

EMBRACING THE MISSION

MAKING KNOWN GOD'S GOODNESS

A RESOURCE GUIDE



SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME DE NAMUR
U.S. East-West Province



Notre Dame Academy (Hingham, Massachusetts).

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ON THE COVER
Students engage in hands-on environmental education in the geodome at the Academy of Notre Dame (Tyngsboro, Massachusetts).

We, as Notre Dame, find that we need, more than ever, solidarity, companionship, community among us so as not to lose the vision that we have had for our people since the beginning, the people of the reign of God here on earth. Our mission to be at the side of the people makes it urgent, as never before, to live the challenges of the Gospel, and together, [build] a society that gives life. Julie and Françoise, your life witness inspires us even today. May many courageous people join us. I ask that God deepen my faith so that I not lose my enthusiasm for the struggle of the people.

—SISTER DOROTHY STANG, SNDdeN FROM A LETTER TO ST. JULIE AND FRANÇOISE, 1998



ENGAGING NEW GENERATIONS

Dear Partner in Mission,

“Let us always do our best with great simplicity of heart and mind.”

—ST. JULIE BILLIART

It is with great joy that this book is shared with you as you embark on a transformative journey as part of a Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur ministry. This book delves into the diverse ministries of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, their mission, and the extraordinary importance of being part of their blessed and purposeful mission.

Within these pages, discover the essence of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, an inspiring and courageous congregation founded by Saint Julie Billiart and Françoise Blin de Bourdon in early 19th-century Namur, Belgium. Their visionary ideals and unyielding dedication have given rise to a sisterhood that has flourished

across the globe, touching the lives of countless people through their compassionate service and profound teachings.

At the core of the Sisters’ mission lies an unwavering commitment to education, empowerment, and the alleviation of human suffering. Their compassionate response to the pressing needs of the world has driven them to establish a diverse range of ministries, each carefully established to address the unique challenges faced by individuals and communities.

In this book, discover the many SNDdeN ministries that span across various fields, including education, health-care, social work, spiritual guidance and advocacy for the marginalized. Through photographs and narratives, witness the commitment of each ministry to educate, care for and engage with people from all walks of life.

Delving into the mission and charism of the SNDdeN, discover that it is rooted in the transformative power of

love and deep spirituality. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur find strength in their unwavering belief in the Goodness of God, and their actions radiate a profound sense of joy and hope. Their mission is not merely a calling; it is a way of life.

Each one of the SNDdeN ministries is responsible for upholding this steadfast mission and belief of the Sisters. The U.S. East-West Province Sponsorship Office of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur plays a vital role in ensuring the continuation and sustainability of the congregation's mission and charism. Our office serves as a bridge between the Sisters and the various ministries they have established, fostering collaboration, support, and guidance. The specific roles and responsibilities of the Sponsorship Office may vary depending on the scope of each ministry, but some common functions include:

Mission Alignment: The Sponsorship Office ensures that all the ministries operating under the umbrella of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur align with the congregation's mission, vision, and values. They work closely with each ministry to ensure that their activities and initiatives are in harmony with the charism of the Sisters.

Governance and Leadership: The Sponsorship Office provides governance and leadership oversight to the sponsored ministries. This involves governance training and support of best practices and ensuring compliance with legal and ethical standards.

Spiritual Guidance: The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have a unique charism and spirituality. The Sponsorship Office supports the ministries in understanding and integrating this charism into their work, fostering a shared identity and purpose across all endeavors.

Collaboration and Networking: The Sponsorship Office facilitates collaboration and networking among the various ministries, and across Provinces. We encourage and support sharing best practices, resources, and expertise among the ministries to strengthen their collective impact.

Formation and Training: The Sponsorship Office supports the formation and training of personnel within the sponsored ministries, ensuring that staff and volunteers understand and embrace the charism and values of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

Advocacy and Social Justice: The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have a long history of advocating for social justice and serving the vulnerable. The Sponsorship Office may assist the ministries in their advocacy efforts and ensure their work reflects a commitment to promoting justice and dignity for all.

Communication: The Sponsorship Office serves as a communication channel, sharing updates, stories, and achievements of the ministries with the broader network. This helps raise awareness and support for ministries' work.

Long-Term Planning: The Sponsorship Office engages in long-term planning for the sustainability and growth of the sponsored ministries, ensuring their continued impact for generations to come.

Overall, the Sponsorship Office plays a pivotal role in nurturing the ministries of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, supporting their dedication to education, service, and compassion, and fostering a dynamic network of ministries that embody the congregation's transformative mission.

We hope this book is a source of support and inspiration. May it instill in you a sense of purpose and a deeper understanding and meaning to being part of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur U.S. East-West Province network of ministries.

On behalf of the U.S. East-West Province Sponsorship Office, with heartfelt gratitude for your presence and commitment to this mission and to the ministry in which you serve, we thank you. We wish you a blessed and fulfilling experience with the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

Peace,

Kathleen M. Colin

Executive Director of Sponsorship
U.S. East-West Province Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur



Notre Dame Elementary School (Belmont, California).



Mission Statement

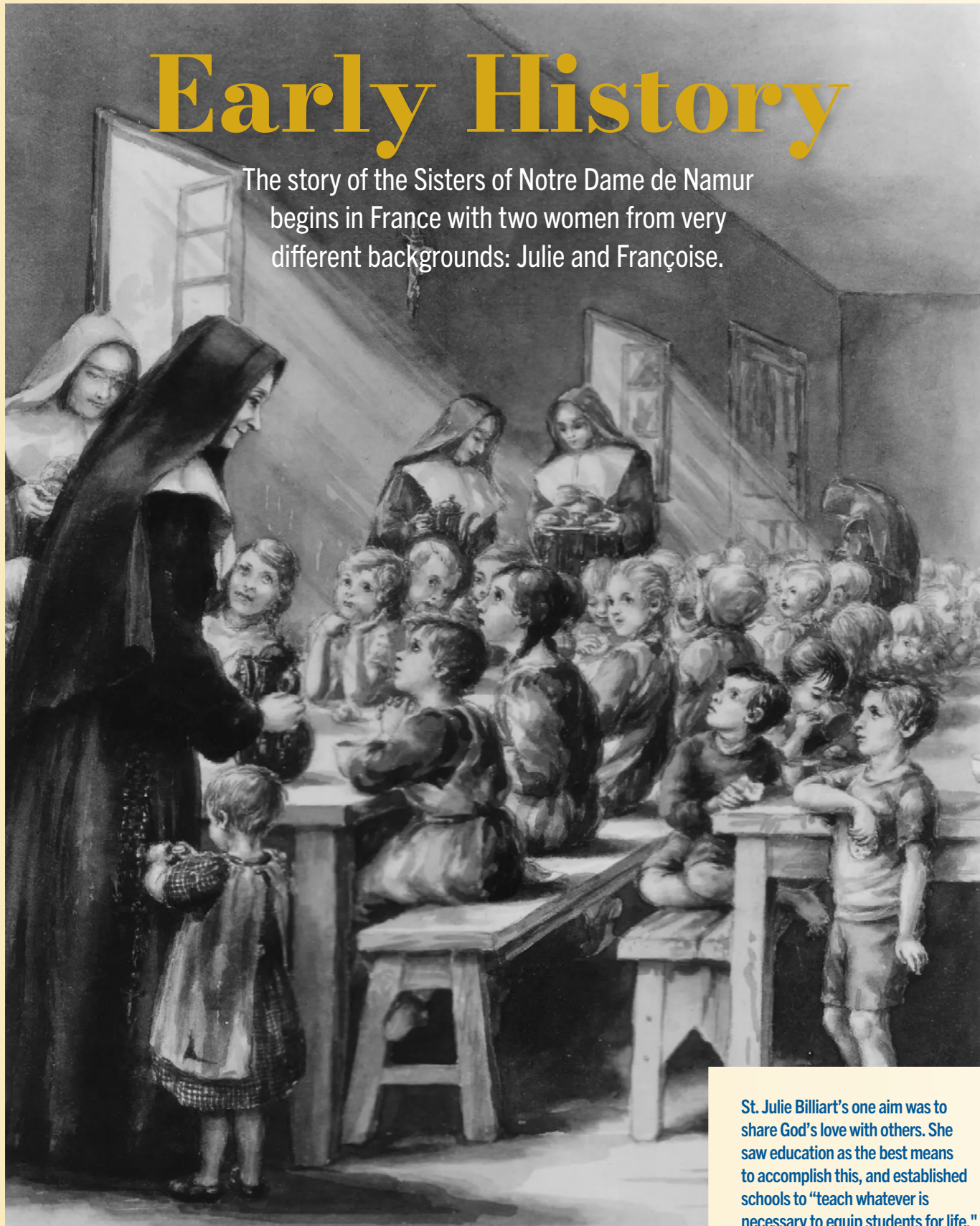
Sisters of Notre Dame,
women with hearts as wide as the world,
make known God's goodness
and love with and among people living in poverty,
through a Gospel way of life,
community and prayer.

