

Trust & Dare

2016



School Sisters of Notre Dame


Laudato Si'

**SCHOOL SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME
EDUCATE, INSPIRE ACTION
TO CARE FOR EARTH**

Shalom Clubs: Changing hearts
one prayer, one project at a time

Helping in South Sudan:
An interview with Sister
Barbara Paleczny, SSND

Inspired by SSND



*Sister Marie Regine Redig
picks radishes from the
sisters' garden at Notre
Dame of Elm Grove
in Wisconsin.*

Transforming the world through education

Trust & Dare

is a publication for family, friends and benefactors of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Africa, Asia and North America and is coordinated by the SSND Collaborative Communications Committee.

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Dear Friends,

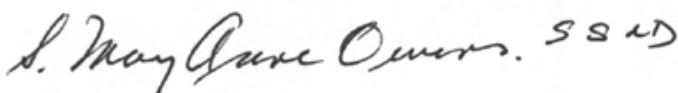
We, in our time, have been richly blessed by the heart and words of our beloved Pope Francis. In his short time as Pontiff, he has lifted the spirits of the poor and marginalized, focused us all on care for the earth and its people in *Laudato Si'*, and strengthened and encouraged families with his most recent summary of the Synod on families, *Amoris Letitio* ("The Joy of Love"). This year, we also are living in a Jubilee Year of Mercy to remind us that God is mercy, and we all participate in God's mercy!

Just one of these reflections would be food for the soul, but we have them in abundance! The unique quality of all these letters is the practicality and simplicity of his words and suggestions for action. Many parishes, schools and study groups have taken up the challenge of understanding the Pope's desires and messages for humanity. You may want to pick up copies yourself and see what richness of grace and what hope for us all they contain.

In our own document, *Love Cannot Wait*, written in 2012, the SSNDs have been calling for many of the same actions that the Pope now asks in his messages. Dialogue, simple living with all creation, witness to unity in a divided world, and deepening of our own prayer and contemplation all help us focus on mercy!

School Sisters of Notre Dame around the world also have been impacted by his messages. In this issue of *Trust & Dare*, we share the ways the SSNDs are living out *Laudato Si'* with their students and among ourselves, how the Year of Mercy is impacting the lives of people in South Sudan where our sisters have been in ministry and how the experiences of our sisters with families in economically poor areas are impacted by *Amoris Letitio*. In addition, we share with you our efforts at Shalom, our international effort for peace education, and a sampling of our colleagues and former students who live lives of service.

We hope you will enjoy reading this issue, and, as always, we thank you for your support in prayer and resources, which aid us in continuing the ministries and mission of SSNDs around the world. You are remembered in the prayers of our sisters daily. May God continue to make you an instrument of God's peace for all!



Sister Mary Anne Owens, SSND
Provincial Leader, Central Pacific Province

Our Mission

is to proclaim the Good News as School Sisters of Notre Dame, directing our entire lives toward that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent. As he was sent to show the Father's love to the world, we are sent to make Christ visible by our very being, by sharing our love, faith, and hope.

You Are Sent

Constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame

Joining hands in Mission

AS GOOD STEWARDS OF ALL GOD'S GIFTS

It has been 183 years since Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger founded the School Sisters of Notre Dame, trusting that God would make it possible to risk all for the sake of the mission of Jesus Christ. During those early years, she turned to generous friends and family for financial support. Since that time, faithful donors have continued to help carry forward that mission through ministries directed toward education.

Pope Francis calls us to “hear both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor,” in his encyclical entitled *Laudato Si'*, which serves as a beautiful reminder to all of us that God wants us to care for our common home. Our Holy Father speaks compassionately about people who are poor as he works to bring an end to extreme poverty. Though millions of poor people, in many parts of the world, are building better lives, too many still struggle. Poverty is at the root of these struggles, particularly as it concerns education and health care.

