

Vision & Challenge

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SUMMER 2022

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



This Synod is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission.

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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,

Within the last few months, many Catholics have been engaged in the Synod, an opportunity to meet Pope Francis' request to engage in dialogue for better understanding of our call to holiness and to participate in the life of the Church. Conversations are occurring around the world in preparation for the 2023 Synod of Bishops. Although summaries of these conversations will be provided to deaneries, dioceses and other Church entities, I believe that there are many opportunities for individuals to embrace the themes of the Synod and most importantly, to follow the lead of the Spirit within one's heart.

These synodal themes, as outlined on the Vatican website, are also incorporated throughout this edition of *Vision & Challenge*.

Communion

The communion we share as Christians is rooted in the love and unity of the Trinity. We have a role to play in discerning and following God's call.



Participation

In virtue of the graces of Baptism, Christians are called to serve one another. Using our own experiences and perspectives, we are called to pray, listen, dialogue, discern and offer advice on making pastoral decisions which reflect God's will. Perhaps more importantly, decisions and actions need to start on the personal level, within one's heart and daily living.

Mission

Our mission is to demonstrate God's love to all humankind, especially to those who live on the spiritual, social, economic, and political margins of the world.

The photos on the front cover illustrate these three themes. The SNDs of the California region are

- at prayer,
- participating in a discernment exercise,
- initiating others into the Church,
- celebrating jubilees of religious profession...
- all under the patronage of Mary, Mother of the Church.

As Sisters of Notre Dame, we repeat these words in our vows: "I commit myself to serve the Church in the apostolic mission entrusted to this congregation." With this in mind, please know that we are dedicated to embracing this Synodal **communion**, **participation** and **mission**. And thank you for being our partners on this most awesome journey!

Gratefully,

Sister Mary Lisa Megaffin, S.N.D.

Sr. Lisa Megaffin, S.N.D.

Director of Mission Advancement Services

The Universal Synod at La Reina

DURING THE SPRING, THE RELIGION CLASSES AT LA REINA HIGH SCHOOL & MIDDLE SCHOOL PARTICIPATED IN A SCHOOLWIDE EXPERIENCE OF THE SYNOD.

Religion Department Chair Chad Ribordy felt that the Synod provided an important opportunity to engage the student body in conversations occurring in the parishes around the world. Religion teachers oriented the students to the purpose of the Synod, and using various resources,



Sandra Gutierrez shares her perspectives on the synod questions.



Ariel Sun and Anya Zhu participate in a table discussion across grade levels.

questions similar to those used in the parishes were prepared.

On March 21, students were divided into groups according to their religion classes, and sophomores, juniors and seniors acted as facilitators. Each group was a mixture of middle school and high school students. Sessions began with an opening song and prayer, a brief explanation of the groups' responsibilities, then group interaction. After some moments for silent reflection, the facilitator invited each member of the group to respond to each question. The sessions each ended with some brief sharing and a final prayer.

Eventually, the responses were compiled and a general form was submitted to the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.

In general, the students believe:

- The Church should be more open to listening to new ideas, especially coming from young people.
- They enjoy prayer; Mass gives them an opportunity to connect with God.
- There should be greater dialogue between the Church and other religions and with people with no religious affiliation.
- Some social issues need more attention, such as racism, poverty, the environment and the rights of those on the margins.
- More female representation in the decision-making bodies of the Church is needed.
- They like the fact that the Church gives them the opportunity to form community.

A senior who served as a facilitator summarized this experience: "I was able to see my relationship with the Church and God in a different light. This Synod exercise was an opportunity to accept the thinking of other students and respect them. I ended up opening my mind a lot, learning from the students, and making new friends."



(Left to Right) Ella Coleman, Sloane Yanicelli, and Lily Ladin engage in respectful discourse. Sloane recorded the group's comments.

Education, Empowerment, Leadership, and Service

On April 9, Sisters, Associates, and donors from across the United States tuned in LIVE with the SNDs in leadership in East Africa. Sr. Christine Syombua, Delegation Superior, was joined by panelists from Tanzania, Kenya, and Uganda to speak about the milestones, blessings, and future dreams for the SNDs in their respective countries. Speakers included: Sr. Kellen Muthoni, Sr. Elizabeth Wanza Mulako, Sr. Rozaria Katusabe, Sr. Therese Marie Nabbaka, and Sr. Teresa Kimario. Donors and friends have the chance to see firsthand how their gifts have been making a difference on the other side of the world! Together, we experience the great blessings of being one part of an international congregation and a global Church.