Continuing a strong
educational tradition,
we take our stand
with people living in poverty,
especially women and children,
in the most abandoned places.

Each of us commits
her one and only life
to work with others to create
justice and peace for all.

Early History

The story of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur begins in France with two women from very different backgrounds: Julie and Françoise.



St. Julie Billiart's one aim was to share God's love with others. She saw education as the best means to accomplish this, and established schools to "teach whatever is necessary to equip students for life."

Come, we must have courage in the century we live in. Great souls are needed, souls that have the interests of the greater glory of God at heart. — ST. JULIE BILLIART, LETTER 35

Beginnings in Europe

Born in 1751 in Cuvilly, France, **Julie Billiart** was the sixth child of shopkeepers of modest means. Known for her keen interest in spiritual things, by age seven she had not only memorized the entire catechism but understood it.

She delighted in the Gospel stories and in learning about God. As a teenager, she helped her family survive a financial crisis. She made linens, worked in the fields, and sold goods for her father. When not working she could be found teaching children and fellow workers about the things of God.

Life dramatically changed for Julie at age 22 when she lost the use of her legs. Accounts vary as to why she was stricken. Some claim a fever epidemic coupled with much bloodletting was the culprit. Others claim that the loud report from a pistol shot into the Billiart house shocked the sensitive girl into this condition. Other known factors included her poor diet and physical hardships. Perhaps it was a combination of all of these factors.

With her body failing her, she turned to God as the

source for her comfort and spent hours in prayer and meditation daily. Many came to her for counsel and comfort, including **Françoise Blin de Bourdon**, an aristocrat's daughter. Initially repulsed by Julie's invalid condition, Françoise continued to visit and later grew very fond of the woman with the "deep and lively faith."

Start of the French Revolution

The villagers had need of comfort and counsel as France had entered a period of political and social upheaval noted for its violence. The French Revolution saw the imprisonment and beheading of aristocrats and many of those in religious life. Churches closed. Schools closed. Life was difficult for peasants, religious, and aristocrats alike. Julie's life was repeatedly threatened, in part it is believed due to her well-known holiness. Finally, she went into hiding, one time escaping those who sought her life by hiding overnight under a heavy load of hay. An imprisoned Françoise, scheduled for beheading, was saved when the mastermind behind the revolution, Robespierre, was himself executed.

A GLIMPSE OF OUR PAST

1804

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are women religious in an international congregation, founded in France in 1804 by St. Julie Billiart. Eventually they make their way to America settling in Oregon and Ohio.



1849

Three Sisters of Notre Dame come from Cincinnati, Ohio by rail and coach to Boston, Massachusetts to take over the church school at St. Mary's in the North End of Boston. They are given the Stillman Street home as their first convent in Boston.



1851

Sister Loyola and Sister Marie Catherine journey from Oregon to San Francisco to meet four Sisters arriving from Belgium. At the request of Bishop Alemany, the Sisters remain in California. With 25 cents in their pockets and an abundance of faith, they open a boarding school in San Jose, the College (high school) of Notre Dame.



1868

Chartered as the first college in the state of California authorized to grant the baccalaureate degree to women, the College of Notre Dame becomes known as the "best school for young ladies" in the West.



1919

The Sisters open Emmanuel College, the first Catholic women's college in Massachusetts.

Churches Reopen

In 1804 churches reopened and the message of the Gospel could once again be preached. In June of that same year, Julie was healed from the paralysis that had plagued her for 22 years. Finally, she could walk again. In the remaining years of her life, she would travel incredible distances, often by foot, to set up new convents, visit Sisters and take care of business matters.

In October 1805, Julie and Françoise professed vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience as Sisters of Notre Dame. For Françoise this meant closing the door to her former life of privilege. Many in her family couldn't understand how she could choose this path. Hadn't

she enjoyed the fine clothes and parties, been introduced at the court of Napoleon and Marie Antoinette and been courted by many eligible suitors? But Françoise was ready to leave behind the trappings of wealth and privilege and commit her life solely to serving God and God's people.

Many at this time saw a whole generation of children growing up unschooled, undisciplined, and unchurched. Without formal education and faith formation, the children knew nothing of God's salvation or goodness. Julie and Françoise intended to change that. Though Françoise eschewed material goods for herself, her inheritance funded the opening of a free school for

poor girls. Later she and Julie would open day schools for wealthy girls using the money received from these schools to offset the cost of the free schools.

Working with Children

Their work with the children, including some orphans, was a great success and they attracted many young women to join them. Eventually the bishop of Amiens wanted Julie and her community to serve only in his diocese, but Julie did not feel this was God's calling for her. When she wouldn't agree to this command, the bishop expelled her from his diocese.

Saddened by this turn of events but believing that to leave Amiens was for the best, Julie and Françoise along with many of the Sisters, relocated the congregation to Namur, France, which is now part of Belgium. There they were able to work as God was leading them with the full support of the local bishop.

In 1816, after several months of sickness, Julie died peacefully while praying in the presence of Françoise and the Sisters of the Namur community.

Heading to the New World

From the city of Namur, first part of France and later Belgium, the congregation expanded. The first request to go across the ocean came after St. Julie's death when Bishop Pur-

Without formal education and faith formation, the children knew nothing of God's salvation or goodness. Julie and Françoise intended to change that.

cell requested Sisters of Notre Dame to go to his diocese in Ohio. In 1840 Belgian Sisters came to Cincinnati. In 1849, three Sisters of Notre Dame traveled from Cincinnati, Ohio by rail and coach to Boston, Massachusetts to take over the church school at St. Mary's in the North End of Boston.

In 1843 Father De Smet, a Jesuit missionary, requested Sisters to help in his mission in Oregon, and in 1851 Sisters began to serve in California.

The Work Continues

Today the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur numbers over 900 serving "the good God" in 15 countries on five continents. The Sisters continue the mission of proclaiming God's goodness and educating for life as did Julie and Françoise.



Student musicians at Sisters Academy (Baltimore, Maryland) a jointly sponsored school of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, School Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of Mercy, and Sisters of Bon Secours, USA.

A GLIMPSE OF OUR PAST CONTINUED

1923

College of Notre Dame (including high school and elementary departments) moves to Belmont, California where it remains today. (It becomes a 4-year college in 1951.)



