

UNITED IN MISSION

ATLANTIC-MIDWEST PROVINCE

Transforming the world through education



December 2018



A message from
Judith Schaum, SSND

Dear Sisters, Associates
and Colleagues,

Our world today is crying out for unity and community. As *You Are Sent* GD 10 says: "Amid the diversity which exists in our church and in our world, our continuous striving for unity in our faith communities is a valuable witness." How apropos then is the third commitment of our SSND Directional Statement, *Love Gives Everything*:

"We claim our authentic community life as a prophetic witness of unity in diversity and a service to God's people."

Through the life-long process of forming community in which we are engaged, we become a prophetic witness to the church and the world. Unity in diversity is possible.

As we continue to probe the deeper meaning of *Love Gives Everything*, we will reflect in this newsletter on the third commitment stated above. For the School Sisters who are reading this, it is hoped that

the November 17 presentation "Looking at Community with Fresh Eyes" by Nancy Schreck, OSF will provide additional background to the reflections contained below. For non-SSND readers, it is hoped that the reflections will inspire your own participation in community whether in family, church or work.

Already it is December and we have begun the holy season of Advent. As we prepare for the feast of Christmas, may we celebrate

God's presence among us (Emmanuel), and live into the future trusting in God's provident love. Have a blessed Christmas and New Year!

Sincerely,

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School Sisters of Notre Dame throughout the Congregation are praying and reflecting on the 2017 Directional Statement: *Love Gives Everything*. It is the responsibility of each provincial council to implement the commitments stated in the Directional Statement. Step one is usually a time of reflecting and praying on the statement itself in preparation for implementation. SSND co-ministers are also invited into this reflection process. In this newsletter we will consider the third commitment, which focuses on community, by examining three concepts contained therein.



Love Gives Everything:

We claim our **authentic community life** as a prophetic witness of unity in diversity and a service to God's people.



What does *authentic community life* mean to you?

In his Apostolic Exhortation *Vita Consecrata*, Pope St. John Paul II states:

“There are three essential qualities of healthy religious communities: commitment to being on a spiritual journey with others; contributing to something greater than oneself; transforming and being transformed into a new and unfolding faith-filled awareness of a deeper divine existence, interconnected with all people, as well as all creation.”

St. Paul in his letter to the Romans tells us:

“So in Christ, we though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.” (Rom. 12:5) *You Are Sent*, the Constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, states: “Our vowed life together is a gift and a responsibility. Christ is the center of our community and the source of our unity.” (C6)

As you reflect on these quotations, how do they resonate with your concept of authentic community or family in the way or form you live it? Choose one phrase that helps you better understand authentic community. Can you recall an experience of community in its most authentic form?



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You Are Sent reminds us in Constitution 8 that living together in faith is a prophetic sign of the church. It further explains that community is influenced by the culture in which we live. Fr. Anthony Gittens (Living Mission Interculturally) states that living community demands a great deal of work and commitment. "Community is a faith-based undertaking. Members are not colleagues in a multi-national corporation but members of one family attempting to live interculturally."

Father Gittens further says that

a primary purpose for intercultural living is not survival. Rather it enables persons to be more focused on mission. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis reminds us that the human person grows more, matures more and is sanctified more to the extent that she or he enters into relationships, going out from themselves to live in communion with God, with others and with all creatures. In this way, they make their own that Trinitarian dynamism which God imprinted in them when they were created.

Have you ever
lived
interculturally
or
engaged
diversity?

What did you
learn
from this
experience?

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Howard Macy (Bible.org) affirms that the community is also where we learn to strip away our self-interest in order to serve others. "It is here that we learn to share what God has given us, whether it be goods or spiritual gifts. It is also here that we learn to be served, though we are sometimes prideful and reluctant like Peter, who balked at Jesus washing his feet (Jn. 13:2-10). Sometimes we are the washers and sometimes the washes, but in many ordinary ways we are a WITNESS TO THE WORLD."

"Apostolic communities exist for the sake of the mission. Missions vary depending on the charism of the founders and the needs of the Church and world. In a local community all the members may be involved in the same ministry, such as education or health care or some may be ministering in a variety of situations—serving those who live in poverty, homeless shelters, soup kitchens, parish work, running social work agencies, etc. Some members living together may be retired and their mission is to support

those who have a specific active ministry. "(Maureen Gallagher, PhD)

Finally *You Are Sent* C9 reminds us that every Christian community is missionary. We are called and sent to deepen communion with God and among people everywhere we are – in every place, in every time, in every situation.

As a community or family,
in work or in church, do you
participate in any outreach
activities in service of God's
people? Can you do more?

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