We are all invited to “change direction” by taking on the responsibility of “caring for our common home.” St. Francis of Assisi, who inspired this letter by Pope Francis, also inspired its foundational basis that we all are called to care for the vulnerable and work toward an integral ecology lived out authentically in our time. To reshape habits and behavior is difficult. Education and training are key to bringing about needed change.

Having taken to heart Jesus' admonition that it takes both prayer and sacrifice to reconcile some critical concerns, our sisters endeavor to live simply and sustainably. To respond to the crises of our times with audacity and hope is challenging, yet we trust God is acting significantly in all of our lives amidst these critical concerns.

Because you care, our sisters are able to direct their resources and ministries toward education that transforms. Indeed, you have been great partners in the SSND mission and the calling to serve God and humanity. The legacy of Blessed Theresa – transforming the world through education, giving special emphasis to women, young people and those who are marginalized – is our common cause in the 32 countries where SSNDs serve.



Sisters Marcianne Bzdon and Jeanne McGue followed by Sister Miriam Patrick Cummings participate in a donor appreciation Mass in the Chicago area.

We are most grateful for the support that the School Sisters of Notre Dame receive. Your prayers, interest, encouragement and financial contributions are a testament to your commitment and partnership

Some donors give monthly or annual cash gifts while others provide stock and appreciated assets. Still others provide for future gifts by making a legacy gift on behalf of their family and the Schools Sisters of Notre Dame. Like other gifts, a legacy gift can be used to support our sisters in retirement and in active ministry. Legacy gifts include bequests, life insurance and retirement plan gifts and trusts of various kinds.

If you have any questions about making a gift or would like additional information, please contact one of the development directors listed below. Together, we can make a difference!

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Laudato Si'

School Sisters of Notre Dame Educate, Inspire Action to Care for Earth

The Papal Encyclical *Laudato Si'* reinforces the contemplative and prophetic themes of dialogue, conversion, education and action contained in the School Sisters of Notre Dame's directional statement, *Love Cannot Wait*. It also provides a resounding affirmation of SSND justice, peace and integrity of creation efforts.

Through contemplation and discussion, SSNDs have nurtured a deeper understanding of their relationship with all creation. For SSNDs, the issue means more than just talk and signing petitions. Sisters struggle firsthand with the devastating effects of climate change in countries around the world, and they are on the front lines as activists - in classrooms, at legislative offices and on rural farms - educating, making changes in lifestyle and inspiring others to act.

IN COMMUNION WITH THE WHOLE

Being in communion with the whole is a concept that has compelled deep reflection on the part of many sisters who consider *Laudato Si'* as a gift and responsibility that challenges heart and mind to reconsider community and what that new awareness means for caring for their common home.

"It was not long ago when I would go out on our second floor back porch in winter, wrapped in a blanket, and look up at the stars consciously trying to become aware of myself on a revolving Earth and in a continually expanding universe," said Sister Genevieve Cassani, SSND. "I was and still am awed."

Like Sister Genevieve, School Sisters of Notre Dame continually search for ways to understand and integrate how they are in relationship with everything else on Earth. Their sense of community expands far beyond the walls of the place where they live to be in communion with "the whole of creation."

A MORAL ISSUE IN GUAM

Climate change is a part of everyday life in Guam, which is home to 14 SSNDs. Rising sea levels have forced migration from several of the Micronesian islands to Guam, said SSND Associate Connie Guerrero.

This migration puts pressure on institutions, including schools, hospitals, businesses and housing, and has led to more crime. Plus, the infusion of salt water has made it impossible to grow basic foods such as taro, breadfruit, bananas and other vegetables.

Connie and Sister Francine Perez, SSND, started a discussion group on Guam using the major themes of the encyclical. Inspired by a new awareness that has come from these discussions, Connie has invested in solar panels for her home and has begun growing her own herbs and vegetables.

"I have learned that global warming is not just a scientific or political issue, but a moral issue that our island must address from the perspective of our shared values," Connie said.

