

UNITED IN MISSION

ATLANTIC-MIDWEST PROVINCE

Transforming the world through education



March 2018



A message from
Judith Schaum, SSND

Dear Colleagues,

“Love gives everything gladly, everything again and again, daily.”

These words of Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger so inspired the delegates to the 24th General Chapter of the School Sisters of Notre Dame that it became the theme of the new Directional Statement for the congregation.

You may recall from the last newsletter that a General Chapter is a meeting composed of elected delegates and ex officio members representing all the provinces of the SSND congregation. The purposes of a General Chapter include setting the direction for the life and mission of the Congregation and electing the General Council (Congregational leadership).

The delegates at the General Chapter “reflect on and evaluate the spirit of the congregation and its fidelity to the mission, in light of the Gospel, the SSND charism, the teachings of the church and the signs of the times.” (You Are Sent GD 94b)

In this newsletter you will learn

more about the seven commitments of the new directional statement titled “Love Gives Everything.” During the next six years, sisters will reflect on the directional statement and commit to ways to implement it. The School Sisters invite each of you to join with us by praying with the Directional Statement and by finding ways to implement it in your personal life and your ministry.

In this issue of United in Mission, each of seven sisters will share a reflection on one of the statements. I am very grateful to them for their thoughtful responses. It is hoped that this will spark your

own personal reflection and commitment.

As you receive this newsletter, we are in the season of Lent. May it be a time of personal renewal and deepened prayer as we prepare for the joy and glory of Easter.

Sincerely,

Judith Schaum, SSND

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Directional Statement *in Action*

We embrace Gospel Poverty, probe its deeper meaning, and risk opening ourselves to be transformed.

And God saw that it was good ... all of creation – good. Jesus took a few loaves and some fish ... the multitude was fed ... it was good. Jesus spoke, water became wine ... the party went on ... it was good. Feet washed with tears ... anointed with costly oil ... Jesus commends Mary ... it was good.

Gospel poverty – using what is at hand for God’s greater honor

and glory. All is gift ... gift of finest wheat ... given ... take and eat ... transformed ... the body and blood of Jesus ... our daily bread ... given for the life of the world ... given for me.

Embracing the Spirit ... embraced by the Spirit ... my Holy Spirit ... I become doer of the Word ... leaving all behind ... going to the ends of the earth ... bringing all to that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent.

- Constance Baker, SSND
Baltimore, MD

“We, School Sisters of Notre Dame, direct our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent. At this critical turning point in the sacred history of creation and humanity, we have heard our deep desire to trust and dare.”

(YAS C 4)

During the next six years, sisters will reflect on the directional statement and commit to ways to implement it.

We deepen our consciousness of who we are in relationship with the Triune God, one another, and God’s amazing universe, particularly through theological reflection on the Trinity.

Reflecting on our Directional Statement we may be tempted to read a line that says “we deepen our consciousness of who we are” with a response such as ‘I hope I know who I am by this time’. On another day I may acknowledge that I am currently unsure of who I am because of the many changes in my life. Either my present life or my expectations are calling me to consider new descriptions of myself. I have used words like teacher, administrator, nurse, director, etc., but in the light of present and anticipated moments more is needed. Sometimes I need to stretch

as wide as the universe to seek a deeper experience of God and myself. Or I may need to focus on a minute moment that I never really probed before. In all of these experiences I meet the Triune God and feel the magnetic call to seek more. Perhaps my prayer should be: O Lord, I am not worthy, but please don’t let that stop you!

In *Laudato Si’* Pope Francis helps us understand our theological reflection when he reminds us to embrace both religious principles and the insights of science. He tells us that “At the end, we will find ourselves face-to-face with the infinite beauty of God.” Whatever terms we use, this reality draws us into the deepening oneness which unites us to God, to others, and to the beautiful universe around us.

- Jeannette Blatz, SSND
Wilton, CT

The School Sisters invite each of you to join with us by praying with the Directional Statement and by finding ways to implement it in your personal life and your ministry.

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

When I first received our Directional Statement, my heart resonated with our call, while at the same time realizing the radical challenge. Love is the essence of life. Love is God, and our response is God's love within and around us, holding us in God's heart and in communion with all creation. God who is love; God who is community; God who lives within us personally and communally, within all creation. It is God who first of all GIVES EVERYTHING GLADLY, EVERYTHING AGAIN AND AGAIN, DAILY. Therefore, in order to live authentic

community, we need to be deeply in relationship with our God, to know and realize that we are loved by God, that all people and all of creation are in the heart of God, that we are all one, that everything and everyone is in relationship to one another. In living this Trinitarian life, it is essential that we commit ourselves to daily prayer.

What does it mean to be authentic? Merriam Webster states that authentic means "conforming to an original." We are created in the image and likeness of the Triune God, a dynamic relationship constantly loving, freely and gladly sharing life, drawing all creation into oneness, forgiving, compassionate. We are made in the image of The

ORIGINAL. God's DNA within us is OUR real essence. Our call is to be conscious of the God-life within ourselves and one another and to help each other to grow together into God.