1960s

The 60s were a time for change including the evolution of the Sisters habits. You can see the lightened attitude here with child star Shirley Temple Black, a friend of the SNDdeN, posing with Sister Roseanne Murphy and friends.



1962

In 1962, the Massachusetts Province move their novitiate from Waltham to Ipswich, Massachusetts.



1946-70

The Sisters expand their mission to Hawaii, Oregon and Washington, and abroad including Brazil and Kenya.



2014

The Ipswich, Boston, Connecticut, Chesapeake and California Provinces merge to create the East-West Province of the United States.

Today

Today the U.S. East-West Province sponsors 18 ministries in education and healthcare. Sisters continue to serve in diverse pastoral and social justice ministries domestically and throughout the world, including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Japan, Brazil, Peru, Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, Italy, and the United Nations.



SNDdeN FEAST DAYS

Founded on St. Julie Billiart's belief in the goodness of God, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur bring to their lives and work a respect for the goodness and dignity of each person and a care for justice for all.

July 12, 1751

Birth and baptism of Marie Rose Julie Billiart

April 8, 1816

The death of Julie Billiart

June 22, 1969

Canonization of Julie Billiart

May 13, 1906

Beatification of Julie Billiart. Official liturgical feast day.

February 2, 1804

Vows of Julie Billiart and first Sisters of Notre Dame

THE SEVEN HALLMARKS OF A NOTRE DAME DE NAMUR LEARNING COMMUNITY

The Notre Dame de Namur Learning Community Hallmarks describe the essential characteristics, values, and activities of a Notre Dame learning community (i.e. school, organization, or ministry). Developed in the early 2000s, the Hallmarks emerged through a collaborative process between Sisters and their colleagues in response to the question, “What makes our school a Notre Dame school?”

Rooted in the gospel, the Hallmarks express the distinctive identity of a Notre Dame de Namur learning community in terms both practical and aspirational. They are an expression of who we say we are, and who we aspire to be.

At the same time, the Hallmarks are a practical guide for setting goals and policies according to each learning community’s particular context and needs. The Hallmarks give values-based direction for decisions and activities so that the learning community continues to express the spirituality and mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. While each Notre Dame de Namur school and ministry is unique, the Hallmarks provide a connective thread that binds us all to one another. Through the Hallmarks, we engage current and future generations in the Notre Dame de Namur mission and charism of sharing God’s goodness with the world.

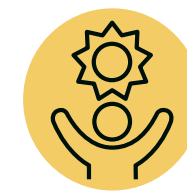
Notre Dame Elementary School (Belmont, California).



Hallmark One

We Proclaim by Our Lives Even More than by Our Words that God is Good

- ✦ We believe, even in the midst of today’s reality, that God is good, and we stand firm in our commitment to honor that goodness in ourselves, in others, and in our world.
- ✦ We value life as an on-going spiritual journey of deepening relationships with self, others, and God.
- ✦ We make relevant to the life of our contemporary learning community the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur history and the spirit of St. Julie Billiart. We seek to live this heritage by allowing it to influence our actions in today’s world.
- ✦ We create decisions and policies that reflect the mission and values of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and that are sensitive to the various stakeholders.
- ✦ We make decisions respecting, and informed by, the gospel values of our Catholic tradition and teachings



Hallmark Two

We Honor the Dignity and Sacredness of Each Person

- ✦ We develop and appreciate relationships that respect individual differences.
- ✦ We create environments that encourage the development of the whole person.
- ✦ We dedicate time, space and personnel in support of the individual’s spiritual and personal journey.

ILLUSTRATIONS: ISTOCK



Hallmark Three

We Educate for and Act on Behalf of Justice and Peace in the World

- ✦ We educate on behalf of justice and are willing to take socially responsible actions against injustice (e.g., issues of discrimination against women and racial discrimination).
- ✦ We ground our action on behalf of justice in the spiritual practice of reflection-action-reflection.
- ✦ We infuse classroom experience with global perspectives and integrate classroom learning with civil and cultural interactions.
- ✦ We live and act with reverence for the earth and the environment.
- ✦ The learning community provides a lived experience of simplicity and goodness which expresses the gospel message of charity in joy, warmth, spontaneity, integrity and openness to God and all of creation.
- ✦ We commit ourselves to create just systems and relationships within our learning community.
- ✦ We make conscious the effect our decisions and actions will have on the lives of the poor by making choices which are rooted in the gospel.
- ✦ We foster responsible global citizenship and to that end we commit ourselves to the practice of dialogue, non-violence, and conflict resolution.



Notre Dame Education Center (Lawrence, Massachusetts).



Hallmark Four

We Commit Ourselves to Community Service

- ✦ We integrate service-learning (community based learning) into the academic curriculum and co-curricular activities.
- ✦ We create partnerships with community agencies that facilitate service-learning processes.
- ✦ We ground our service in the spiritual practice of reflection-action-reflection, and we incorporate this process into our service-learning commitments.



Hallmark Five

We Embrace the Gift of Diversity

- ✦ We welcome to our community people of diverse cultures, ethnicity, race, socio-economic circumstances, gender, age, sexual orientation and faith traditions.
- ✦ We develop educational programs which expand our knowledge and understanding of the diversity in our world community and which celebrate the richness of that heritage.
- ✦ We initiate strategies and support services which respect individual learning styles and which build the self-esteem of each student.



Kinder & 5th grade buddies at Moreland Notre Dame (Watsonville, California).



Hallmark Six

We Create Community among Those with whom We Work and with Those We Serve

- ✦ We remember and honor the legacy of friendship between the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur co-foundresses, Julie Billiart and Francoise Blin de Bourdon, and we foster a spirit of friendship as foundational to our learning community relationships.
- ✦ We value and implement community-building activities, both social and spiritual, between and among all members of our learning community.
- ✦ We design and foster collaborative processes wherever possible; we ground decision-making in active participation and the principle of subsidiarity.
- ✦ We create interactive and collaborative educational experiences.
- ✦ We create an atmosphere of open and direct communication.

ILLUSTRATIONS: ISTOCK



Hallmark Seven

We Develop Holistic Learning Communities which Educate for Life

- ✦ We design and implement academically excellent educational experiences.
- ✦ We create curricular/co-curricular interactions that facilitate student-centered learning/teaching environments.
- ✦ We actively support the intellectual, emotional, spiritual, psychological and social growth of the members of our learning community.
- ✦ We provide an environment and appropriate training for leadership development.
- ✦ We foster educational activities that develop self-directed learners capable of self-evaluation, critical thinking, and creative responses to life situations.
- ✦ We work with and within a risk-taking and flexible organization which exhibits compassionate and socially responsible actions in response to issues of justice; bases its curriculum on cross-cultural perspectives and understandings; respects and explores the unique and complementary roles and gifts of women and men in society.

No matter where we teach, no matter who we teach, no matter what we have in terms of resources, educational excellence is our standard. We expect the best and we give the best to every single student who sits in front of us.

— SISTER MARY JOHNSON, SNDdeN, CONGREGATIONAL LEADER, 2023



From Top: Notre Dame Education Center (Lawrence, Massachusetts), Notre Dame High School (Belmont, California), Notre Dame de Namur University (Belmont, California), Notre Dame Academy (Worcester, Massachusetts).

THE MISSION & SPIRITUALITY OF THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME de NAMUR



St. Julie Billiart (top) and Françoise Blin de Bourdon (bottom), co-foundresses of the Congregation of Notre Dame de Namur.

...We commit ourselves to ongoing dialogue with believers of other faiths and with non-believers in our search for a deeper understanding of Truth.

— CONSTITUTIONS, ARTICLE 27

Religious congregations in the Catholic tradition are founded by women and men who feel called to carry out the mission of Jesus according to a particular spirit. That spirit, or spirituality, is known as a charism.