AGROFORESTRY IN AFRICA

Sustainable development through agroforestry is one of the ways School Sisters of Notre Dame in Nyalieng'a, Kenya, nurture Earth and live the principles of *Laudato Si'*.

"The sisters at Nyalieng'a community have contributed tremendously in empowering the community to participate in agroforestry in order for

Sister Mary Odundo (standing) demonstrates drip irrigation to an organizer with the Pontifical Missionary Childhood Society as part of an educational program in Kenya.



them to deal with food insecurity and increase nutritional value,” said Sister Mary Odundo, SSND.

The sisters have raised awareness about organic farming, crop rotation, using green manure, composting and biological pest control to improve the environment. Some of their activities include growing fruit and vegetables and raising dairy cows and chickens.

“One of the ways of improving the living standard of people is through good methods of farming,” Sister Mary said. “Hence, to be in solidarity with all God’s creation requires us to make those choices that allow us to reflect and see the beauty and the contribution of all that exists to be part and parcel of us.”

A LESSON FOR THE UNITED NATIONS

The Pope’s message has resonated around the world with Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Sister Eileen Reilly, the SSND representative at the United Nations, said she was taken by surprise just a few days after *Laudato Si’* was released when Kenyan Ambassador Macharia Kamau stood before a meeting of the U.N. General Assembly, holding up a copy of the encyclical.

“I know we are not all Catholics here,” he said. “I am not a Catholic myself, but this document ought to be required reading. It is only 184 pages long, and it is intriguing. It touches on all of our



Top, from left, Sisters Marie Regine Redig, Rose Helene Miller and Mary Beck check on the progress of their vegetables at Notre Dame of Elm Grove in Wisconsin. As they care for their garden, the sisters share the importance of reverence for creation and promote sustainability to the sisters on their campus.



Left, Sisters Joyce Engle, Linda Kremer, Ruth Emke, Patricia Gravemann and Janet Siebenman care for the environment by picking up trash along an entrance and exit ramp off I-255 in St. Louis as part of the Missouri Department of Transportation Adopt-A-Highway program.

proposed goals; it has a very integrated, universal agenda.”

When the new Sustainable Development Goals were finalized in August 2015, Sister Eileen recalled, Ambassador Kamau again lauded Pope Francis for inspiring a high level of ambition and dedication to the issues of poverty, suffering and sustainable development.

“Knowing that Ambassador Kamau was following this particular issue personally and directly always helped

Continued on page 6

“Care for the earth is one of the most important spiritual, political and moral issues of our day. Pope Francis in his encyclical, *Laudato Si’*, clearly affirms that care for the earth is integral to our faith and a moral obligation as daughters and sons of the Creator. However, the greatest motivation for caring for our earth home is simply because we love her. We protect and care for what we love.”

Continued from page 5

me realize in many ways there was something very special going on here,” Sister Eileen said.

ENGAGING EXPERTS TO EDUCATE

Sister Paul Mary Draxler’s concern has grown precipitously as she has considered the wide-ranging ramifications of doing nothing, and it has moved her to call legislators,



write letters to the editor and organize informational events in her community in Elm Grove, Wisconsin.

“Just wringing your hands and saying the weather is bad is not enough,” Sister Paul Mary said. “I am concerned because climate change affects practically all SSND endeavors and missions.

“My biggest concern is that when all catastrophes happen, they will blame the bad weather, the food shortages, the immigrants. They will blame everything except what they neglected to do. I can’t change people’s world view, but I can do something to prevent the destruction of Earth.”

Sister Paul Mary Draxler organized a public presentation on “A Catholic Response to Global Warming” in Elm Grove, Wisconsin, with Steven J. Coleman, a Catholic educator from Madison, Wisconsin, who is a retired engineer versed on the effects of climate change, Catholic Social Teaching and Pope Francis’ encyclical, Laudato Si’.

THEOLOGICAL AND CATECHETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Sister Dolorette Farias, SSND, said that she believes that *Laudato Si’* has much to say to one responsible for theological and catechetical ministry like herself.