The Notre Dame charism is so vibrant, alive and strong in the speakers and the ministries they represented. While many African women occupy the margins of their society, the educational opportunities and vocational training that the Sisters make available to them enables them not only to engage in dignified, self supporting work, but also prepares them for leadership roles within their communities. Many viewers commented that they had no idea of the scope and number of programs the Sisters of Notre Dame are supporting across East Africa. Suzanne Devaney viewed the Zoom from California. She wrote, “I was inspired that in a very short 25 years the vision of Saint Julie could be brought to this area of Africa and blossom in a new culture. It is amazing that the missionaries could listen so well and adapt to the needs, the desires, and the practices and culture of a new nation. The new growth is a tribute to the original visionaries.”



East African SNDs preparing for their final vows minister in the Kicheko slums in Kenya.

An emerging priority for the East Africa delegation is justice, peace, and the integrity of creation. Every ministry site is making active efforts to conserve natural resources. Each Sister shared the ways that the ministries in her area were educating children and the community on ecology: from responsible use of water, to planting projects in both the city and rural areas. Sisters are also acquiring compressed firewood and educating their communities on how to use more sustainable fuel sources in light of the deforestation happening in Africa. Many of their upcoming projects reflect the need for environmentally sustainable infrastructure in East Africa.

The Sisters are incredibly grateful to the donors who helped fund a borehole well and pump in Buseesa, Uganda. Access to safe, reliable drinking water remains a concern across East Africa. Wherever Sisters of Notre Dame are serving, they work to bring this life-saving resource to the poor. The schools in Uganda and Tanzania are in need of water purification systems. Two sites in Tanzania were also identified as needing either a borehole or rainwater collection system.

Sr. Kellen Muthoni shared about the vocational training programs offered through the Zinduka Women’s Centre in Tanzania, in particular the tailoring program for girls who do not receive an education past primary school. The sisters plan to develop vocational training programs for the semi-nomadic Maasai people in Simanjiro as well as for women and children in the urban centers of Mpala, Uganda and Arusha, Tanzania.

SND Associate Jim Ford expressed, “I was glad to have the opportunity to see the results of the hard work that the



Pictured here are the California SNDs who served in or visited the East Africa mission. They are: (top row) Sr. M. Rebekah Kennedy, Sr. M. Colette Theobald, Sr. M. Paulyne Tubick, Sr. Jane Marie McHugh, Sr. M. Annette Adams (returned missionary from Chardon, OH), Sr. Antoinette Marie Moon, Sr. Mary Amy Hauck, Sr. Margaret Mary Scott, Sr. Rose Marie Tulacz. Front Row: Sr. Marie Paul Grech, Sr. Betty Mae Bienlein, Sr. M. Regina Robbins, Sr. M. Teresita Keliher.



Students at St. Julie Model Primary Boarding School perform household chores, such as washing clothes, from a young age. They are taught methods to conserve water while maintaining proper hygiene practices.

Sisters have achieved in Uganda, Kenya, and Tanzania. The Lord has exceedingly blessed their handiwork.” The Sisters of Notre Dame in East Africa are witnessing to God’s good and provident care in these diverse, creative ministries. And thank you to each one of you who has prayed for and supported the work of the missionary sisters over the years. Their powerful legacy has indeed born lasting fruits!



Sr. M. Colette Theobald instructs young women interested in becoming Sisters of Notre Dame in Uganda, Africa.



You can view the entire presentation at www.sndusa.org/africazoom. Or simply scan this QR code.

An Amazing Adventure of Love

Sr. M. Colette Theobald, originally from the California region, ministered in Uganda from 2005 until 2022. All of the SNDs missioned to East Africa between 1992 and 2022 shared their reflections in a booklet compiled by Sr. Annete Adams and gifted to the East Africa Holy Spirit Delegation. Sr. Colette wrote these words of encouragement:

God has called each of us to an amazing adventure of love. We can reach the heights of holiness if we allow our charism, mission, spirit, vows, indeed the entire Constitutions, to fill us and transform us. Then we will be happy because we are living our calling.