FOUNDATIONAL CHARISM: THE GOODNESS OF GOD

At the core of Notre Dame spirituality is St. Julie Billiart's belief and experience that "God is good."

Julie's belief that God is good enabled her to face life with a trusting and joyful spirit that gave meaning to all her life experiences. "Ah! How good is the good God!" was an exclamation continually on her lips. The one aim of her life was to love and bring others to love this God whom she knew to be good.

"The Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur was founded by Marie Rose Julie Billiart, a woman filled with love for God and God's people. She responded to the call to commit her life completely to God and to spread everywhere the Gospel message that God is indeed Good." (Constitutions, Article 1)

All those in mission in the spirit of Notre Dame are called to proclaim the good news of God's goodness through word and action.



Emmanuel College students (Boston, Massachusetts).

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PERSON IN MISSION

- ✦ Trust
- ✦ Liberty of Spirit
- ✦ Simplicity
- ✦ Centrality of Prayer
- ✦ Joy
- ✦ The Cross/Paschal Mystery

Trust

A strong belief that God is good engenders an equally strong trust in God and in God's creation — an optimistic stance on life. Julie Billiart was able,

to a heroic degree, to abandon herself to the all-wise ways of divine providence. Her trust was tough and steady, tested by trials and suffering.

Julie passionately yearned to instill in others her own spirit of trust and her resulting freedom of spirit and action: "God knows how to make everything turn to the good of those who love with all their hearts and who put their trust in God."

Liberty of Spirit

Trust in God's goodness is accompanied by a liberty of spirit which frees a person from taking him or herself too seriously. God is to be trusted; God is in control. Julie believed that "the

mark of true confidence in God is never to be shaken, no matter what happens."

That liberty of spirit is shown in openness, flexibility, and serenity in the face of criticism and opposition — all qualities which speak of the wisdom and strength of a life focused on God's goodness. Liberty of spirit engenders a magnanimity of soul which is certainly characteristic of Julie's spirituality. There was no place for pettiness in her approach to life. She encouraged her Sisters to "cut from the whole cloth." She had no patience for the fear that comes from smallness of mind and heart. "Better mistakes than paralysis," was her advice.



Teachers and staff at Moreland Notre Dame (Watsonville, California).

Simplicity

Simplicity is a primary characteristic of the Notre Dame charism. Simplicity, the single-heartedness that is a response of one's whole person to God experienced as good, was the outstanding mark of Julie's spirit from the beginning and the first quality in the spirit of the early Sisters. Like the sun drawing the sunflower or the magnetic north attracting the needle of a compass, God held Julie and her Sisters in a simplicity of response that was direct, total, and uncomplicated. Simplicity affects all of life, one's entire style of being. It is at once Julie's great legacy and her great challenge, for simplicity is one and undivided; we cannot have it in one aspect of our lives and lack it in others.

A person with an inner quality of simplicity keeps focus on God and does not determine where God should be or how God should be. A person possessing simplicity can respond to new calls from God and moves with God as God continues to be revealed in the contemporary reality.

Centrality of Prayer

The ability to live a life of complete trust in God and total focus on God's action in all of life calls for a life of prayer and reflection. Notre Dame spirituality is centered in and flows from a tradition of contemplative action.

Continual attentiveness to God's presence in every aspect of life is the foundation of apostolic prayer. The needs

and hopes and the joys and sorrows of all people — those known globally and locally — are brought to prayer. In God's loving presence, the person in mission gains a deeper understanding and is energized to reach out with a renewed sense of care. Mission-centered prayer calls for a heart attuned to hear God's word and a will to respond with Spirit-led action.

Notre Dame de Namur spirituality calls the person in mission to live in a continual cycle of prayer, an attentive presence to God's word and action in life, an openness to the transformative effect of God's presence, and a self-giving participation in the action of God's saving grace in the concrete historical reality.

Joy

In Julie, the spirit of trust and simplicity produced a manifest joy. She was known as the smiling saint. Joy is so much a characteristic of Notre Dame spirituality that at one point Julie declared that a particular convent was no longer a Notre Dame community because there was no joy there.

Followers of Julie are called to "become a community joyfully available to proclaim by presence and service to the good news of God's liberating and reconciling love" (Constitutions, Article 73). In order to convincingly proclaim the goodness of God, the person



Notre Dame High School (Belmont, California).

in mission must feel the joy of that goodness and let that joy shine through as a message of salvation.

The Cross/ Paschal Mystery

The joy of Notre Dame spirituality is the Christian joy rooted in the Paschal mystery. Julie's joy was rooted in trust and strengthened by years of contemplative prayer in the midst of physical and mental

suffering. The follower of Julie is called to embrace the cross, trusting in the mystery of life and death which lies at the center of Christian faith. Embrace of the inevitable suffering of the human condition is integral to the embrace of God's action in all of life. This love of the cross was so much a part of Julie's life that she continually called her followers to reach out to life's crosses with realism and self-giving love modeled

on Jesus' acceptance of death on the cross.

Notre Dame spirituality leads the person in mission directly into the baptismal journey through death into resurrection, joy, liberation, hope, and love. The journey is not made alone but in communion with the people of God. The journey has meaning because in the movement to fuller life, the reign of the good God is being made known.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE COMMUNITY IN MISSION

- ✦ Christ-Centered
- ✦ Love for God's People
- ✦ Preference for Those Made Poor
- ✦ Educational Dimension
- ✦ Responsiveness to God's Continuing Action in History
- ✦ Focus on Mary
- ✦ Relationship to the Church

Love for God's People

Julie Billiart was filled with a love of God and of all that God loves, particularly God's people. For her, each person possessed sublime dignity as an individual brought into being and loved by the good God. She saw the entire work of the Congregation as worthwhile, "to put one soul in the way of salvation." This deep respect for the dignity of every person is reflected in the call to mission in the Con-

stitutions of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

The Notre Dame mission, flowing from a deep love for God's people, is characterized in community by a deep respect for each person, friendships, and a universal concern for all people. This love is shown through outreach to those who lack resources to live a full human life, and extends to the development of social systems that are just and respectful of the dignity of each individual.



Volunteer fair with Notre Dame Mission Volunteers Americorps (NDMVA), Baltimore, Maryland.

Christ-Centeredness

Julie's view of the entire evangelical and educational enterprise of Notre Dame was rooted in her relationship with Jesus who made the goodness of God known out of love. The methods and values of our ministry are to be like those of Jesus. In Julie's words, "Our good Jesus is our Way, our Life, our Truth." Thus, a loving familiarity with the Gospel is essential to the Notre Dame mission.

For the first disciples of Jesus, companionship and sending were not separate moments. Companionship with Jesus so filled their lives that it had to be shared and spread. Discipleship calls the person in mission, not only to proclaim the Gospel as message, but to share Jesus as a person to be known and loved and Christianity as a life to be lived, an experience to rejoice in.



Academy of Notre Dame (Tyngsboro, Massachusetts).

Preference for Those Made Poor

Notre Dame's preference for the "poor in the most abandoned places" (Rule of 1818) flows directly from the priority given to the dignity of each individual. Julie knew well that people living in poverty are the most likely to be deprived of a sense of dignity and a full experience of the blessings of creation. Reflection on scripture gave her a deep experience of God's preference for those who lack the necessities of full human life. Therefore, she called her followers

to a mission of preference for those made poor:

*We exist only for the poor,
only for the poor,
absolutely only for the poor.*

This priority necessitates action on behalf of justice. Taking a stance on behalf of those made poor and oppressed is merely empty rhetoric unless accompanied by action to build more just social structures. The Notre Dame option for the poor "continues to tantalize us and, like a stone in our shoes, never allows us to feel we have

arrived. Rather it reminds us that we are always being beckoned to widen our horizons in response to the call of our mission." (Response).

