



Sisters of Notre Dame  
of the United States

# SND USA

SUMMER 2021



## Global Missions: The Great Commission

### **ALSO INSIDE:**

Ministering to the Sick and Vulnerable Across the U.S.

Meet Air Force Veteran & SND Associate Sue Willard



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l-r: Sister Rebekah Kennedy, *Thousand Oaks, CA*; Sister Shauna Bankemper, *Covington, KY*; Sister Regina Fisher, *Toledo, OH*; Sister Margaret Gorman, *Chardon, OH*; Sister Patricia Garrahan, *Chardon, OH*



## LETTER FROM **SND USA PROVINCIAL TEAM**

This spring, Sisters of Notre Dame around the globe celebrated the installation of the first national African leadership team to head the East Africa Delegation. This inspiring step forward was made possible through decades of work by SND missionaries from the United States, India, and Germany who came to Africa with a vision to prepare local African sisters for leadership. We stand in awe of God's continuing work through our congregation.

In this issue of *SND USA* magazine, readers will also learn about the transformative work of Sister Rose Bernard Groth, SND, who served as a missionary in Papua New Guinea for more than 40 years. Despite being held at gunpoint and facing unknown risks, Sister Rose Bernard reached out to a local population of AIDS victims, offering them shelter, health care, and compassion while many in the country called for their deaths.

A continued priority of SND USA is healthcare ministry. Sisters of Notre Dame in Covington, Kentucky work in leadership roles at St. Claire HealthCare, the largest rural hospital in Northeastern Kentucky, and at St. Charles Community, an eldercare facility including adult day care, cottages, senior apartments and more. Notre Dame Village, in Chardon, Ohio is thriving with its independent and supportive residences for seniors. In Toledo, Ohio, SNDs are engaged in pastoral care and other ministries for their aging population. And in downtown Los Angeles, California, Sister Judeen Julier enjoys serving as a chaplain at California Hospital. Hear from these sisters who joyfully serve this vulnerable population.

We continue to pray for the safety of you and your loved ones as the worldwide pandemic slowly diminishes. Thank you for your prayers and continued support of our ministries.

Gratefully,

The SND USA Provincial Team



# East Africa Delegation Established



## SND Missionaries Prepare Local African Sisters For Leadership

On May 24, 2015 in Arusha, Tanzania, the Sisters of Notre Dame's mission in Uganda joined the SND missions in Tanzania and Kenya to form the new Holy Spirit General Delegation, or East Africa Delegation. Just six years later, in May 2021, the first fully national African leadership team was installed to lead the East Africa Delegation. These pioneer sisters are:



**Sister Christine Syombua Ndolo,**  
*Delegation Superior*



**Sister Margaret Kathambi Mbuba,**  
*Assistant Delegation Superior  
and Councilor*



**Sister Elizabeth Wanza Mulako,**  
*Councilor*



**Sister Rozaria Katusabe,**  
*Councilor*



**Sister Mary Gladness Shayo,**  
*Councilor*



**Sister Therese Marie Nabakka,**  
*Delegation Treasurer*



**Sister Teopista Nabugwawo,**  
*Delegation Secretary*

This new African leadership team represents the foresight and the fulfillment of years of mission by American, Indian, German, and Brazilian SNDs to provide African sisters with the educational and experiential framework needed to successfully identify, lead, and expand outreach services in their native country.

Sister Christine Syombua Ndolo, the new Delegation Superior, says, “I am excited to begin this new chapter in our evolution and am looking forward to many new members joining us. My biggest desire is to see our delegation become self-sustainable. When and how we attain it is what I shall work, together with my team, to figure out.”

The missionary focus, to educate impoverished children and teach women skills which empower their lives, drives the East Africa Delegation. Paramount to the mission is continuing to invite young African women to follow in the current East Africa Delegation model and assume additional leadership roles within their native lands. Perhaps Sister Margaret Droege describes the East Africa Delegation best in her book: “We were Ugandans, Kenyans, Germans and Americans. There were inhabitants from Tanzania and India as well as travelers from Rome, yet we hear them speaking in our own tongues of the mighty acts of God.”

## **A historic look back: The Great Commission**

Jesus Christ instructed his disciples to spread the gospel to all the nations of the world. This “Great Commission” has been integral to the Sisters of Notre Dame mission since the congregation’s founding in Coesfeld, Germany in

Since arriving in America in 1874, the congregation continued to expand its reach from Cleveland to Covington, Kentucky in 1874; Toledo, Ohio in 1877; and Los Angeles, California in 1924. And like their founding sisters of Germany, a new wave of SNDs felt led by the Holy Spirit to expand their mission field beyond the United States. “This was radical thinking at the time,” Sister Marie Manning, SND, former Global Missions Coordinator, Chardon explains. “This was before other religious congregations from the Cleveland Diocese started any foreign missions.” The SND congregation anxiously waited and prayed for opportunities to found international missions.

## **Mission work begins in INDIA**

The opportunity to establish a SND mission in India came in 1949 when the Bishop of Patna, India, invited Sisters of Notre Dame from the United States to educate children and provide much needed health care to the impoverished town of Jamalpur, Bihar. Sisters St. Thomas Fitzgerald, Magdela Schaeffer, Lauretta Thompson, Joella Luebbers, Maris Geiger and Kieran Seubert answered the call – chosen from more than one hundred sisters who volunteered to go. After a one-month ocean crossing, they landed in Bombay, India on October 20, 1949. Here was a land and culture completely unknown to them. Back then, as today, only two percent of India’s population was Christian.

“Our sisters immediately began teaching in an already-established grade school and assumed the school’s administration,” Sister Marie describes. “A year later, they began a small clinic on the back porch of what served as their convent, treating such diseases as malaria and tuberculosis as well as local health concerns like snake bites.” Early

*“Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.”*

- Mark 16:15

1850. The Coesfeld sisters developed a flourishing educational ministry that spread to 30 locations within 20 years. Their work was thwarted when the “Kulturkampf” laws of the 1870s expelled sisters from Prussia, the leading state of the German Empire. Faced with the choice of either abandoning their vocation or leaving their homeland, the Sisters of Notre Dame sought a new mission field in the United States.

letters from these sisters describe such challenges as adjusting to different foods, travel and language difficulties, and even keeping doors and windows closed from bands of roaming monkeys.

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## East Africa Delegation Established

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Over time, elementary and high schools were added across India. Soon, a SND clinic was caring for thousands annually. Hundreds of young Indian women heard God's call to join the SND congregation where they eventually took leadership roles in existing SND schools, clinics, and other outreach ministries.

