The Power of Beauty

“In the summer of 2006, I spent ten weeks in southern Sudan, teaching a six-week course in English - teaching for teachers in the elementary Catholic schools in Juba. About 55 men and eight women took the course. Half taught in the morning and met with me in the afternoon, and the other half had the opposite schedule. They walked or biked to or from their school to my classroom in a secondary school. A week before the course started, I visited all the elementary schools, and saw their rustic conditions.

Standing at the end of the table, I handed each a two-pocket folder from a stack of various colors, in which to keep their papers. Each teacher accepted the top one, and thanked me. But one man, instead of reaching for the grey folder that I was holding out, said to me, ‘Please, could I have a yellow one?’ ‘Yes, of course.’ He smiled as he walked away with the yellow folder. Then I realized: the yellow folder was a sign of beauty in a city devastated by war and poverty, a dun-colored city strewn with uncollected trash and garbage, bereft of color. And I remembered: our spirits are nurtured by beauty.”

A native of Baltimore, Sister Kathleen Feeley received her Bachelor of Arts in English from Notre Dame of Maryland University in 1962, her Master of Arts in English from Villanova University in 1967 and in 1970, her Doctor of Philosophy with a major in English from Rutgers University. In addition to serving as executive director of the Caroline Center in Baltimore City and teaching throughout Maryland, Sister Kathleen ministered as president of Notre Dame of Maryland University for 21 years, from 1971 - 1992. She has taught around the world including at the University of Madras, India; Australian Catholic University in Australia; Fudan University, Shanghai, China; and at the Catholic University of Ghana where she taught for seven years from 2003 – 2010.