Educational Dimension

Julie and early Sisters of Notre Dame established schools in response to God's call. This call came through the experience of living in post-revolutionary France, where there was a critical lack of educational opportunity for youth, particularly those who were poor. The first Notre Dame schools provided free instruction to



St. Patrick School students celebrate Cultural Day (Lowell, Massachusetts).

poor children to teach them what they needed to live a full and meaningful life.

Thus the primary ministry of the Sisters of Notre Dame became education, chiefly in the classroom. As the congregation spread to the United States, Britain, Africa, Japan and Latin America, education of youth and the establishment of schools remained the greatest ministerial need. The Sisters of Notre Dame became experts in their teaching ministry, staffing and administering hundreds of schools around the globe. Today, a Notre Dame

learning community remains dedicated to the education of the whole person, teaching what is necessary for life, so that all students may grow to their fullest human potential.

Focus on Mary

By giving her congregation the name of Notre Dame which means, “Our Lady,” Julie Billiard gave a strong indication of her love for Mary, the mother of Jesus. This focus on Mary is affirmed in the present Constitutions:

Julie named her Congregation the Sisters of Notre Dame as an

expression of her love for Mary, woman of faith, who rejoiced in the glorious mystery of salvation and in God’s mercy to the poor. (Constitutions, Article 8)

Mary, the first disciple, the contemplative in action, is a model for those who strive to be in mission according to the Notre Dame charism. Mary welcomed the Word of God and gave that Word to the world. The spirit which the Sisters of Notre Dame desire to foster is a spirit of openness to God, serenity, joy, and self-giving love. These qualities embody the

power of a woman whose Yes gave to God her whole being and gave God’s people a model of discipleship.

Responsiveness to God’s Continuing Action in History

The Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur was founded in response to a call to give a particular ministerial service at a particular time in history. The need was a lack of opportunity for Christian education; the response was the establishment of schools.

Because Julie was totally focused on responding to the call of her good God, those who engage in mission according to her charism are in continual discernment to recognize and respond to the action of God in contemporary society.

We endeavor to discern the power and presence of God acting in the history of our times. Our discernment is rooted in: the word of God; the teachings of the Church; our congregational tradition; and the voices of the poor. (Constitutions, Article 19)

Both the Sisters and those with whom they minister place a high value on awareness, analysis, and appropriate response to contemporary reality. What is changing? Where is new life surfacing? What new response is needed to God’s continuing action in history?



Notre Dame Cristo Rey High School graduates (Methuen, Massachusetts).

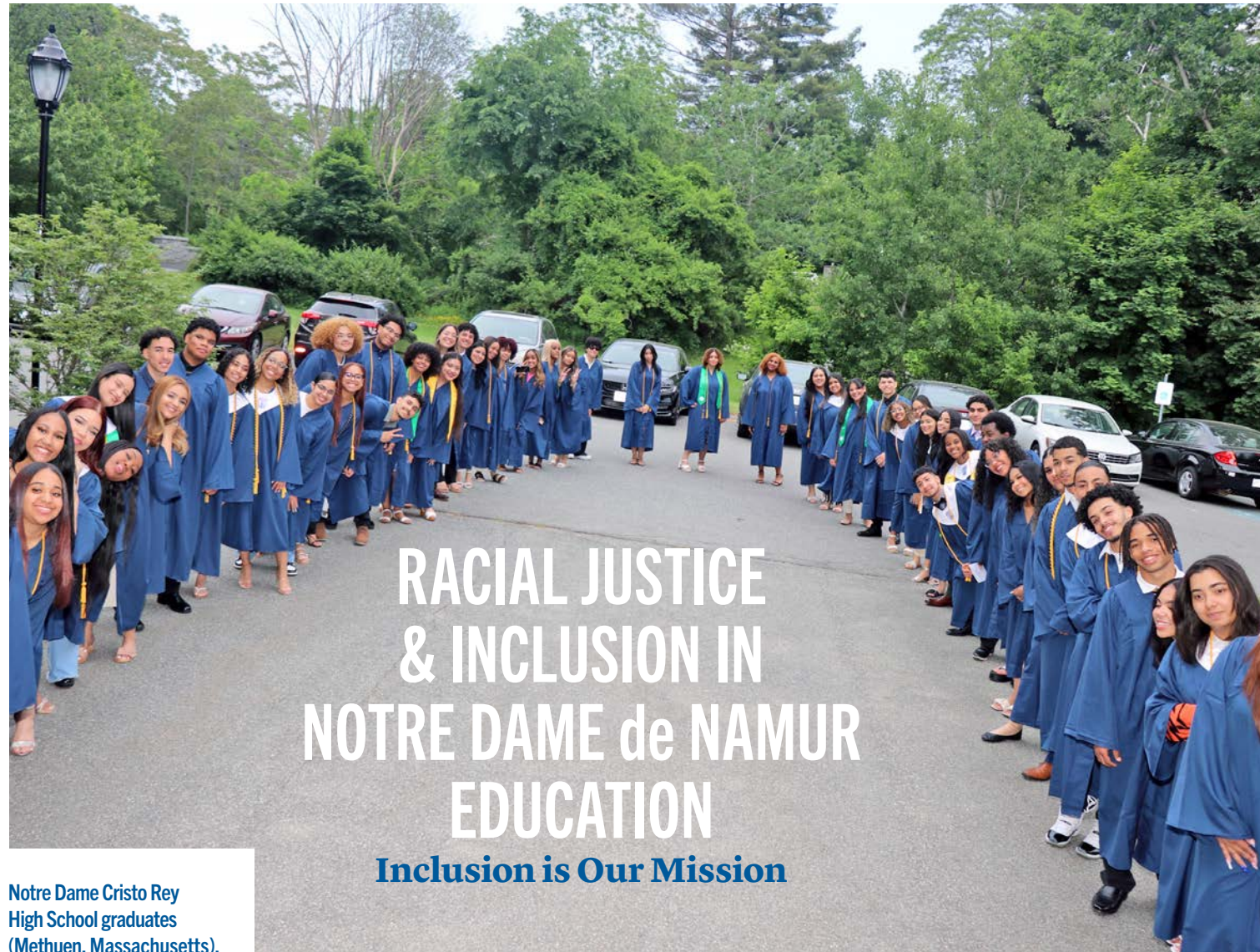
These are crucial questions that call for insightful and courageous ministerial response.

Relationship to the Church

The Catholic Church of post-revolutionary France was beleaguered by loss of faith, humiliated by Napoleon, and divided by schism. Yet the ministry of Julie and the early Sisters of Notre Dame was characterized by ecclesial fidelity, loyal evangelization, and zealous catechesis. Julie

loved the church and dedicated herself and the congregation to serving the needs of the church and the world.

Julie was challenged to maintain a delicate balance between her own founding insights and the differing views of the clergy of her day. However, she established the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur as an ecclesial body, existing within the Church and ministering in the healthy tension between charism and institutional authority.



RACIAL JUSTICE & INCLUSION IN NOTRE DAME de NAMUR EDUCATION

Inclusion is Our Mission

Notre Dame Cristo Rey High School graduates (Methuen, Massachusetts).

The work of racial justice and inclusion is a manifestation of the Notre Dame charism in the world — from Julie Billiart’s efforts to educate the poor and abandoned in post-revolutionary France, to serving immigrant communities today who are excluded from public school systems in the U.S. Notre Dame de Namur educators ask who is being excluded or exploited? Where are we needed? Let’s go there.

Did you know?