Sister Laurette Kramer, of Chardon, Ohio arrived in Jamalpur, India in 1960. She worked as a classroom teacher and administrator at Notre Dame Academy in Patna. Additionally, Sister Laurette served as a counselor, director of teacher education, mentor and friend to countless sisters and colleagues. As co-founder of the prestigious Campus School of the Agricultural University, Pantnagar, she laid a solid foundation for its future growth and success.

Sister Tessy Thomas, SND, Provincial Superior of the Patna, India Province, eulogized Sister Laurette years later: "For 30 years Sister Laurette spent time in India as a missionary, educator and sister to us. She was significant for the development of Indian sisters. She radiated a vibrant enthusiasm and zest for living, for getting involved in ministry and for sharing her gifts. Sister Laurette brought her educational expertise and beauty of the Notre Dame heritage.

After adjusting to life in India, Sister Laurette came to appreciate the Indian people, their deep spirituality, and rich traditions, which led her to immerse herself in this culture and make it her own."

Today, more than 300 Indian Sisters of Notre Dame are serving in their native country, educating women and children, teaching skills that empower women,

delivering health care, and working in various social ministries. They are impacting their own culture and elevating their own society.

## SND missions expand to Africa

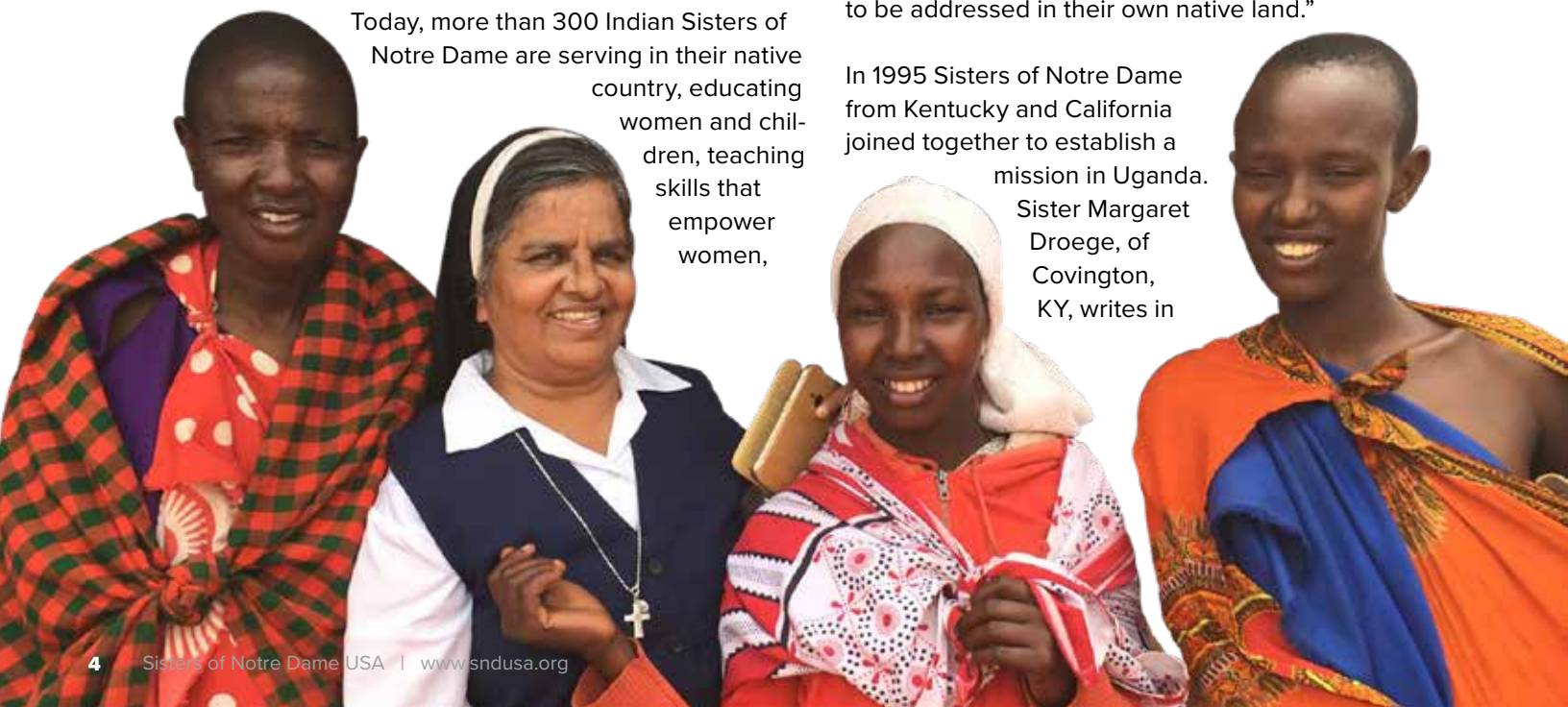
Just as Sisters of Notre Dame across the United States served as missionaries in India, Indian sisters responded to the Great Commission, sending their sisters as missionaries to Africa. In 1992, the Sisters of Notre Dame of Patna answered an invitation to open a mission in Tanzania, Africa, where the population is 50 percent Muslim and 50 percent Christian. One year later, Brazilian Sisters of Notre Dame founded a second mission in Mozambique.

Sister Joell Overman, SND Kentucky, Superior General for the global SND congregation at the time of the first Africa mission, polled all provincials at a General Conference in India in 1990 to garner worldwide support before deciding to begin missions in Africa. She says, "Each province was asked to indicate their contribution to opening a mission in Africa, either through personnel, financial support, or prayer. For instance, India was able to provide personnel initially, Europe provided funding and later personnel."

Sister Joell adds, "It exemplifies our concept of 'plant a tree you will never sit under' – the premise of getting missions started and training African sisters who can take over and determine what needs to be addressed in their own native land."

In 1995 Sisters of Notre Dame from Kentucky and California joined together to establish a mission in Uganda. Sister Margaret Droege, of Covington, KY, writes in

Sister Rashmi with the Maasai people in Kenya.







**After teaching for 38 years at Notre Dame Academy in Covington, Kentucky where I taught biology and chemistry, I was ready for a change.**

*- Sisters Judith Averbeck, Covington, KY*

her book, Approaching Holy Ground, “We came to share, to learn, to live with the people of Buseesa, a virtually unknown village in the bush area of the Kibaale District of Uganda. So many things surprised the sisters: the deep faith and friendliness of the people, their welcoming spirit, their giving from the little they had, and their great desire for education for their children.” The pioneers were Sister Janet Stamm and Sister Delrita Glaser from Kentucky and Sister Jane McHugh and Sister Margaret Mary Scott from California.

