



# International Solidarity Reflection

School Sisters of Notre Dame

*Shalom*

Raise Consciousness and Awareness February 2025

## Introduction

For School Sisters of Notre Dame, taking action to *Raise Consciousness and Awareness* is fundamental. As it says in our [Shalom Document](#), “We School Sisters of Notre Dame will raise our consciousness and that of those with whom we minister by announcing justice, denouncing injustice, strengthening just structures, and changing unjust structures.” It is reflected in our commitment to education, “We educate with the conviction that the world can be changed through the transformation of persons.” (*You Are Sent*, Constitution 22) “We are educators in all that we are and do, exploring concrete avenues to eliminate root causes of injustice.” ([Call of the 25th General Chapter](#))

## Call to Prayer

God of love and peace, you are always with us. Help us contemplate the gifts of your creation while being conscious and aware of our responsibility for the life and care of all participants with whom we share our world. Unite all people of faith, especially our students, teachers, and associates, in the care of the earth. Creator God, fill us with awareness that all people, as well as all life on Earth, deserve protection and care. We long to dwell in your world, in a new way, and recognize that our care for all of us makes us servant-cultivators with you. Amen.

## Experience

In my time serving the congregation at the United Nations, in collaboration with other religious and NGOs, I had the opportunity to help make sure the concerns of the Girl Child were heard, so they could be acknowledged and ultimately acted upon. I remember while in Beijing at the Fourth World Conference on Women, an entire chapter on the Girl Child was included in the final document, and this guided our future advocacy.

Later on, I got to represent SSND in shareholder dialogues with large multinational corporations. I worked in partnership with other religious and faith-based investors to highlight our concerns for human rights, worker dignity, and more recently, for the care of our environment. I especially remember feeling success when one of the fossil fuel companies finally withdrew their harmful drilling operations from a Latin American country.

Now “in retirement”, I am still an educator in all I say and do, raising awareness and consciousness where I can. I write occasional newsletter articles and use the opportunity of table conversation (with people of varying professional backgrounds) and prayer time to acknowledge the cries of the poor and the earth, while encouraging action.

## Reflection

Through our SSND ministry, “We and those to whom we are sent are mutually enriched. We are enabled to grow in communion with God and with one another and in acceptance of responsibility for the earth and its people.” (*You Are Sent*, Constitution 25) We sisters,

associates, and ministry partners are in positions through our everyday encounters with students, staff members, parishioners, and others, to raise awareness and lift up situations of injustice and need. We have the ability to communicate with our elected officials and governmental officials on current situations related to health care, local educational conditions, and the care of local waterways. We can use letters to the editors of local newspapers to raise awareness about the need to address environmental and civic issues. As educators we can raise consciousness and encourage action in our classrooms and other professional situations.

For those of us for whom prayer, presence, and reflection are our primary ministry these days, we may ask ourselves, as Mary did at the Annunciation, “How can this be?” How am I to raise awareness and encourage action when I am no longer in a school or active in a parish? Yet upon reflection, we all know “retired” sisters and associates who do just that – who find creative outlets to lift up the concerns of the marginalized and encourage action.

Let us take time this month to examine the various avenues each of us has for lifting up the cries of the earth and the poor and encouraging action. In what settings do we/I do this well and in what areas do we/I have room for improvement or growth?

“Our goal is not to amass information or to satisfy curiosity, but rather to become painfully aware, to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering and thus to discover what each of us can do about it.” (*Laudato Si'*, 19)

## Action

“Making the concerns of the poor our own, we become painfully aware of the many who suffer privations stemming from the sinfulness of our world. In accord with church teaching and directives, we work actively, especially in our local situations, to eliminate the root causes of injustice in order to realize a world of peace, justice, and love.” (*You Are Sent*, Constitution 17)

What about bringing together sisters, associates, and/or friends in a spirit of prayerful action in order to initiate changes in our donations, civic engagements, and prayer? During community prayer, consider inviting a local speaker to offer insights for dialogue and/or action. Along with our donations for food and clothing for those who are in need of them, we can also contribute to environmental organizations working to preserve land and clean water.

“Our charism continues to develop in the living community, which enriched by the past, enables the congregation to unfold in the present and to be challenged by the future.” (*You Are Sent*, Prologue) Hopefully we can spark each other’s imaginations to contribute to a more hopeful and flourishing world.

## Closing Prayer

God, source of all life, deepen our gratitude for all you have made. Rouse in us delight in the beauty of your creation, to take time to revel in its lovely sights, sounds, and scents. Help us to recognize and resist the structures of exploitation that bring harm to people and planet, to your creation. Touch our hearts and inspire our minds to eagerly study and learn more about the natural world and all those who dwell here. Give us the courage to raise awareness about the cries of the earth and the cries of the poor, and to act urgently and wisely so that our common home may be healed and restored. Amen.