“I have tried to integrate the call of *Laudato Si’* in speaking of the fact that unless our Earth and universe is cared for, we will not have healthy water for Baptism, the growth of wheat and spices for the bread, wine and sacred oils for anointing,” Sister Dolorette said.

“Thank God, the Magi could see the star that led them to Christ. Should God send us a star, we may not see it through the polluted sky. As we pray from the psalm ‘May my prayer come like incense before you,’ the incense we burn may not rise due to the heaviness of the air.”

“Living one’s faith is not just practicing the rituals but taking responsibility to

CREATIVE CURRICULUM INSTILLS LOVE FOR CREATION IN SSND STUDENTS



As transformative educators, School Sisters of Notre Dame endeavor to instill their love for all creation in the next generation to ensure that efforts to care for Earth continue into the future. And they are finding that their students wholeheartedly embrace those ideals.

At the Academy of the Holy Angels (AHA), an SSND-sponsored high school in Demarest, New Jersey, the school theme for the past few years has been based on the SSND directional statement, especially “to live more simply, responsibly, and sustainably with one another and with all of creation.”

Throughout the year, the students have experienced and interacted with that focus through a schoolwide environmental awareness day focused on “Caring for our Common Home,” by growing more than 1,000 pounds of vegetables to donate to local food pantries and by raising trout to release into a local stream to increase awareness of freshwater health in New Jersey.

care for all of creation, from which its fruits are used and made sacred to make receiving the sacraments possible.”

CENTER FOR EARTH SPIRITUALITY

Looking at care of the Earth and climate change is not new to the staff at the Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry in Mankato, Minnesota. The center promotes and fosters awareness and ways of living that recognize and support the interconnection and interdependence of all life.

In embracing people of all spiritual paths, the center strives for earth justice and sustainability through education, spirituality, sustainable agriculture, rural ministry and political advocacy. One of the purposes of the center is to model environmental stewardship on the SSND land itself through ecological awareness, ecosystem restoration, support of local food production, and environmentally sensitive maintenance practices.

A NEW VIRTUE

Sister Judith Best, SSND, is one of several activists involved in raising awareness about the dangers of the radioactive waste leaking from the West Lake Landfill in Bridgeton, Missouri, and demanding that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) take action to clean it up.

“Choosing to be involved at West Lake offers me the opportunity to speak for Mother Earth and everyone whose lives are touched by this toxic disaster, especially our sisters who live only two miles from this nuclear waste dump,” Sister Judith said.

That is why one can see Sister Judith and other SSNDs, as well as sisters from other religious congregations and members of the greater St. Louis community, along the roadside holding signs proclaiming the dangers of the landfill.

“A huge leap for us as Catholics is that our understanding of virtue is shifting



SSND Associate Joan Feldman joins protesters along the road leading to the West Lake Landfill in Bridgeton, Missouri.

on how we take care of Mother Earth,” Sister Judith said. “What Pope Francis is calling for in the integral ecology is that we have to see what we do to Earth, the reality being that virtue and ethics are dramatically shifting.

“The Pope is pulling us to a great conversion on this. Care for creation is a virtue in its own right.”

“We hope that each student develops a deepening awareness of the interconnectedness of all of creation,” said Joan Finn Connelly, AHA mission integration coordinator and religious studies teacher.

The opportunities have done more than simply educate, inspiring many students to venture beyond the prescribed activities. The Greenhouse Project was developed two years ago to connect with the school’s STREAM Initiative to incorporate science, technology, religion, engineering, art and math into the curriculum.

“Project Greenhouse is a student-run organization that incorporates many facets of learning, one of them being theology and the themes of Catholic Social Teaching,” said Erin McNamara, AHA Class of 2016. “I was stunned to discover how limited many people’s access is to fresh produce, and I am thankful to be



Bianca Lakoseljac and Kate McDermott load trout into a cooler in preparation for their release in a nearby stream.

part of an organization which strives to give others the same opportunities for nutritious food as we ourselves have.’