Sisters Judith Averbeck and Marge Mouch, of Covington, Kentucky were among the sisters who served in Africa. Sister Judith taught at the all-girls secondary school where the SND formation house was located. “I always dreamed of being a missionary in Africa,” she says. “After teaching for 38 years at Notre Dame Academy

in Covington, Kentucky where I taught biology and chemistry, I was ready for a change. This was when our sisters in Uganda were

ready to begin a secondary school for girls leaving our St. Julie Primary School to further young women’s education. At the time, girls graduating from St. Julie Primary School had little to no opportunity for further education.”

Sister Judith says women in Africa have traditionally been totally subservient to men, particularly in less developed areas where a man can have as many

wives as he can support (in reality, as many as he wants). “Women do all the work in the village – subsistence farming, obtaining water, cooking, hut maintenance, childcare, etc.,” she explains. “When I arrived in Africa, a woman was expected to kneel when meeting a man.”

She continues, “Violence against women is widespread in Africa, especially sexual violence. A husband is even expected to beat his wife on occasion. A woman appeared on our doorstep one night, horribly wounded by acid thrown in her face by her husband. Another came to us to save her young daughter whom the father wanted to sacrifice in a witchcraft ritual. I was amazed to learn that curses and witchcraft still play a significant part in their lives, and child sacrifice was a reality. As our parish priest says: ‘You come to church in the morning and go to the witchdoctor in the evening.’”

Almost half of Uganda’s population is under age 15. The typical life of a girl in Uganda means heavy chores and care of younger siblings; some primary schooling if possible; sexual experience at an early age, followed by early marriage; and assumption of responsibilities at home.

Sister Judith says the first step in breaking the abuse cycle is removing the young person from village life. Hence, boarding schools are the rule. Good educational courses, books, and now TV and the internet are beginning to broaden minds. Winning the students’ confidence is the next slow and

**“I always dreamed of being a missionary in Africa.”**

*- Sister Judith Averbeck, Covington, KY*

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painstaking step, as many are hesitant to trust the “white sisters.”

“Education, to me, is the way to improve the lot for women in Africa,” Sister Judith passionately exclaims. “A friend of mine is fond of saying, ‘Only two things can change the world: love and education.’ I couldn’t agree more.”

SND missions typically work with the underprivileged, caught in the cycle of ignorance and poverty. Young women come to school from mud huts with no concept of a wider world, individual worth, or freedom. “The African culture is so different from that of the West,” Sister Judith continues. “SNDs from the United States and India have done and continue to do our best to share the core Notre Dame spirit on African soil.”

A heavy emphasis was placed on educating young African Sisters of Notre Dame. In 1998, Sister Annete Adams, SND USA of Chardon, arrived as a missionary to Uganda where she taught school and served

in vocation ministry. She became the formation director in Tanzania, encouraging and training local SNDs for leadership within Africa. When the East Africa Delegation was formed, Sister Annete was appointed

Secretary to the Holy Spirit Delegation and moved to the center in Kenya.

### **African sisters assume leadership roles**

Today, there are 32 professed African sisters and a total of 70 African SNDs serving in the East Africa Delegation. Sister Christine is the first Kenyan to join the SND congregation and she is now serving as the East Africa Delegation Superior.

Sister Christine shares, “Working with sisters from different countries and tribes can present challenges here and there because of our different cultural backgrounds. But I do not see this as a big issue because all the countries are represented within our East Africa delegation team, and we are also from different tribes. In fact, most of the sisters belong to these tribes represented on the council.”

Sister Marge and Sister Judith agree that it is important that African sisters take leadership in the mission work in Africa. “They are the ones who truly know the hearts and desires of the people, for they share the culture and languages. Every day there are immediate needs which the SNDs try to meet: seeking justice for one of their farm workers; visiting the people in their homes; providing jobs for people of the village; and giving advice and assisting with medical needs. One larger project has been to provide a more permanent water supply for the

**“God called us to begin the mission, and now it is in capable hands to grow.”**

*- Sister Marge Mouch, Covington, KY*

(l-r) Sister Christine Syombua Ndolo, Sister Marge Mouch and Sister Colette Theobald in Africa.





schools and village. This is becoming a reality. The sisters' dream is to establish a college to educate teachers."

"God called us to begin the mission, and now it is in capable hands to grow," Sister Marge exclaims.

Sister Colette Theobald, of Thousand Oaks, California, describes the East Africa Delegation: "The delegation is not quite a province, but that is a future goal. They are under the direction of the Generalate. Our goal the last six years was to unite the three diverse countries of Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya; to educate the many young sisters in leadership and professional studies, and to make a long-term plan for the delegation. At least yearly there are gatherings most sisters attend. This is not easy since bus trips can be 24 hours, and we may have to cross two borders. The postulancy and novitiate have women from all three countries as well as Mozambique, a mission run by our Brazilian SND sisters. Of the eight schools in which our sisters serve, seven now have African sisters as the head."

The African sisters are involved in social and pastoral work as well," she continues. "Some are training to be nurses and midwives; two are studying philosophy as a prerequisite to theology studies. All the formators are now African. There is great hope for the future of the East African Delegation."


"I am amazed at the providence of God when I look at the history of the Sisters of Notre Dame. From Germany to the United States, from the U.S. to India, and from India to Africa. It has been a blessing to work side-by-side with our Indian sisters. Their spirituality, love of Notre Dame, their passion for mission to the poor and marginalized women and children, and their living of the educational heritage of the Sisters of Notre Dame inspire me," Sister Colette concludes. "I am proud of the U.S. missionaries as well. It has been a joy to work with SNDs in Africa from all four of the former U.S. provinces plus sisters from Germany. All those sisters brought excellence in education, love for the people, material and spiritual help, and a true love for each person as a child of God."



## CONCLUSION

"The shared charism of the Sisters of Notre Dame across the globe unites and rejuvenates our international congregation despite distance, culture, and language barriers," Sister Margaret Gorman enthusiastically proclaims. "When opportunities arise, U.S. sisters visit these countries, offering their wisdom, knowledge, and experience."

Over the years, thousands of donors have embraced the SND mission, providing essential funding for each missionary venture. In addition to individuals, many schools, parishes, and organizations have chosen to be part of these efforts to share the Gospel of Jesus around the world through their financial support. The Sisters of Notre Dame are deeply grateful to our partners in mission and pray that God will always bless them for their magnanimity and generosity.