*God’s love called us as we are to be consecrated to Him. Each of us, therefore, is loved more than we can ask or imagine. Of course, we are always trying to follow Christ more perfectly, not to earn his love, but rather to imitate our Beloved. I pray that each African SND will “be who she is” when she is alone, with friends, with community members, with superiors, even with the Pope! **Be who you are**, that is, the one God called.*

The SNDs in California have been thrilled to welcome Sr. Colette home. When you “meet” the East African leadership team through the recorded Zoom, you can witness their dynamic spirits and unique gifts.



SNDs in Tanzania operate three programs to prepare students in rural areas to enter primary school. Pictured here is a Tanzanian child learning to write with her finger in the dirt.

SPIRITUAL DIRECTION:

Journey to the Divine

THE SYNOD THEME OF COMMUNITY REFLECTS ONE OF THE KEY TENETS OF CHRISTIANITY. IN GATHERING THE APOSTLES TOGETHER, JESUS MADE IT CLEAR THAT FAITH IS NOT EXCLUSIVELY A ONE-TO-ONE RELATIONSHIP, BUT THAT FAITH INCLUDES A SHARING OF BELIEFS, COMMON PRAYER, FELLOWSHIP, MUTUALITY, SERVICE AND A SENSE OF SHARED DESTINY.

In the book of Genesis, God said, “It is not good for Adam to be alone.” Simply stated, everyone needs companions on the journey. In more contemporary parlance, “it takes a village” not just to raise a child, but for mutual support.

Contemporary Christian spiritual direction traces its roots to ancient philosophers and various faith traditions. It is the practice of sharing one’s experience of God and cultivating a life of ongoing spiritual growth.

The word “director” is a bit of a misnomer. The best example is from the entertainment industry in which a director interprets a script with a certain element of control over casting, artistic renderings, music, etc. By contrast, a spiritual director is a companion on one’s journey into a deeper relationship with God. In every spiritual direction conversation, there are three participants: the directee, the director and the Holy Spirit.

A number of Sisters of Notre Dame and SND Associates have heard the call to formally journey with others, and they have pursued the training and formation to be certificated spiritual directors. Because of the presence of the Holy Spirit, both the directee **and** the director experience transformation that is growth-filled and healing. The experience of being a spiritual director is summarized by Sr. Leanne Hubbard:

Being a spiritual director feeds my faith in the Living God. I am witness to the movements of grace in the everyday lives of my directees. Sometimes I feel like a safari leader looking at the same landscape together and being able to point out the wonders ever so subtly hidden in the ordinary brush. Sometimes I feel like a marriage counselor helping to facilitate the conversation between the directee and his or her Beloved. This work is “evangelizing,” that is, proclaiming the Good News that God is alive and active, loving, encouraging and saving even now, and especially in our age. Walking with others in spiritual direction in their “joys and hopes, griefs and anxieties” (Gaudium et Spes #1) is the closest I come to the heart of God in my own life of faith. I stand in awe at every encounter.

For further information about engaging with a spiritual director, please email your request to infoca@sndusa.org.



“WHAT IS SHARED IN SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IS UNIVERSAL. IT IS ABOUT HOW ONE LOVES, FORGIVES, GRIEVES, AND CHOOSES WHAT IS MOST LIFE-GIVING. IT WALKS THROUGH THE QUESTIONS: WHO AM I? WHO DO I WANT TO BECOME? HOW AM I GOING TO GET THERE?”
~ SND ASSOCIATE TAM LONTOK



Tam Lontok (right) shares a joyful moment with fellow Associates Terri Bond (left) and Tresa Gowland (middle).



“I AM AWED BY THE FACT THAT OTHERS TRUST ME TO KEEP OUR CONVERSATIONS CONFIDENTIAL. FOR EXAMPLE, ONE YOUNG WOMAN SAID, ‘I AM TELLING YOU, BUT I’M NOT READY TO TELL MY MOTHER YET.’”
~ SR. M. JUDEEN JULIER





“I WILL ALWAYS CHERISH A CONVERSATION WITH A BAPTIST MINISTER WHO SAID TO ME: ‘WE ARE ALIKE, WE SEARCH, WE FAIL, WE WANT GOOD. SO WE SHARE QUESTIONS NOT TO FIND ANSWERS, BUT TO BECOME ONE.’”