The Trout in the Classroom Program is part of AHA’s environmental science class. Using eggs from a local hatchery, the students care for them until they hatch and the fish grow large enough to be released into a local stream. In the process, they learn about the importance of clean water and develop an environmental consciousness, which will guide them the rest of their lives.

“I think everybody is aware of the increasing pollution in our world,” said Bridget Slavin, AHA Class of 2016.

“However, this experience has shown me how even the smallest amount of pollution can affect other species. Rather than just thinking of ourselves and helping ourselves, we need to think about the world as a whole.”



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Faces

*of School Sisters of
Notre Dame in Prayer,
Ministry and Community*

Sister Marlena Janis receives a Valentine's card from Sandra Mejia and Nour Elqaq, who are members of Kappa Sigma Mu Multicultural Sorority at the Milwaukee School of Engineering. The students make about 150 cards for the SSNDs in Elm Grove, Wisconsin, each year. Photo courtesy of Kappa Sigma Mu Multicultural Sorority



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1. Sister Elizabeth Newman, director of the Orthopedic Training Centre in Nsawam, Ghana, works with children at the facility.

2. Sister Carol Jean Dust (center), a member of the SSND General Council, is surrounded by School Sisters of Notre Dame from provinces around the world as they wait for a glimpse of Pope Francis during a general audience at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.

3. Sister Mary Fitzgerald, assistant professor of education at Notre Dame of Maryland University, talks to students in the School of Education during an induction and blessing ceremony for their program. [Photo courtesy of Notre Dame of Maryland University](#)

4. Sister Gladys Schmitz, left, is joined by Georgann Kramer in a protest in Mankato, Minnesota. Sister Gladys has been protesting every Wednesday since November 2001 and is often joined by likeminded sisters and community members.

5. Sister Raquel Ortiz (right) and Dr. Helen Kornblum (left) visit with friends in Honduras during a mission trip with Amiga, the non-profit organization they founded to provide medical supplies and support to the people of Honduras.

6. From left: Sisters Marie Rose Van Deurzen, Carol Dwyer, Carolyn Jost and Peg Mattare lead the procession for the Mass celebrating the Jubilees of Chicago-area School Sisters of Notre Dame at Mater Christi Parish in North Riverside, Illinois.

7. From left, Sisters Jana Roberts, Jane Mary Lorbiecki, Marcia Zofkie (on violin), Zipporah Marigwa and Vonnice De Cleene are part of the choir providing music for a Jubilee Mass celebration for sisters at Notre Dame of Elm Grove, Wisconsin.

8. Sister Linda Stilling (right) participates in a blessing ceremony with Notre Dame of Maryland University students as they prepared for their trip to the Arizona-Mexico border as part of the School Sisters of Notre Dame's Mission Awareness Process program. [Photo courtesy of Notre Dame of Maryland University](#)

9. Sister Rosemarie Nassif, director of the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation Catholic Sisters Initiative, explains the concept of a global sisterhood at a convening of representatives from foundations, organizations and non-profits that support women religious around the world. [Photo courtesy of the University of Southern California Center for Religion and Civic Culture](#)

10. From left, Sisters Rebecca Tayag, Mary Lennon and Limètèze Pierre-Gilles participate in the Bell Choir during the Mass for School Sisters of Notre Dame celebrating jubilees in the Atlantic-Midwest Province.

11. Sisters Lucy Mukachi Kwalimwa (left) and Norah Anne Mogute Oyagi celebrated their perpetual profession of vows at Immaculate Conception Nyabururur Parish, Kisii Diocese, Kenya.

12. Sister Jacinta Kanini, headmistress at St. Francis Girls Secondary School in Kiptere, Kenya, talks to a class of students.

13. Sisters Janet Tanaka, from Japan, and Christine Garcia, a provincial councilor for the Central Pacific Province, share a laugh during a Provincial Assembly meeting in St. Louis, Missouri.