Today, Sisters of Notre Dame from India and Africa are determining for themselves the best way to elevate women and educate their children. SNDs are teaching women valuable skills that will help their families. SNDs are also collaborating with their government officials to initiate health education and health services as well as legal-aid services to ensure justice through law. 

# Papua New Guinea



Sister Rose Bernard Groth, of Toledo, Ohio, served for more than 40 years as a missionary in Papua New Guinea. At age 90, her amazing memories of the land and its people remain as clear as the day she first desired to become a missionary.

“I wanted to be a missionary since the first grade when I saw films about these faraway places,” Sister Rose Bernard recalls with a lilt in her voice. “Later, I desired to enter religious life as a Sister of Notre Dame. At the time, there were no opportunities for mission work within the congregation. However, in 1961, a bishop from Papua New Guinea came to Rome and asked the SNDs for help educating girls in Papua New Guinea. Four of our Toledo sisters answered the original call: Sisters Magdelida Dorsey, Claver Pollauf, Alexia Kochanski, and Marisa Connors.” Sister Rose Bernard got her first chance

to volunteer in 1964. She was there for 4 years, and then returned again in 1970-2011.

“Papua New Guinea is known as the land of the unexpected,” she says with a chuckle. “My life in Papua New Guinea was a progressive journey in this land. I had no idea what my life would be like. I was guided by the needs of the people.”

Sister Rose Bernard initially taught girls in grades one through six. Later, the government told her and other missionary teachers to leave education to the people of New Guinea. So, they decided to build a nonformal school for girls beyond grade six, teaching many to become teachers who could educate others in their own country.



Her work eventually grew to involve prison ministry. "I would attend court with the prisoners," Sister Rose Bernard describes. "I even went to some of their hideouts to collect their guns and ammunition so they could receive a lighter sentence." On one such trek, she experienced a loaded gun held to her head.

**"I knew I had to do something. In 1990, the first two known cases of AIDS appeared in my parish."**

- Sister Rose Bernard Groth, Toledo, Ohio

Rose Bernard states. "I knew I had to do something. In 1990, the first two known cases of AIDS appeared in my parish. People diagnosed with AIDS in Papua New Guinea were killed or made to leave the country to prevent the spread of the virus. I knew one woman who was taken around a mountain, arms and legs bound, thrown in a shallow hole, covered with leaves, and left to die."

Sister Rose Bernard began teaching prevention and, with a few health workers, counseling AIDS victims. "I showed them love and taught them what they could do to slow the advance of the disease," she says. "They were dying so fast."




I begged the government for three years for a house where I could eat with them, teach them, and pray for them."

Eventually, she won the battle and opened the Shalom Clinic, the first such facility in Papua New Guinea.

"Because AIDS victims needed a source of income, we also taught them useful skills such as sewing and cooking where they could make a meager living. I even bought a few people their own sewing machine," she recalls. "The children of these AIDS victims also had no place to go. The Australian government helped us find them homes."

Eventually, Sister Rose Bernard became a member of the Papua New Guinea National Health Council, despite having no medical background. Additionally, for her outstanding work in AIDS education and her compassionate, selfless work with AIDS victims in Papua New Guinea, Sister Rose Bernard won the Order of Logohu Award from the Australian government. Quite a distinguished honor!

And what happened to the hundreds of young girls she taught in Papua New Guinea? Today, Sister Rose Bernard proudly reports some are doctors, lawyers, government leaders, ambassadors, pilots, bank executives, and more.

Imagine the award Sister Rose Bernard will receive when she enters heaven! 





# MINISTERING TO THE SICK AND VULNERABLE ACROSS THE U.S.

It feels good to hear someone say, “Take care,” but it’s so much more comforting to hear someone say, “I’ll take care of you!” With the ever-increasing elderly population in the United States, delivery of compassionate health care by the Sisters of Notre Dame has blossomed over the decades to include St. Claire HealthCare, St. Charles Community, and Notre Dame Village, as well as SNDs serving on health care system and hospital boards, as nurse practitioners, as hospital chaplains and pastoral ministers, and as hospice volunteers. Discover how Sisters of Notre Dame are active in healthcare ministry today:



## COVINGTON, KENTUCKY

Covington, Kentucky is the SND USA region most engaged in healthcare ministry. The sisters began in 1950 when the Covington Diocese's bishop asked the Sisters of Notre Dame to assume operation of a hospital in Lynch, Kentucky, serving primarily Appalachian coal miners and their families. The sisters immediately responded, building and operating Notre Dame Hospital until 1961 when a new facility, the Appalachian Regional Hospital, opened its doors across the mountain. Again in 1961, the SNDs answered the Covington Diocese's request to build and staff a convalescent hospital a short distance from the SND Covington Provincial Center. Today, this facility, known as St. Charles Community, includes an adult day care program, 62 cottages and 71 apartments for seniors, a therapy department, personal care suites, home care and private duty nursing, and an outreach program to elderly people in need.

In 1963, a Morehead, Kentucky town physician, Dr. Claire Louise Caudill, turned to Monsignor Charles Towell, Director of Catholic Hospitals in the Diocese, and requested SNDs take on another new project – opening what was to become St. Claire Medical Center. On July 1, 1963, the general acute-care hospital opened its doors, with 41 beds, nine nurses and six physicians representing three medical specialties - General Practice, Surgery, and Internal Medicine. Today, St. Claire is much more than a hospital. It is an integrated, not-for-profit Catholic healthcare system sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame of the United States.

The largest employer in the region with nearly 1,000 staff members, St. Claire HealthCare includes more than 100 medical providers representing 32 medical specialties. It is the

largest rural hospital in Northeastern Kentucky with 159 beds, seven primary care locations, a multi-specialty medical pavilion, an outpatient center, and homecare services. St. Claire serves five counties and operates three retail services including family medical supply, pharmacy, and aesthetics.

**“The need is great, and when the need is great, the response must rise to fully meet it.”**

- Sister Judine Lambert, Director of Mission Integration and Administrative Council member at St. Claire HealthCare



Donald H. Lloyd II, President/CEO of St. Claire HealthCare, credits the role of the Sisters of Notre Dame in St. Claire's founding and continued success. “St. Claire HealthCare would not be here today if it were not for the hard work, commitment and devotion of the Sisters of Notre Dame. They were the last organization Dr. Caudill reached out to for help. The Diocese had given up all hope, and this community has never forgotten the sisters' willingness to help.”

