



The 25th General Chapter Experiences and Impulses

Winter 2024 Message to SSND Sponsored and Co-Sponsored Ministry Boards

On behalf of the Provincial Council of the Atlantic-Midwest Province I wish you special blessings in this New Year! We are grateful to you as you continue your service as a board member and for sharing your time and your expertise to keep your ministry flourishing and the mission among God's people alive.

As you begin this new year, I would like to share a few highlights of our 25th General Chapter with you and how it might have an impact on you as you move through this 2024 year.

It has been over two months since thirty-seven elected SSND delegates gathered for the opening of our 25th General Chapter which took place in Rome during the 190th anniversary of our founding.

There was great excitement among the 37 chapter members as they gathered to give thanks to our loving and generous God for blessings bestowed on us, past and present and to discern the future path of our congregation. We eagerly shared how each of our provinces lived the 24th General Chapter directional Statement, *Love Gives Everything*, over the past six years and then began brainstorming how God might be calling us for the next six years.

During our five weeks together, we were aware of the 3-year Synod on Synodality going on at the same time at the Vatican, an expansion of the usual Synod of Bishops to include listening to the entire people of God and to explore how we can walk together into the future as a Church. We were also very mindful of the sufferings of our world, especially in Ukraine, the Holy Land, and various other places. As we gathered in small communities with sisters from different countries, we began listening to each other and sharing how each of us thought God was calling us to respond to the needs of the world. This process provided the chapter members with many insights for the crafting of our directional statement. We came together in a synodal way.

As we continued to listen deeply for the ways we might be called to universal communion at this time in our history, we began to discern who might lead us in implementing this statement. After much communal discernment and prayer, we called forth and elected the following sisters to lead us for the next six years. They will be installed at our Generalate in Rome on January 20, 2024.

Sister M. Dominica Michalke was elected as our next General Superior. She was born in Berlin, Germany and served in elected leadership both on the provincial and international level. Sister Dominica was in South Sudan when called to serve as General Superior.

Sister Mary Kerber was elected as a general councilor/vicar-elect and is a native of the United States. She has spent 31 years in Africa and was elected as its first Provincial Leader. After returning to the US in 2015, she worked at Notre Dame of Maryland University and is presently the Director of Mission at St. Mary of the Lake Parish in White Bear Lake, Minnesota.

Sister Chrisine Garcia, general councilor-elect, was born in San Antonio, Texas. She has served for two terms as provincial councilor for the Central Pacific Province. She has served in formal elementary education as teacher or principal, lived in Pakistan and ministered at the Arizona and Mexico Border.

Sister M. Martina Radež, was reelected for a second term as general councilor. She is a native of Slovenia. Before serving in congregational leadership, she served as local leader of a community in Slovenia, as well as served on the provincial council for three terms.

Sister Carolyn Anyega, was reelected for a second term as a general councilor. She is a native of Kenya. Before serving in congregational leadership, Sister Carolyn, served as principal of Notre Dame Senior Secondary School in Ghana.

We feel that the broad spectrum of these sisters in terms of cultural background and ministerial experience offers the congregation the diversity it needs to lead the congregation and to share God's mission with the world. Please keep them in your prayers.

Another special highlight of the General Chapter was a private audience with Pope Francis. He welcomed 50 School Sisters of Notre Dame and thanked us for making Christ visible by our presence, faith, hope and charity. He expressed his gratitude for our great contribution to the Church, especially in education, service, and spirituality.

Pope Francis encouraged us "to continue to be courageous witnesses of evangelical solidarity at a time when many are experiencing fragmentation and disunity and invited us to discern how we could more effectively bear witness to the joy of the Gospel, especially through our educational apostolate and service." When he asked how many sisters we had throughout the world and was given the answer 1900. He said, "I greet them all! 1900 kisses!"

Lastly, it is my joy to present to you our directional statement entitled *The Call and Acts of the 25th General Chapter*, which I invite you to read in its entirety at your leisure. As you begin this new year, I ask that you to take a few moments to quietly read one section of our directional statement and contemplate on how this might apply to your presence on the board. How might God be calling you/the board to act as you reflect on this particular commitment? Please pause the video and ask someone from your board to read the

following excerpt. Then take a few moments of quiet reflection and move into a conversation on the question offered.

We are committed to sustaining our charism and life in mission as a faith-filled, welcoming, and inclusive community.

- We come before God willing to be changed, to accept our mission more intensely, and to respond to God's continuing call to mission.
- We invite new members, associates, and colleagues to join us in proclaiming the good news in the spirit of our charism.

Welcome back! I hope you will find our directional statement to be inspiring and motivating as you begin this new year as a board member. May we, as School Sisters of Notre Dame, and may you, as leaders of our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries, be credible witnesses of universal communion and intentionally commit to actions that deepen your relationships of communion wherever you are. Let us work together in responding to this call of our 25th General Chapter. Many Blessings!!