14. Sister Joan Penzenstadler (front) participates in a liturgical dance during the Archdiocese of Milwaukee (Wisconsin) celebration to close the Year of Consecrated Life. [Photo courtesy of Michael O'Loughlin, School Sisters of St. Francis](#)

Shalom Clubs: CHANGING HEARTS ONE

Every September, along with the School Sisters of Notre Dame, SSND Shalom Clubs around the globe lift up their prayers in celebration of the United Nations International Day of Peace. Though oceans, language and culture divide them, these clubs are united by their prayers and their common passion for building a “more just and truly humane world.”

Shalom Clubs are part of the larger SSND Shalom network for justice, peace and the integrity of creation of more than 3,500 sisters, associates and friends worldwide who join together to encourage peace, raise awareness of social injustices and care for the Earth. There are currently 30 SSND student Shalom clubs operating in 13 countries, and one active group of senior adults, educating and serving in their local communities.

“The idea of Shalom Clubs is to help students connect their faith and the call of Jesus to work toward a just and peace-filled world,” said Sister Kathy Schmittgens, SSND international Shalom coordinator. “They are putting into action the charism of the sisters, working to bring the ‘oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent.’”

IN SOLIDARITY WITH ALL OF CREATION

At the local prison near Kiptere, Kenya, the Shalom Club at St. Francis Secondary School, an all-girls school in Western Kenya, brings food items and toiletries to the female inmates and clothing for the babies born in prison. The visits are more than a sharing of gifts; they become a transformative experience for the prisoners and the students alike.

“Through the club, our students have become aware of the sufferings of human persons, said Sister Jacinta Kanini, SSND, headmistress of the school. “They’ve taken initiative to be in solidarity with such people and the whole of creation.”



Sister Janise Berberich and Shalom Club members at Notre Dame High School in St. Louis, Missouri, prepared 80 “Bags of Hope” for the Let’s Start program in St. Louis to help women who have been recently released from incarceration get back into daily life. The bags were decorated with messages of hope and filled with toiletries, winter gloves, and snacks.

With more than 100 club members, ages 12 to 19, this vibrant group gathers twice a week. On Sundays, they share ideas and pray, and on Thursday afternoons, they share prayer at their Peace Pole. They plan their events at the beginning of each school year and are able to follow through with an impressive number of outreach projects that promote human dignity and care for creation around their community of Kiptere and beyond.



The Shalom Club of St. Francis School in Kiptere, Kenya, visits with former street boys and children living with AIDS at the Living with Hope Center in Kericho Town, Kenya.

In addition to their jail visits, club members have visited the Living with Hope Centre in nearby

Kericho Town where

they spent time with former street orphans and children living with AIDS. Environmental programs include such activities as planting trees and cleaning the village market, which is often strewn with non-biodegradable bags.

BREAKING BREAD TOGETHER

The members of the Shalom Club at the Institute of Notre Dame (IND), an all-girls high school in Baltimore, Maryland, are committed to educating others about real-world concerns.

“I feel like we actually can make a difference and raise awareness for different issues that we think are important,” said Maddie Yoncha, a 2016 graduate of IND.

“Bread and Soup Days” during Advent and Lent are just one avenue they use to achieve this goal. The school-wide,



Sister Kathy Schmittgens (center) met with students in the Shalom Club at Institute of Notre Dame.

awareness-building assembly led by the Shalom Club, followed by lunch, is both an educational event and fundraiser as IND students and staff gather for a meal and learn about a particular

PRAYER, ONE PROJECT AT A TIME



Students at Notre Dame High School in Talofofo, Guam, proudly display the flags they created in celebration of the U.N. International Day of Peace. Teams of students researched selected countries around the world, prepared a short presentation about areas of concern in their selected country and offered prayer requests for that country.

social justice issue. This past Advent, students raised funds for the Baltimore City Child Abuse Prevention Program, and during Lent proceeds went to the Refugee Youth Project, a program of Baltimore City Community College.

The club meets three to four times a month, coming together to discuss the topics in the monthly SSND Shalom e-newsletter and to plan their service projects and main events, some in collaboration with other school clubs.