He continues, “There are several Sisters of Notre Dame serving in leadership roles at St. Claire HealthCare today including Sister Marla Monahan, St. Claire HealthCare Board of Directors Chair, and Sister Judine Lambert, Director of Mission Integration and Administrative Council member. Sister Margaret Droege completed her term on the St. Claire HealthCare Board in 2020. We still use photographs of Sister Jeanne Frances Cleves in our advertising. She worked at St. Claire from 1963 to 2016 and was loved by all our physicians and staff. In fact, her photograph can be seen in almost every building within our healthcare system. (Sister Jeanne passed away in 2018.) To the extent the Sisters of Notre Dame are willing and able, we will always welcome their participation in the governance of St. Claire HealthCare.”

St. Claire HealthCare remains committed to providing quality health care in a caring environment through the living of its mission: “To proclaim God's goodness through a healing ministry to the people of Eastern Kentucky.”

Sister Marla shares, “St. Claire HealthCare embodies our commitment to serve our brothers and sisters, especially those most in need.”

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# MINISTERING TO THE SICK AND VULNERABLE ACROSS THE U.S.

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Sister Judine concurs, “Our mission is to serve a population that is among the poorest and sickest. The need is great, and when the need is great, the response must rise to fully meet it.”

She considers, “This outreach is not so far removed from the SND’s founding focus of education. It may not occur in a classroom, but efficient, effective healthcare delivery is all about education of the healthcare team and our patients. Our region will continue to prioritize health care in all its forms, from direct patient care in hospitals to pastoral care, elder care, and hospice services.”

In addition to St. Charles Community and St. Claire HealthCare, sisters extend compassionate care at other locations including Carmel Manor in Fort Thomas, Kentucky and St. Elizabeth Medical Center and Hospice in Edgewood, Kentucky.

“Jesus healed as he walked the earth,” says Sister Marla. “What greater example do we have for the importance of healthcare ministry?”

## CHARDON, OHIO

Notre Dame Village in Chardon, Ohio is a community of living and learning, thoughtfully designed and constructed by the Sisters of Notre Dame. The Village represents a unique collaboration between two non-profit organizations: SND USA and Jennings. Notre Dame Village offers independent and supportive residences for adults 65 years of age and older with cottage homes, independent living apartments, and unique “small houses” for memory care assisted living (for adults 55+).

“It is amazing how God is currently blessing our healthcare ministry,” says Sister Margaret Gorman, Provincial, SND USA. “We wanted to offer our beautiful campus to fill a need in this community – attractive senior housing as well as healthcare services for people of all faiths.”

In addition to living in a breathtaking, bucolic setting, Notre Dame Village residents can remain in one place as they age. “Residents can continue living the

**“We wanted to offer our beautiful campus to fill a need in this community – attractive senior housing as well as healthcare services for people of all faiths.”**

*- Sister Margaret Gorman, Provincial, SND USA*

way they choose, thriving in the right sized residence in community with neighbors and the support of amenities and services that enhance their lifestyles as needed. Individuals live successfully with a combination of exceptional choices – such as lifelong learning, trips and dining – and the available support of home care, memory care and hospice,” says Vivian Springer, Executive Director of Jennings at Notre Dame Village.

While the Sisters of Notre Dame own the facilities, services are provided by Jennings. Locally sourced food and services, a chapel, auditorium, intergenerational and spiritual programs and “SNDs who are your neighbors” set Notre Dame Village apart from other residential senior housing options nearby.



This campus also serves as headquarters for SND USA and the SND Health Care Center, where many of the congregation's elderly, ill sisters receive compassionate, loving health care as well as end-of-life services. Sister Alex Justavich, SND, is coordinator of the Chardon long-term care community, and Sister Gail Sako, SND, is the Director of the Pastoral Ministry Team at the SND Health Care Center. Sister Gail taught and was an administrator in elementary grades before taking classes to become certified in pastoral ministry. As a certified Lay Ecclesial Minister in the Diocese of Cleveland, she worked in three parishes for 15 years, primarily in bereavement ministry, before working at the SND Healthcare Center, where she has served for the past 13 years.

Sister Gail says the most rewarding part of pastoral ministry is BEING with her sisters. "We do this as part of a team, sharing our individual gifts, trying to meet sisters differing needs and deepening relationships," she adds. "We feel end-of-life care is an honor because this is one of the most vulnerable times in the sisters' lives; we are privileged to be present with

them. We care for our sisters on their final journey 'when our earthly life reaches its final fulfillment in God, and we are transformed into the very image of Jesus Christ'. (SND Constitutions, Article 91) This is the goal of our lives."

SND USA's healthcare ministry in

Northeast Ohio does not end with Notre Dame Village and the SND Health Care Center. Sister Shirley Kodiyan, SND, serves as a nurse practitioner in Ashtabula County; Sister Kendra Bottoms, SND, is a chaplain and Director of Pastoral Care at University Hospitals St. John Medical Center in Westlake, Ohio; Sister Valerie Sweeney, SND, is in pastoral care at Jennings in Garfield Heights, Ohio, and many more sisters are lovingly at bedsides, speaking words of comfort and Christ's love as individuals pass on to eternal life.



Sr. Gail Sako, SND

## TOLEDO, OHIO

For 17 years, Sister Loretta Borgerding, SND, has served in pastoral care at St. Anne Home and Retirement Community in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The facility offers independent-living apartments, assisted living, a rehabilitation center, and a nursing home. When she began ministering there, she was 65 years old, and many of her patients were older. Now at age 81, she laughs and considers, "I have been working for more than a decade with people who were older than myself. It's caught up with me."



Sister Loretta Borgerding, SND

"Working in healthcare ministry has made me a better person," she contemplates. "I feel I am gentler, more understanding, and more appreciative of the love of my other sisters. I sit by the bedside and watch someone die over many days. It is often extremely quiet, and I wonder if this is when God does the most communicating."

Sister Loretta describes St. Anne's as a real "faith" community. "We have four priests living at St. Anne's who are available 24/7. At one time we had seven priests living here, which speaks to the heart of this diocesan-owned facility. We offer daily Mass and sacraments as well as devotional services, weekly rosary, and more. We also provide Protestant services for non-Catholics."

Recently, Sister Loretta, along with St. Anne administrator Elaine Wilson, began a new program for people transitioning from independent living to the nursing home. "Transition from independent living into a nursing home is often a difficult, emotional time. One day they are taking their own medicine and the next day they need help. Our program is designed to ease the transition," says Sister Loretta.

She sees SND USA's increased role in healthcare ministry as a natural occurrence with the aging U.S. population. "Our congregation came to the United States to educate the children of immigrants and the poor. Today, we are responding to an increased need for health care, particularly among the marginalized and poor," she says.

## LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA



Sr. Judeen Julier, SND

Sister Judeen Julier, SND, Board Certified Chaplain (BCC) at California Hospital in Los Angeles, California, explains how one becomes a chaplain: "First, you must accumulate more than 1600 hours of clinical pastoral education (CPE) -- this includes both in the classroom with a certified supervisor and through a clinical hospital chaplain internship," she describes. "Usually, a chaplain also has a master's degree in Theology or Pastoral Studies. Upon completion of the required CPE hours, you then apply to become a BCC, which entails submission of a written paper and an interview by a certifying team."

Prior to working as a chaplain, Sister Judeen ministered as an elementary school teacher and principal, did parish administration, and directed outreach programs for her parish and the inner-city poor in her community. "I was also a bereavement minister for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles at Catholic cemeteries. It was a chaplain's presence and assistance when my mother died suddenly after a short stay in the hospital that helped me discern a ministry in health care. I wanted to support others as I had been helped at my mother's death," she says.




"One long-time chaplain friend of mine describes chaplains as 'story catchers.' When we visit patients, we meet them where they are on life's journey and listen as they share what gives their life meaning and purpose. We also discuss how they are coping with life's changes," says Sister Judeen. "Patients tell chaplains their hopes and dreams."

"In my downtown LA hospital, I am blessed to be amid a 'miniature world community' of many

**"Although I am often asked to bless the sick and dying, I am the one receiving the blessings, as I listen to their stories which inspire and edify me."**

*- Sister Judeen Julier, SND, Board Certified Chaplain (BCC) at California Hospital in Los Angeles, California*

ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds. I minister with patients, families, and employees. Although I am often asked to bless the sick and dying, I am the one receiving blessings, as I listen to their stories which inspire and edify me," concludes Sister Judeen with a gracious smile. 



# MEET AIR FORCE VETERAN AND SND ASSOCIATE SUE WILLARD

Sue Willard grew up in Elwood, a small town north of Indianapolis. Upon graduating from Wendell L. Willkie High School in 1965, Sue enlisted in the U. S. Air Force, serving four years. It was during her military service that Sue met her future husband, also serving in the Air Force. They were married at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Elwood in 1969. Sue went on to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in Criminal Justice from Indiana University prior to the couple relocating from Indiana to Apollo Beach, Florida in 1985. They now live in Clearwater, Florida. Their son is a former Captain in the Marine Corps.

Sue worked with Federated Insurance Company in Tampa for 24 years as a workers' compensation supervisor before retiring in 2009. She began volunteering at the Humane Society of Pinellas in 2010 - then two friends, Sister Marcia Willkomm and Paulette Purvis, told her about the Associates of the Sisters of Notre Dame. It was a game changer.

"They thought I would enjoy becoming a SND Associate," Sue recalls. "When I started attending meetings in 2018, I realized my friends were right. It was exactly right for me, and vice versa. I enjoyed learning about the origin of the Sisters of Notre Dame, St. Julie Billiart, and Sister Maria Aloysia – how they cared for orphaned children. Participating in meetings, reading scripture, and living life have brought me closer to God. Our instructor Sister Pat Sipan's explanation of scripture, that 'God is in us, and we are in God' and 'finding God in all things' has further opened my heart to God, helping me see everything differently."

Sue made her covenant in August 2019. She says since becoming a SND Associate, she prays more often and with greater understanding.

"One of our assignments was reading Shorter Christian Prayer. I enjoy this book and continue my readings morning and night. And I enjoy reading Abide and having our Faith-Sharing meetings. Unfortunately, Covid restrictions require us to do this by Zoom, not together. I miss being with our group," Sue admits.


She has attended Espiritu Santo Catholic Church in Safety Harbor, Florida for 26 years. Currently, Sue is a Sacristan at the 8 a.m. Mass on Fridays and 4 p.m. Mass on Saturdays. She is also a Eucharistic Minister and serves in the Linen Ministry where she washes



Sue Willard, SND Associate

and irons the small linens. Sue also participates in the Environmental Ministry – growing and tending plants placed in the sanctuary. "Father Len says this is a form of prayer."

"I became interested in fighting human trafficking when Sister Renetta Graff discussed this important issue during one of our Formation of Associate Candidates meetings." Sue says, "I then attended a truly eye-opening, 20-hour Zoom presentation that explained, not only how widespread this hideous practice has become, but also that 50 percent of human trafficking victims are children. I've made donations to the "Florida Dream Center," and other charitable organizations dedicated to both fighting and raising public awareness of human trafficking. Ironically, the Zoom presentation also explained that one of the biggest areas where human trafficking takes place is during the Super Bowl."

"I am grateful for all I have – my life, my health, my husband and our son, and for becoming a SND Associate, which has further opened my heart and mind, drawing me closer to God," Sue exclaims. "I believe others who become Associates will feel the same." 

**If you are interested in becoming a SND Associate, please contact:**

**CALIFORNIA | Sr. Lisa Megaffin, SND**  
lmegaffin@sndusa.org | 805-917-3714

**CHARDON | Sr. Regina Davala, SND**  
sndassociates@sndusa.org | 440-279-1198

**COVINGTON | Sr. Mary Luann Bender, SND**  
lbender@sndusa.org | 859-630-6336

**FLORIDA | Sr. Pat Sipan, SND**  
Psipan@sndusa.org | 386-479-7766

**TOLEDO | Sr. Charleen Hug, SND**  
chug@sndusa.org | 419-913-6598

# MAKE YOUR LIFE A

The students' favorite bus driver, her husband, and their grandchildren sat in the middle of the gym floor at St. John High School, Delphos, Ohio. All the students in this K-12 school surrounded them. Together, they prayed that God would "give Annie Ruen, the Bus Driver, a complete cure of cancer." The students asked the intercession of Sister Maria Aloysia, the foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame, who had spent part of her life in Delphos. After some weeks of medical tests, doctors attested to the cure. Bone cancer was gone, and Annie lived another 15 years.



**Sister Valerie Schneider** has ministered in education, parish ministry, and service at Lial Renewal Center. Currently, she is a substitute Church musician and conducts grief support sessions at St. Patrick of Heatherdowns in Toledo. Sister Valerie has also authored 10 books and blogs on various topics of interest.

Annie Ruen, an Associate of the Sisters of Notre Dame, had an exceptionally beautiful voice, which she used at the service of the Church as cantor and choir member. "I just know that God is good! I guess I feel closest to Him when I'm singing," she claimed. Annie loved charismatic songs for the praise and thanks they give to God. Annie's song and her life were expressions of praise and thanks to God. She made both her song and her life a "sacrifice of praise" (Heb. 13:15). You can, too.