- ✦ The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have made racial justice a national priority.
- ✦ Several members of the congregation are nationally recognized leaders in civil and racial justice including Sr. Patty Chappell and Sr. Josita Colbert.



Clockwise from left: Sisters Academy (Baltimore, Maryland), St. Patrick School (Lowell, Massachusetts), Notre Dame High School (San Jose, California).



Sr. Anne-Louise Nadeau, SNDdeN (left) and Sr. Patty Chappell, SNDdeN, co-directors of the EW Province Anti-Racism Team.

We work with others to transform unjust structures and systems as we participate in creating new ways of relating which enable all to experience more fully the goodness of God.

— CONSTITUTIONS, ARTICLE 23

STATEMENT FROM THE U.S. SNDdeN ANTI-RACISM TEAM

The U.S. SNDdeN Anti-Racism Team for over 20 years has worked against systemic racism and for policies and actions that will move us toward a just society for people of all races. We firmly believe that now is a defining moment, an inflection point in our history. It is a time when all of us must say loudly and clearly that racism and white privilege are intolerable and unacceptable.

In the U.S. there has been a disproportionate number of people of color who are unemployed, uninsured, dying from Covid-19. Black and brown citizens have been murdered. The long history of racism in the U.S. continues to manifest its sinfulness in coordinated, intentional and deliberate efforts to dehumanize human beings we have been taught to fear.

We urge Sisters, associates, colleagues, friends and neighbors and all people in the U.S. to be in solidarity with the people of our cities, suburbs, and rural areas in all 50 states who are demanding that justice and accountability go hand in hand and that the killing of any human being is reprehensible.

Care for Creation

The enduring legacy of Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN

Sister Dorothy “Dot” Stang, SNDdeN, was born in Dayton, Ohio, one of nine children. She was raised on a farm in a traditional Catholic family. She entered the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur community in 1948 and professed final vows in 1956. From 1951 to 1966 she taught elementary classes at St. Victor School in Calumet City, IL; St. Alexander School in Villa Park, IL; and Most Holy Trinity School in Phoenix, AZ. She began her ministry in Brazil in 1966, in Coroata in the state of Maranhao.

A citizen of Brazil and the United States, Sister Dorothy worked with the Pastoral Land Commission, an organization of the Catholic Church that fights for the rights of rural workers and peasants, and defends land reforms in Brazil. Her death, on February 12, 2005, came less than a week after meeting with the country’s human rights officials about threats to local farmers from loggers and landowners.

Before her murder, Sister Dorothy was named “Woman of the Year” by the state of Para for her work in the Amazon region. She also received

the Humanitarian of the Year award from the Brazilian Bar Association for her work helping the local rural workers.

Since her death, Sister Dorothy has been widely honored for her life and work by the United States Congress and by a number of colleges and universities across the United States. She was posthumously awarded the 2008 United Nations Prize in the Field of Human Rights. She has also been formally recognized by the Vatican as a modern day martyr.

Dorothy lived these words from Pope Francis: We have to realize that a true ecological approach always becomes a social approach; it must integrate questions of justice in debates on the environment, so as to hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor. (Laudato Si, #49)

She believed in protection of the land as much as she believed in the protection and rights of the people; these two were irrevocably intertwined and Dorothy knew that the work for justice in Brazil must include both.



“We are faced not with two separate crises, one environmental and the other social, but rather with one complex crisis which is both social and environmental. Strategies for a solution demand an integrated approach to combating poverty, restoring dignity to the excluded, and at the same time protecting nature.” (LAUDATO SI’, ¶139)

✦ The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have signed on to the Laudato Si’ Action Platform, an international movement within the Catholic Church for environmental justice. Learn more here: laudatosiaction-plan.org.



Top: NDA Hingham students visit the Cuvilly Earth Education Center. Below: Cuvilly’s “Trail Blazers” enjoying a day at school. (Ipswich, Massachusetts).



HER LEGACY LIVES ON — LEARN MORE:

BOOKS

- ✦ *The Greatest Gift: The Courageous Life and Death of Sister Dorothy Stang*, by Binka Le Breton
- ✦ *Martyr of the Amazon: The Life of Sister Dorothy Stang*, by Sr. Roseanne Murphy, SNDdeN
- ✦ *A Journey of Courage: The Amazing Story of Sister Dorothy Stang*, by Michele Murdock



ART

- ✦ Triptych (above) and illustrated children’s book *Angel in Our Forest*, by Sr. Janet Mullin, SNDdeN.
- ✦ Sr. Margaret Hoffman, SNDdeN created a set of paintings depicting the Beatitudes with rainforest images and quotes from Sr. Dorothy Stang’s letters.
- ✦ Icon of Sister Dorothy Stang by Rev. Bill McNichols

FILM

- ✦ *The Student, the Nun, and the Amazon* is a short film (less than one hour) made by a British college student, Sam, who goes to the Amazon to meet Dorothy and make a documentary about her and her work. Watch this film with Jr. High students and older to see where Dorothy lived and worked, to meet the people she worked with, the land she spent her life protecting, and to hear her speak about the devastation in the Amazon and how we are called to fight and care for God’s creation.

MUSIC

Angel of the Amazon, is an operatic presentation of the life and mission of Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN, martyred in Anapu, Pará, Brazil, on February 12, 2005, because of her work in defense of the Amazon Forest and its people. The opera by composer Evan Mack has been presented throughout the United States.



SCIENCE

A new species of owl that was discovered in the Amazon in 2021 has been named in honor of Dorothy Stang in remembrance of her nearly 40 years working for justice for the land and the people of the Amazon.

Because of her fight to save the environment, she has had a newly discovered, rare owl named after her — the **Xingu Screech Owl (Megascops Stangiae)**. The common name Xingu Screech Owl refers to the area where the new species is found, between the Tapajos and Xingu rivers, where Sister was a very active community leader until her killing.

Sr. Judith Clemens, a friend of Sister Dorothy said: “I think it is so beautiful that an owl, which is a nocturnal animal and a symbol of great wisdom, be the animal to honor her. Dorothy had that kind of wisdom.”

OWL: KLEITON SILVA

DO YOU SPEAK NOTRE DAME?



A Glossary of Common Notre Dame de Namur Words and Phrases

Ah! Qui bon est le bon Dieu!

Ah, how good is the good God! Belief in God's goodness was the source of St. Julie's spirituality and the inspiration for her prayer. Her prayer informed her life, gave it meaning and enabled her to fulfill her mission to love God and make known God's goodness in the world.

Amiens, France

The town in northern France where the Congregation of Notre Dame de Namur was founded in 1804 by St. Julie Billiart, Françoise Blin de Bourdon, and Catherine Duchatel, dedicating themselves to the education of girls, especially the poor, and training teachers.

Associates

Associates of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (AND) are women and men living their baptismal call in the spirit of St. Julie Billiart. Associates complete a formation program, meet, and pray together in community, while coming from varied professions and walks of life.

Catholic Identity

Catholic identity refers to characteristics and values that make a school Catholic, such as a focus on a sacramental worldview; respect for the inherent human dignity and sacredness of each person; care for the community; a commitment to justice, life and peace; an attitude of faith, hope and gratitude; and a practice of prayer and worship. In a Notre Dame de Namur school, our Catholic identity is expressed through the mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur and the seven Hallmarks of a Notre Dame de Namur Learning Community.

Catholic Social Teaching/Thought

An area of Catholic theology that is focused on applying Gospel values to real world problems. Major themes of Catholic Social Teaching include honoring the dignity of every human person, promoting the common good of society, a preferential option for the poor, solidarity, and care for creation.