~ SR. RITA MARIE SCHROEDER



“BEING A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR HAS BEEN ONE OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL EXPERIENCES OF MY LIFE. ONE OF THE FIRST PEOPLE I DIRECTED, NOW DECEASED, WAS AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN EPISCOPALIAN PRIEST, REV. ALBERTINE. A POWERHOUSE OF THE DIVINE PRESENCE HERSELF, SHE REMINDED ME OF WHAT A SPIRITUAL DIRECTION SUPERVISOR TOLD US ONE DAY: ‘SPIRITUAL DIRECTION IS TWO PEOPLE SITTING IN A ROOM TRYING TO FIND GOD. THE SAVING GRACE IS THAT GOD DESPERATELY WANTS TO BE FOUND AND IS ALWAYS REVEALING HIMSELF.’”

~ SR. MARY AMY HAUCK



“Contemporary Christian spiritual direction traces its roots to ancient philosophers and various faith traditions.

It is the practice of sharing one’s experience of God and cultivating a life of ongoing spiritual growth.”

Paying It Forward

La Reina High School senior Emelia Reinoso felt a deep connection with the students at Notre Dame Academy in Buseesa, Uganda, even though she has never met them in person. After learning about the challenges they faced in accessing clean water for drinking, cooking, and bathing, Emelia organized fundraising efforts not only at La Reina High School, but also at her former elementary school, St. Mary Magdalen School in Camarillo, CA.

When students in California learned about the challenges faced by the students at the SND schools in Uganda, they realized how lucky they are. Emelia admitted, “I’ve left faucets on and never really had regard



Emelia Reinoso, pictured with her parents Dr. Marc Reinoso and Amy Jo Reinoso.

eyes to a global view and also support the good work,” the principal said. “It’s one thing to preach the faith, but this is a great opportunity for the kids to put their faith into action.”

for it until I realized how scarce it was.” In addition to raising \$3,560, Emelia educated students in her community from TK-12th grade on the critical need for safe water in Africa.

Principal Michael Ronan said he was happy for the St. Mary Magdalen School (which is an SND Affiliated school) to be involved in the effort.

“It really seemed like a perfect opportunity for us to help open their

NDA Media Symposium

In April, the Notre Dame Academy community engaged in its second Inquiry Symposium, a community-wide conversation about the media, with guest speakers and student-led workshops on topics such as “Is Free Speech Really Free?,” “How is Social Media Affecting International Relations?,” and “The Misrepresentation of Asians in the Media.” Students explored the media through multiple lenses and made



connections through conversations ranging from technological advances to how media’s usage affects changes in the relationships among people and countries, as well as how to become a responsible content creator.

Speakers included writers, producers, and global business leaders. The symposium is one aspect of NDA’s new Emphasis Program, which also includes experiential learning opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom. The Emphasis Program equips students with the skills needed to be innovative, critical thinkers, able to navigate complex global structures.

The Grapevine

MISSION MOMENTS

“My most recent memory which has been very powerful has been with Joe, a person in hospice care. He was a missionary in Israel in his younger years and has been a believer his entire life. I bring my Bible and read some of his favorite passages. All he does is listen, nods his head and whispers, ‘Amen.’ He tells me that he is so happy that the Lord brought me to his bedside. The feeling is very mutual.”
~Sr. Betty Mae Bienlein

SND Associate Warren Smith has 16 colleagues, employed by Boeing, in Ukraine. SNDs and Associates have volunteered to serve as their “prayer angels,” daily interceding for them by name.

STAY IN THE KNOW!

The California Mission Advancement is pleased to publish a monthly egram on recent SND life and ministry. To subscribe, send your name and email address to infoca@sndusa.org.

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By including the Sisters of Notre Dame in a bequest or trust, or as a beneficiary of a retirement plan or life insurance policy, donors can share God’s goodness with thousands of lives entrusted to our care. These gifts enable your most cherished values to become your living legacy. Our legal title is “The Sisters of Notre Dame.” For further information, please contact Sr. Lisa Megaffin at the Regional Office. Thank you for the many ways you are in partnership with the Sisters of Notre Dame. Our prayers are always with you!