How do we claim authentic community? We can do this by growing into God, by the daily living with one another, through our presence to others, our open-hearted prayer, always moving from me to us, listening to one another, attentively without judgment, willing to reach out to respond to hidden, unseen needs. LOVE GIVES EVERYTHING GLADLY, EVERYTHING AGAIN AND AGAIN DAILY.

- Delia Calis, SSND
Waterdown, ON

We expand our understanding of interculturality and commit to develop skills for intercultural living in community & society.

My coming to know SSND began in the early 1960's, and for 17 years – kindergarten through college – occurred both inside and outside of the traditional classroom. When I entered SSND in the mid 1980's I knew SSND was an international congregation, but my experience was only the Baltimore Province.

From the looks of my marked up YAS, during my novitiate I was captivated by the first line of GD 36, "The internationality of our congregation affects all we are and do." Fast forward 10 years to the mid 1990's and my participation in the Bonding Program when I

KNEW, like I hadn't known before, that we were indeed an international community. Then came the realization that by virtue of being international, we SSND are also an intercultural community.

Through my ministries I have come to embrace and frequently be challenged by the realities of living in a multicultural society. Since receiving this Directional Statement, I have been struck by the phrase "intercultural living in community". And I find myself pondering, do I currently recognize and appreciate enough the interculturality of my SSND sisters (associates & colleagues) in the AM Province? And I pray that I am made more ready for intercultural living with my SSND sisters, or whomever, in the future.

- Catherine Gugerty, SSND
Baltimore, MD

We risk innovative responses as educators in a rapidly changing world impacted by globalization and technology.

For me, it is exciting that our 24th SSND General Chapter asks us to read *Love Gives Everything* along side *Laudato Si'*. Chapter Three of the encyclical addresses "globalization" and "technology," and Chapter Six looks at "ecological education and spirituality." These Chapters relate clearly to our call to "risk innovative responses as educators in a rapidly changing world impacted by globalization and technology."

Pope Francis declares: "There needs to be a distinctive way of looking at things, a way of thinking, policies, an educational program, a lifestyle and a spirituality which together generate resistance to the assault of the technocratic paradigm (par. 111)." He stresses: "Our efforts at education will be inadequate and ineffectual unless

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we strive to promote a new way of thinking about human beings, life, society and our relationship with nature (par. 215) – and unless we embrace an “integral ecology” capable of addressing every aspect of our global crises (par. 137).

To live out Love Gives Everything, it seems first we need to educate ourselves about Francis’ vision of “integral ecology” - the core message of *Laudato Si’*. Hopefully then, we will find innovative ways to carry out the educational call in Love Gives Everything. As Pope Francis once said, ‘Education is an act of love; it is like giving life.’

- Mary Heather MacKinnon, SSND
Burlington, ON

We educate, advocate, and act in collaboration with others for the dignity of life and the care of all creation.

Love for the Creator impels us to an active love for all that has been created. So we ask ourselves how that can be shown.

Conversations with friends and others whom I meet on a regular basis can, in fact, be educating. It’s certainly not formal education, but information can be shared and ideas can be challenged in a friendly way. This requires active listening, as well as honest speaking.

Advocating can be done by all of us. We receive information from the community which gives us sufficient knowledge to enable us to contact our legislators by phone, letter-writing, or e-mails. Some of us can take part in “walks” or can gather in protests of unfair prac-

tices. All it takes to be involved in advocating is a willingness to give some time to learn and to act.

Collaboration with others can be facilitated by responding to requests from province departments, such as Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation (JPIC), Shalom, Beyond Borders, and other religious congregations and local civic groups. The opportunities are in place for us. We need to realize that collaborating can make a difference in the number of calls, signatures, etc. received by legislators, and perhaps influence decisions in a positive way. At least that’s what we hope for! And why do we do all this? We believe in the dignity of life, ALL life, and strive for the care of all creation. Love for our Creator impels us!

- Jean Phelan, SSND
Chicago, IL

We discern as a congregation which urgent and critical global concerns we are called to address and we dare to respond boldly in unsuspected ways.

What are we willing to risk to address global critical concerns? Arrest? Insults? Misunderstandings? Rejections? Financial security?

Imagine if we were to boldly invest a million dollars (or two or three) in a media campaign, full page ads in prominent newspapers in all the

countries where School Sisters serve, firmly stating the case for justice and peace for a particular issue, and asking people of all faiths, or no faith to join us? Could we tell them that we are educators, deeply concerned for future generations?

Could we do this for the Rohingya people, who are not citizens of any country, and who face genocide? Could we call for an end to nuclear weapons? Could we plea for our fragile fresh water supply?

Could this initiative have an effect in rallying awareness and commitment for change? Would it? Would people call us silly, accuse us of meddling in politics or wasting money? Would friends abandon us? Or would people believe we are putting action behind our words?

We could continue to discern this for the next couple of years, or we could set a deadline to take action before the end of 2018.

- Peg Regan, SSND
Wilton, CT

Which reflection speaks to you most and draws you deeper into the corresponding commitment? How does it tug at your heart and nudge you to prayer?

United in Mission is a quarterly publication of the Department of Ministry Services, School Sisters of Notre Dame Atlantic-Midwest Province.

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