the history and accomplishments of Filipino Americans within the arts, entertainment and political sectors.

The Latin American Hispanic Student Organization (LAHSO) hosted an information night for first-generation college bound students. Topics included college applications and financial aid. NDA Alumna, Cristina Cuellar '00 also shared her personal experience as a first-generation college student.

ST. PIUS X-ST. MATTHIAS ACADEMY "Preparing Young People for College, Careers, and Heaven"

Throughout the pandemic, St. Pius X-St. Matthias Academy became the stable source of the living Gospel and formation of mind, body, and soul for its students. Facing the difficulties of isolation for thirteen months, Campus Ministry took every opportunity to connect students virtually through prayer services and retreats. They safely gathered in the presence of God at drive-in Masses and outdoor Eucharistic Adoration services. "Through innovation, leadership, and dedication, the faculty and staff prepared young people for college, career, and Heaven," according to President Dr. Christian DeLarkin.

FUN FACT: 17 California SNDs attended either St. Matthias or St. Pius X High Schools. Today, St. Pius X-St. Matthias Academy is an SND Affiliated School.



CONDOLENCES

The Sisters of Notre Dame offer their sympathy to the families of

Mrs. Leonor Casas
SND Associate

Mrs. Martha Huggins
SND Associate

Mrs. Oi Sue Leung
mother of Sr. M. Grace Leung

Mr. Frank Wahl
father of Sr. M. Frances Wahl

REMEMBERING

SR. MARY BERNADETTE PENDOLA



Born in 1945 in Richmond, California, Sr. Bernadette was the only daughter of Charles and Mary Dilena Pendola. Influenced by the SNDs in her schooling, she entered the community in February, 1963 and professed her first vows in 1965.

Although Sr. Bernadette spent 24 years as an educator, her passion was caring for the sick, and she eventually became a licensed vocational nurse. Her long-time dream to serve in a mission came true in 2000 when she was assigned to the dispensary in Jamalpur, India. Later, she ministered as the school nurse at St. Julie School in Buseesa, Uganda.

After an obituary was posted online, the SNDs received several testimonials, including memories of her former Ugandan students. Norbert Mwesige wrote:

"We have lost a great instrument indeed. I am one of the pioneer students at St Julie Model Primary School in Buseesa who has ever felt how her services were so great and caring. She loved her work and she always encouraged and motivated all persons of all ages. May the almighty grant her happiness with the angels in heaven. I will miss you always, Sister."

Her life of consecration and service was the lived reality of her personal mission statement.

"God is my good Father, in Whom I trust, and to Whom I abandon all. God is Jesus, my Lord and companion. I love Him and His mission and am willing to risk everything for it. God is Holy Spirit, Who makes all things new, and in His light, brings rebirth."

May she rest in peace.

PLANNED GIVING

By including the Sisters of Notre Dame in your estate plan, you will invest in the ongoing spiritual, educational and charitable outreach of our congregation. Our legal title is "The Sisters of Notre Dame" and our federal tax identification number is 85-2630127. And many thanks to those who have already chosen this enduring form of partnership.