Sacrifice literally means "to make holy," an attitude of mind and heart that acknowledges everything as God's gift. A sacrifice of praise acknowledges that our lives are in God's plan. So, praise God for unbelievable, unconditional love! Say "thanks and praise" for both the clouds and the sunshine in your life. As Paul writes, "Whatever you do—you should do all for the glory of God" (1 Cor. 10:31).

Prayer is a sacrifice of praise. We pray in Psalm 141 in Evening Prayer: "Let my prayer come like incense before you; the lifting up of my hands, like the evening sacrifice." In the Liturgy of the Eucharist we pray, "We offer you this sacrifice of praise." We do this by uniting ourselves with the perpetual self-offering of Jesus to his Father from his death on the cross until now and for all eternity. I have asked students to imagine that the perpetual self-offering of Jesus is like a twirling jump rope. The rope is always twirling; that is, Jesus is always offering himself to the Father, and the Father is always accepting the Son's offering. When we jump into the twirling rope, especially at Mass but at any other time, we offer ourselves with Jesus and know that we can always be offering, always be receiving, and always knowing that God hugs us with acceptance.

Our everyday lives are a sacrifice of praise when they are lived in Christ in response to the will of God. When Micah wonders what he should offer to God—rams or oil?—the Lord requires only this: "Do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God." Lend a hand. Collect food. Teach someone English. Plan a surprise. Find endless creative ways to offer praise.



# SACRIFICE OF PRAISE

All this sounds nice, but how do I live my life with praise and thanks to God when I'm isolated or unemployed or grieving? How do I get through the hard times when thoughts of praise and thanks seem light-years away, or when grateful thoughts of God are buried in an avalanche of disturbing news, deadlines, and illness?

On my golden jubilee our sisters living in Norwalk, Ohio, made each jubilarian a decorative quilt with her favorite Scripture quotation. My favorite quotation was Galatians 2:20: "I live now, not I. It is Christ who lives in me." The Trinity is living in us, praying in us, loving in us. Just think about it! Are you amazed? Well, don't keep reading. Stop to say, "Praise and thanks!"

**"Whatever you do—you should do all for the glory of God"** (1 Cor. 10:31).


Being a sacrifice of praise lets us

Try this: pick up your morning coffee cup and lift it up to God. "Cheers!" Imagine God's chuckle as God replies, "Cheers for you!" and delights in you before your first sip. Throughout the day develop a habit of saying, "Praise and thanks!" for everything no matter what. Laugh at yourself: "God, I love the crazy me you made!" Fill the gas tank. "Praise and thanks for wheels!" Empty the dishwasher. "Praise and thanks for grub!" Sit at a stoplight or in a dentist's chair. "Praise and thanks!" Pick strawberries. "Praise and thanks!" Spread a picnic. "Praise and thanks!" Three quick words powerfully connect us with God and make of us a fragrant incense. We become celebrants of the sacrifice of life, transforming the ordinary into the life of God.

It's so exciting to realize we live in a sacramental world where everything points to God. Go outside, lift your hands. Imagine yourself in the center of the world, both receiving it as gift and offering it to God. "We are celebrants of the sacrifice of life, of its transformation into life in God" (Alexander Schmemmann). We do this in union with Christ because he has already offered all that is to be offered to God. Constantly offering and receiving, we are always in communion. We are always in the divine circuit because we live in God.

live in awe. God uses every circumstance of our lives to draw us closer to him. Just keep walking on your pilgrimage to heaven. On the days you can't quite skip in joy, remember all spirituality is summed up in the term, "Paschal Mystery." Sometimes we live, and sometimes we die. Sometimes we jump in joy, and sometimes we trudge through the pain. Sometimes we smile, and sometimes we grit our teeth. Whatever happens, we can still say, "Praise and thanks!"

The prayer for Annie's cure ended with these words: "To God be all praise and glory forever and ever. Amen." And that's what Annie is doing right now—giving praise and thanks. We can, too, right now in awesome delight! Don't wait! Right now offer with Jesus, Annie, and all God's loved ones the eternal Eucharistic Sacrifice.

Alleluia! Praise and thanks! 

Praise and  
Thanks

# SISTER MARY FRANCES TAYMANS RETIRES AS NATIONAL SPONSORSHIP AND NETWORK OFFICE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR




**A**fter 10 years of service as Executive Director of the SND National Education Office, Sister Mary Frances Taymans will retire this summer.

To this role she brought a wealth of experience: teaching in three SND schools, heading two diocesan high schools, serving as executive director of the National Catholic Educational Association Secondary

Schools Department, and her involvement in the International Confederation of Principals.

During her tenure she built on the SND commitment to transformative education that characterizes Notre Dame schools. “She found many ways to involve educators from our sponsored and affiliated schools,” observes Sister Margaret Gorman, SND USA provincial. “Through committees, national gatherings, and an advisory council, she encouraged creative new programs and prepared to pass the torch to the next generation of lay collaborators. We are grateful for her visionary leadership.”

Most recently Sister Mary Frances shepherded the evolution of the SND National Education Office into the National Sponsorship and Network Office (NSNO) and worked with SND leadership to establish the SND USA National Ministry Corporation and its board. The NSNO now includes SND sponsored healthcare and elder care ministries.

“It truly has been a privilege to work closely with the women and men who lead our sponsored ministries and affiliated schools as administrators and trustees,” reflects Sister Mary Frances. “During 2020, 16,700 children and students were educated, over 400 received supportive elder care, and approximately 500,000 were given medical assistance through St. Claire Medical Center and outreach clinics. I have great appreciation and gratitude for being part of the ever-unfolding gift these ministries are to those they serve, to our country, and to our Church.” 

## SND NATIONAL SPONSORSHIP AND NETWORK OFFICE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR APPOINTED





**“I am humbled and honored  
by this leadership opportunity  
to work with SND USA to  
advance the SND mission.”**

*-Dr. Laura Koehl*


**D**r. Laura Koehl has been appointed Executive Director of the SND National Sponsorship and Network Office. Dr. Koehl will continue to serve as President of Notre Dame Academy (NDA) in Park Hills, Kentucky, until assuming her new position with SND USA on September 1, 2021.