Chapter Calls

Periodically the Congregation of Notre Dame de Namur gathers members together as a "chapter" for prayer, discernment, and election of new leadership. The Chapter Calls reflect the current priorities or "calls" of the congregation as discerned during the gathering.

Charism

A gift of the Holy Spirit recognized by the Church as a particular grace which a congregation contributes to the whole church. The Second Vatican Council (1963–65) urged congregations to return to or renew the original spirit or charism of their founders. The charism of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur is to make known God's goodness in the world.

Community in Mission

Refers to any group or organization of Sisters and partners dedicated to living out the SNDdeN mission in response to the current needs of a particular community.

Congregational Leadership Team (CLT)

A group of five Sisters selected every six years, who work as a team to oversee the governance of the international congregation. They are based in Rome, Italy. One member holds the designation of Congregational Leader.

Constitutions

The Constitutions describe the way of life of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur internationally. They include inspired goals for living out the spirit, mission, spirituality and governance of the congregation. The Constitutions have their origins in the rule of life written by co-foundresses St. Julie Billiart and Françoise Blin de Bourdon in the early 19th century.



Outdoor learning at the Cuvilly Earth Education Center (Ipswich, Massachusetts).

ILLUSTRATIONS: ISTOCK

Cuvilly, France

The town in northern France where Julie Billiart was born in 1751.

Educate for Life

A phrase from St. Julie's educational mission and philosophy of "teaching students what they need to know for life."

Hallmarks

The 7 Hallmarks of a Notre Dame de Namur Learning Community describe the essential characteristics, values, and activities of a Notre Dame school, ministry, or organization. The Hallmarks are a statement of Notre Dame de Namur's mission and Catholic identity.

Hearts as Wide as the World

Phrase from the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur's mission statement that expresses the expansive mission of making known God's goodness and love to all people and communities.

Leadership Team (LT)

Members of the congregation who provide executive and administrative leadership of the East-West Province of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, serving six-year terms.

Ministry

Any SNDdeN institution that promotes the spirit of the Gospel and the mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

Mission

The core mission and purpose of Notre Dame de Namur is to make known the goodness of God, and the good news of the gospel, in a variety of ministries, in different ways and places. SNDdeN have always valued education as a means of making God's goodness known.

Mission Integration

Mission integration describes the work of incorporating the spirituality, charism, and goals of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, their associates and colleagues into every aspect of the life of a sponsored school, organization or ministry.



Notre Dame High School (Belmont, California)



Notre Dame Mission Volunteers Americorps

NDMVA places full-time volunteers with organizations focusing on literacy and education in communities around the world.

Namur

The town in Belgium where Julie and Françoise relocated the mother house of the congregation in 1809 after being forced from Amiens by the bishop. Today Namur is home to the SNDdeN Heritage Center Museum.

NGO

A non-governmental organization that operates independently of any local government and has status internationally. The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are registered as an NGO with the United Nations (UN) which means they attend and represent themselves at official meetings of the UN.

Notre Dame

French for "Our Lady" referring to Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Person/Partner in Mission

Any individual who supports and promotes the mission of a Notre Dame de Namur ministry. Partners in mission include staff, faculty, students, board members, parents, community members, and any stakeholders in a Notre Dame de Namur school or organization.

Province

A subdivision of Sisters and ministries within the congregation. There are twenty provinces within the congregation internationally, and three provinces within the United States: East-West, Ohio, and Base Communities.

Sisters of Notre Dame of Amersfoort, Netherlands, and Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld, Germany

Two other international religious congregations which trace their roots to St. Julie Billiart. Sometimes these congregations are referred to as SNDdeN "cousins."

SNDdeN

Stands for Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Used after a Sister's name to identify her as a member of the order.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship implies a formalized relationship through governance structures and mission integration with works that are initiated and influenced by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. Through this relationship, the SNDdeN support the institution, project, or program, influence and hold it accountable. The mission statement and philosophy of the institution, project, or program must be consonant with the spirit and mission of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur.

SYMBOLS OF NOTRE DAME de NAMUR



Cross

On February 2, 1804, while recovering and in hiding in Compiègne, France, Julie had a mystical vision of her future congregation gathered around the Cross of Jesus and heard the words, ‘Behold the spiritual daughters whom I give to you in the Institute which will be marked by my Cross.’ Today, Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur around the world wear the cross as their congregational symbol of vowed membership.



Crystal

In Counsels of Perfection, an internal document of the SNDdeN, St. Julie is quoted as saying: “A simple soul is an exceedingly pure crystal, penetrated, illumined, and warmed by rays from the Sun of Justice.” The crystal symbolizes how one is invited to be entirely open to God, as a crystal is open to the rays of the sun.



Hand bell

A handbell is sometimes used in ceremonial ways in SNDdeN ministries. It recalls the very early foundation of schools. Julie sent a novice and a postulant out into the streets, each ringing a little bell, and proclaiming, ‘We let you know that the Sisters of Notre Dame have just opened free schools for little girls. Go and tell your parents the news.’”



Sunflower

St. Julie Billiart often spoke of the sunflower straining to follow the sun as it moved across the sky. She saw this as a metaphor for the soul, which — if we let it — follows the direction of God moving in our lives. “To be simple is to be like a sunflower which follows all the movements of the sun and ever turns towards it.”

— ST. JULIE BILLIART



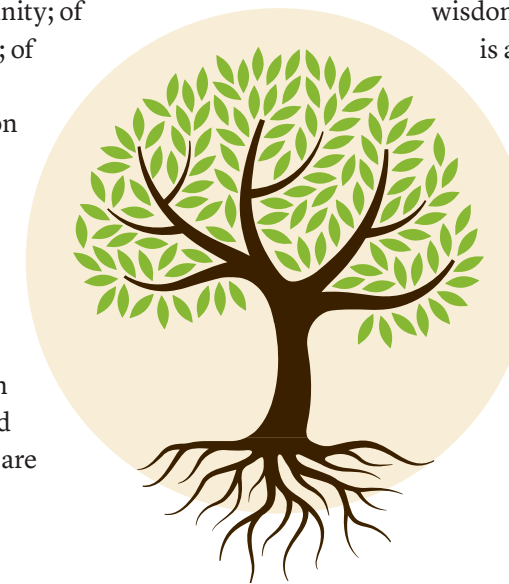
Seal

There is much symbolism in the Notre Dame de Namur seal: 3 stars for the Trinity; the cross for Jesus’ love; the crown for victory; the roses for Mary; the shield for faith and protection. The shield and crown are essentials of the seal of Notre Dame de Namur.

SNDdeN Chapter Calls

Our 18th General Chapter calls us to deepen our commitment and act with reverence for God’s Creation. Responding to the signs of our times, we are called to commit ourselves, to renew and transform the Congregation and its structures.

- ✦ **We are called to respond** within our local and global realities to those who suffer, and to pray and work for the transformation of the attitudes, structures and systems that cause profound suffering.
- ✦ **We are called to implement** the Congregational Strategic Resource Plan and review our Constitutions.
- ✦ **We are called to continue** to till the ground of the liberating mission of education in all its forms’.
- ✦ **We are called to sow** across the world new seeds of hope and unity; of inclusion and belonging; of invitation, welcome and dialogue; of collaboration for mission.
- ✦ **We are called to continue** to cultivate the rich soil of our heritage and the friendship of Julie and Françoise which embraces every Sister and models the reverence we are to have for one another.
- ✦ **We are called to prepare** the ground again and again by inviting and sustaining new generations of vowed members.
- ✦ **We are called to share** our charism and mission as they energize collaborators and friends, and inspire new forms of association.
- ✦ **We are called to water**, with care and loving challenge, the new growth and deep roots among us, in every season of our lives.
- ✦ **We are called to care** for those to whom and with whom we minister across five continents, as we are sustained by Sisters whose prayer, wisdom, and experience of the Cross is at the heart of our ministries.
- ✦ **We are called to tend** the gardens of diverse ministries and inter-cultural communities, and nurture an ecclesial life that holds the hope of producing a harvest of communion and synodality.



