

Video Message for SSND Ministry Boards

Greetings. I am delighted to be able to spend this time with you. For those of you who don't know me, I am Sister Charmaine Krohe, Provincial Leader of the Atlantic-Midwest province. I have been serving in this role since 2016.

On behalf of our provincial council, I want to thank you for sharing your time and your expertise to keep your ministry flourishing and the mission among God's people, alive.

Today, I want to share with you something that engages the entire international SSND congregation at this time. Each of our 9 Provinces around the globe is preparing for the 25th General Chapter, including us, the Atlantic-Midwest Province.

A General Chapter is the highest authority of the congregation when in session and takes place every 6 years. It is a sacred and special moment in the life of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and is a time for renewal and transformation for the entire congregation. Members of the chapter form an international faith community as they pray, dialogue and search together for the will of God. We also reflect on and evaluate the spirit of the congregation and its fidelity to its mission in light of the gospel, our charism, the teachings of the church and the signs of our times. At this time, we also are electing our general superior and general councilors for the next six years.

Our General Chapter will begin on October 24, 2023, the day on which our congregation was founded. It will end on November 17, 2023, the day our foundress, Theresa Gerhardinger was declared "Blessed" by Pope John Paul II. The theme of our General Chapter is "Living into a prophetic witness of universal communion."

In preparation for this General Chapter, our sisters and associates have been participating in congregation-wide dialogue groups which reflect on how each province has lived the communal life and mission as inspired by our Directional Statements of the last seven General Chapters.

As we review the last 36 years, we listen deeply for ways we might be called to universal communion at this time in our history. Then, joining with members of other provinces, we continue to listen and reflect, deepening our awareness of the insights and lived experience of the broader congregation. The General Chapter delegates will engage these gathered insights and use them to discern and articulate the direction for the next six years. This is all to say that within SSND exists a culture of review and reflection in the service of God's mission.

Reviewing and examining a period of time, whether it is a day, a month, a year, or even longer, is nothing new to our faith tradition. We find it first in the Creation story

in the Book of Genesis in the Bible, which details how God created the heavens and the earth and everything in them in six days. After each day God looked back on the day, reviewing, and examining what God had done, and found it good. After the 6th day God reviewed all of creation, including us humans, and concluded it was ‘very good.’

It was however St. Ignatius of Loyola and today the Jesuits who popularized a prayer for our times called ‘The Examen’. In this prayer we are invited to encounter God, express gratitude for the blessings of each day and to be honest with ourselves about any mistakes we may have made.

This approach to prayer can be modified in many ways. As we School Sisters of Notre Dame examine our ways leading up to the 25th General Chapter, I would like to lead you in a version of the Examen adapted for ministry boards.

As you are at the end of a board year, this is an opportune time for you personally and as an entire SSND sponsored or co-sponsored ministry board to review the work of your board.

How have you fulfilled the mission of your ministry this past year? How was your ministry a prophetic witness in the larger community? And how have you engaged individually in the work of the board this past year?

Now let’s take a few moments to examen ourselves individually and as a board:

1. Place yourself in God’s presence. Give thanks for God’s great love for you and your ministry board.
2. Pray for the grace to see with the eyes of your heart how God’s Spirit is acting in and through this board.
3. Review this past year. Recall specific moments at meetings, agenda items, decisions made, actions taken. What stands out for you? What feelings emerge with that?
4. Reflect on your contributions to the conversations and your overall involvement in the work of the board. How have you used your God-given gifts – where might you have held back? Where might you have experienced gladness or sadness in your relation to service on your board. Talk to God about this in a way that is most natural for you.

5. Now, look beyond this year towards next year. Think of what might be God's dream for you as an individual board member and the board as a whole. What might be God's dream for the community your ministry is in? What is shimmering on your horizon?
6. Individually and in the presence of one another, make a commitment to God, to continue to serve your ministry as you go forward to make a difference in the world.

I would like to close this time with you by praying the prayer that all our sisters, associates, and colleagues are praying in preparation for our 25th General Chapter. Let us pray:

Triune God, Source of love, open and widen our hearts and shape us into a new creation of your love.

Word of love, teach us how to love and be a healing presence needed in our world today.

Spirit of love, free us to let go, risk and become prophetic witnesses of universal communion.

May Blessed Theresa, woman of love, accompany us on this transformative journey, ever seeking to know and do Love's will. Amen.