A 1975 Notre Dame Academy graduate, Laura returned to the academy as a science teacher in 2006 and took on the role serving as NDA's first lay Principal from 2010-2015 and then first lay President in 2014. During her tenure as NDA Principal and President, the academy was recognized as a Blue Ribbon School of Excellence in 2012 and 2019. From 2016-17, she successfully led the Excellence Without Boundaries campaign that generated 100 percent of its \$7 million fundraising goal to build the Mary, Mother of the World Chapel and Collaborative Learning Center, completed in 2018.

Laura is currently working with the NDA Board of Directors to complete the school's 2018-2022 Strategic Plan: *Building Leaders Through Transformative Education* which includes a \$3 million Building Fund. Says NDA Board Chair Amy Quinn Dye, "Throughout her 15-year tenure at Notre Dame Academy, Dr. Koehl has provided exemplary leadership to our high school and community. She conveys the mission of NDA and the charism of the Sisters of Notre Dame in all she does. We are grateful for her service and she will be greatly missed by our institution."

While at NDA, Laura worked closely with Executive Director Sr. Mary Frances Taymans and several SND ministry leaders as a member of the SND National Education Office Advisory Board, serving as its chair from 2014-2020. She is a founding member of the Notre Dame Urban Education Center (NDUEC) Board and currently serves as chair. Laura is a Trustee for Thomas More University (founded as Villa Madonna College by women religious, including the SNDs, in 1921) and serves as chair of the Enrollment Management and Student Services Committee.

As a student, employee, board member and associate, Laura has embraced the SND mission. "The Sisters of Notre Dame have been a central part of my personal and professional life and left an indelible and endearing mark on my heart," states Dr. Koehl. "Through our many SND ministries, we see the incredible impact the sisters' mission has on so many individuals and communities. I am humbled and honored by this leadership opportunity to work with SND USA to advance the SND mission."

Sister Margaret Gorman, SND USA provincial, concurs, "We are grateful to Laura and to all of our lay collaborators for assuming leadership in one of SND USA's top priorities: ensuring the legacy and sustainability of our sponsored ministries long into the future." 



# An Affordable Way to Make a Big Impact

If there is one thing we can count on in life, it's change. Life's constant changes can make it difficult to balance caring for family and supporting the organizations you care about. Fortunately, there is a solution. Instead of giving a fixed amount to the Sisters of Notre Dame, consider gifting a percentage of your estate, retirement account, life insurance policy or donor-advised fund.

## Percentage Giving and Your Will

If you want to remember the Sisters of Notre Dame in your will, there are two ways you can support our mission with a percentage gift:

- Gift us a percentage of your estate in your will or living trust.
- Leave the Sisters of Notre Dame a percentage of your residual estate (*the portion of your estate that remains after all claims on the estate are settled.*)

## Give a Percentage of Other Assets

You can also remember the Sisters of Notre Dame in your future plans by naming us as a beneficiary of your retirement plan assets, life insurance or donor advised fund. Naming the Sisters of Notre Dame as a beneficiary is as easy as filling out and returning a piece of paper.

- Request a copy of the change of beneficiary form from your provider (*or download a copy from their website*).
- Fill out the form, naming the Sisters of Notre Dame, along with the percentage you'd like us to receive, on the form.
- Sign and return the form to your plan administrator, insurance company or sponsoring organization. Be sure to keep a copy for your records as well.
- Notify us of your future gift so we can document your intended ministry purpose and thank you for your support.

## Every Gift Matters

Gifts of all sizes, from 1 to 100 percent, make a difference to our ministry efforts. For more information on naming the Sisters of Notre Dame as a beneficiary in your plans, please contact your regional Mission Advancement Office.

### COVINGTON, KY:

JODEE MCELFFRESH | [jmcelfresh@sndusa.org](mailto:jmcelfresh@sndusa.org)

### THOUSAND OAKS, CA:

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*The information in this publication is not intended as legal or tax advice. For such advice, please consult an attorney or tax advisor.*



# SND USA 2021

# JUBILARIANS

**Congratulations** to the following Sisters of Notre Dame of the United States who will be celebrating their 2021 Jubilees. You may recognize the name of a sister who taught you in grade school, high school, or college, or who touched your life in a meaningful way. Watch for information on in-person and social media celebrations later this fall.

## Jubilee of Peace

### 80 YEARS

Mary Jamesetta Krafty

## Jubilee of Joy

### 75 YEARS

Mary Francis Dirr

Mary Ronald Frohnapple

## Jubilee of Grace

### 70 YEARS

Mary Ross Burgard

Mary Georgene Fink

Mary Rose Bernard Groth

Mary Heleen Hehman

Mary Antonine Manning

Mary Loretta Pastva

Mary Ann Catherine Wehry

## Iron Jubilee

### 65 YEARS

Joan Marie Buda

Mary Deborah Carlin

Mary Claire Engbersen

Mary Theresa Gebura

Mary Jean Hoelke

Mary Raymund Johnson

Mary Ann Christine Kathman

Mary Charlotte Manzo

Mary Karlanne Noehring

Mary Francel Orosz

Elizabeth Marie Scanlon

## Diamond Jubilee

### 60 YEARS

Mary Elaine Baechle

Carol Mary Bogner

Margaret Mary Collins

Grace Mary Corbett

Mary Therese Grady

Mary Carol Gregory

Mary Patricia Griesmar

Mary Hunter

Julia Marie Hutchison

Mary Kathleen Lyons

Mary Sandra Nativio

Mary Virginia Reesing

Mary Lynette Shelton

Mary Janet Stamm

Mary Jean Strathern

Mary Lucy Suter

Mary Joanne Wittenburg

Joanne Marie Zeitz

## Golden Jubilee

### 50 YEARS

Mary Julie Boehnlein

Margaret Mary Faist

Mary Paula Greggila

Mary Sean Groh

Mary Amy Hauck

Jean Marie Hoffman

Mary Dominic Jones

Mary Rebekah Kennedy

## Ruby Jubilee

### 40 YEARS

Mary Deborah Giles

Anne Mary Molyet

Mary Frances Wahl

## Silver Jubilee

### 25 YEARS

Barbra Marie Buka

Pauline Marie Kagl



*Sisters of Notre Dame  
of the United States*

**One Heart. One Hope. One Mission.**

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**Toledo Office Prayer Line**

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**Thousand Oaks Office Prayer Line**

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# SND USA Launches National Website!

The new SND USA website encompasses information from all four of our regional centers with valuable information on mission priorities, SND news and events, both local and national ministry outreach activities, regional event information, blogs from sisters, prayer lines, and numerous ways to get involved and partner with us.

*Visit us at  
**[www.sndusa.org](http://www.sndusa.org) today!***