Our charity must not be limited by the love we have for one another. It must make our hearts as wide as the world. — ST. JULIE BILLIART, THEMES

ILLUSTRATION: ISTOCK

WE ARE NOTRE DAME

Sponsored Ministries of the U.S. East-West Province

SCHOOLS

Academy of Notre Dame
Tyngsboro, Massachusetts

Cuvilly Earth Education Center
Ipswich, Massachusetts

Emmanuel College
Boston, Massachusetts

Moreland Notre Dame School
Watsonville, California

Notre Dame Academy
Hingham, Massachusetts

Notre Dame Academy
Worcester, Massachusetts

Notre Dame Cristo Rey High School
Methuen, Massachusetts

Notre Dame de Namur University
Belmont, California

Notre Dame Education Center
Lawrence, Massachusetts

Notre Dame Elementary School
Belmont, California

Notre Dame High School
Belmont, California

Notre Dame High School
San Jose, California

Notre Dame Virtual School
ndvs.org

St. Patrick School and Educational Center
Lowell, Massachusetts



HEALTH CARE

Julie House
Windsor, CT

Notre Dame Health Care
Worcester, Massachusetts

St. Julie Billiart Residential Care Center
Ipswich, Massachusetts

Co-sponsored by U.S. East-West and Ohio Provinces

Notre Dame Mission Volunteers AmeriCorps
Baltimore, Maryland

Sisters Academy
Baltimore, Maryland

Ohio Province Ministries

SCHOOLS

Academy of Notre Dame de Namur
Villanova, Pennsylvania

Badin High School
Hamilton, Ohio

Chaminade Julienne High School
Dayton, Ohio

Maryvale Prep
Lutherville, Maryland

Mount Notre Dame High School
Cincinnati, Ohio

The Summit Country Day School
Cincinnati, Ohio

Trinity School
Ellicott City, Maryland

HEALTH CARE

Mount Notre Dame Health Center
Cincinnati, Ohio



sddeneastwest.org

INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL AND MINISTRIES

In addition to the U.S. schools, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur sponsor or support schools in Nigeria, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Japan, Belgium, France, England and Scotland.



ESOL students celebrate at the Notre Dame Education Center (Lawrence, Massachusetts).

*The world is a gift.
The nation is a gift.
Every human is a gift.
How do we build systems and structures that allow people to be free and to live safely in community being who they are and sharing who they are in the human family?*

— SISTER MARY JOHNSON,
SNDdeN, CONGREGATIONAL LEADER, 2023

PRAYERS



Emmanuel College Chapel (Boston, Massachusetts)

A Prayer for Courage

Dear God, courage is a word usually reserved for heroic deeds. Some courage people even sacrifice their very lives. My sacrifices are such little ones in comparison. But it seems, God, that you keep asking them of me moment by moment, one at a time. It never seems to stop! I know that you know so well the exact measure of my strength and will never ask for more than I can give. Grant me through the intercession of St. Julie Billiart, the faith and courage which helped her always to walk in the footsteps of your son, Jesus. Amen.

Prayer to Celebrate Julie's Birthday (July 12)

Sr. Carol DeFiore, SNDdeN

It is with great joy that we gather together today to celebrate the birthday of Saint Julie Billiart. We give thanks for her life, and pray that we may always trust in the goodness of God.

Let us pray —

Loving God, we thank you for Julie, a woman of great courage and compassion. May the good you have accomplished in her life continue through all those who have followed in her footsteps. We make our prayer in Jesus' name.

Grace in Memory of Dorothy Stang

By Amy Jobin

Loving God,

We give thanks for this opportunity to come together today. May this meal and conversations enrich our work, and inspire us with courage and confidence to share the charism of St. Julie — the goodness of God — in the world.

Bless all those who provided this meal, from the farmers who grew it to the cooks and servers who prepared it.

May we be mindful of those who suffer from poverty and hunger, that our work together might change the systems and structures that cause their suffering.

In the spirit of Dorothy Stang:

“There are things you do because they feel right and they make no sense and they make no money and it may be the real reason we are here: to love each other and to eat each other's cooking and to say it was good!” (Sr. Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN)

Let us say, Amen.



The more difficult the times are, the more we must expect and hope everything from the goodness of the good God.

— ST. JULIE BILLIART, LETTER 260

Community Prayer

Good and gracious God,
Just as the sunflower turns toward the sun,
Transform our hearts to be dedicated to You.

Empower us to become a community of faith, service and leadership, confident that we can inspire unity.

Encourage us to be life-long learners,

mirroring the example of St. Julie.

Joined with the tradition of Notre Dame,

may we embody the goodness of God

each and every day.

St. Julie.... Pray for us.

We pray this in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



SUNFLOWER: ISTOCK

L-r: Students from NDA Worcester; classroom at NDA Hingham; Moreland Notre Dame students perform a concert for the Sisters.

Commissioning Prayer

By Kathleen Quiazon, Ed.D.

St. Julie once wrote: “Come, we must have courage in the century we live in. Great souls are needed, souls that have the interests of God at heart.”

We now invite you, faculty and staff, to commission one another to the work of the year ahead, to live out the mission and Hallmarks of a Notre Dame de Namur Learning Community with courage, hope and compassion.

May you proclaim God’s goodness in all that you say and do.

May you recognize the inherent human dignity of all and proceed with respect and reverence toward your students and colleagues.

May you work and teach with hope and courage, seeking justice and peace for all.

May your service to neighbors, students, and families heal, restore, and renew hearts and minds.

May you create authentic community among those with whom you work, teach and serve.

May this learning community remain a beacon of light.

May you educate for life — our legacy and our future.

In the name of St. Julie, Françoise, and the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, with courage and hope, we ask for God’s blessing on this year, that we may proclaim with our lives the goodness of God.

Amen.

A Prayer for Our Earth

Pope Francis

All-powerful God, you are present in the whole universe and in the smallest of your creatures.

You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love, that we may protect life and beauty.

Fill us with peace, that we may live as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

O God of the poor,

help us to rescue the abandoned and forgotten of this earth,

so precious in your eyes.

Bring healing to our lives,

that we may protect the world and not prey on it,

that we may sow beauty, not pollution and destruction.

Touch the hearts

of those who look only for gain

at the expense of the poor and the earth.

Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,

to be filled with awe and contemplation,

to recognize that we are profoundly united

with every creature

as we journey towards your infinite light.

We thank you for being with us each day.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.



Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur U.S. East-West Province Sponsorship Office

Kathleen (Katie) Colin
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SPONSORSHIP
kcolin@ewsndden.org
978-380-1363

Julie Dowd
DIRECTOR OF MISSION INTEGRATION
jdowd@ewsndden.org
978-380-1385

Amy Jobin
DIRECTOR OF MISSION INTEGRATION
ajobin@ewsndden.org

Sister Louise O’Reilly, SNDdeN
DIRECTOR OF MISSION INTEGRATION
louise.oreilly@sndden.org
650-486-2179

Kimberly (Kim) Weckbacher
PROGRAM MANAGER
kweckbacher@ewsndden.org
978-380-1555



<https://sddeneastwest.org/>

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  @sddeneastwest

Notre Dame High School students present
The Woman's Place Project (San Jose, California).



*Live in continual gratitude to the
good God; never let the peace of your heart
be disturbed by anything in the world.*

— ST. JULIE BILLIART, LETTER 301