“The most rewarding service project I have worked on is helping to rebuild houses on Rockaway Beach,” said Meaghan Schneid, a junior at IND, recalling her service after Hurricane Sandy. “I got to know the people we were helping and hear their story. It impacted me because it hit close to home. It could have been here, in Baltimore.”

Juniors at Institute of Notre Dame in Baltimore, Maryland, enjoy “Bread and Soup Day” in support of the Youth Refugee Project during Lent.



In learning more about their world and living out the Gospels, something extraordinary begins to unfold in the hearts of Shalom Club members. The students soon realize they are being taught by those they serve. In giving, they receive.

“Some of the students have shared that their relationships at home and school have become better since they identified with Shalom,” said Sister Eti-ini Udom of her Shalom members at Our Lady of Apostles Girls’ College in Akwanga, Nigeria. “I believe that a lot of transformation has taken place in them, and they will continue to grow through Shalom.”



Students in the Shalom Club at Our Lady of Apostles Girls’ College, Akwanga, Nigeria, worked to clean up the school grounds.

See Prayer card on back cover.

To receive the monthly Shalom North America e-newsletter, sign up at <http://bit.ly/shalom-news-signup>
Interested in starting a Shalom Club at your school or parish? Download a brochure: bit.ly/shalom-clubs-2016
Or contact the Shalom international coordinator, Sister Kathy Schmittgens at shalom@ssndroma.org

Helping South Sudan

move toward a future of hope - an interview with Sister Barbara Paleczny

Old Fangak is a community of people living by the Zaraf River in South Sudan. It is normally a small community, with an open market and people who live by raising cows, trading on the river, fishing and gardening. During the dry/cool season, cool means that it doesn't get much above 100 degrees Fahrenheit during the day, while temperatures drop to sometimes below 70 F at night.

Like the heat, the number of people living there continue to rise, from 5,000 to 10,000 in one year. In all of South Sudan, there are several hundred thousand displaced people and more who fled as refugees because of the civil war, which has lasted since 1955 with only short spans of uneasy peace.

Many of the children, babies, and adults have various, neglected tropical diseases, including acute malnutrition, tuberculosis, kidney disease, Kala-azar (also known as black fever and Dumdum fever).



Sister Barbara Paleczny with students in the In-Service Teacher Training Program for Fangak County, South Sudan.

In view of all this misery, it is not surprising that South Sudan is home to multiple generations of families who are suffering from deep trauma. This reality led Sister Cathy Arata, SSND, to invite experts to set up Capacitar wellness and healing workshops throughout the country.

Helping people to help themselves and others to heal from trauma also has become the key focus of Sister Barbara Paleczny, SSND.

Capacitar is a program they use to help heal trauma and empower wellness. A key premise is that each person has an inherent capacity to return to balance and wholeness – body, mind, spirit and emotions. And because the core experiences of trauma are disempowerment and disconnection, recovery is based on the empowerment of the survivor and the creation of new connections, all taking place in the context of relationships.

In all South Sudan, deprivation is more than visible as a result of the 1,000 percent inflation over the past two years. Prices have skyrocketed, and money is almost without value. There is a lack of food.

Sister Barbara's community in Juba is responding. But when they agreed to say "no" to children asking for school fees, uniforms and shoes, one religious brother asked, "What are

Sister Barbara Paleczny dances with a child during a Healing from Trauma workshop in Agok, Abyei, South Sudan.



you going to do when a mother comes with her little ones and say they are all hungry?”

Because this type of giving is not a good way to help, Sister Barbara’s community has found other ways, such as being a hidden sponsor. For example, the community supports a neighboring social worker and immigrant from Uganda who works cleaning hotel rooms. She, in turn, is now organizing ways for women to provide meals for others.

Unfortunately, people’s hope is waning as tensions mount throughout the country. The peace process has not taken hold and the economy has collapsed (not quite officially, but in practice). Desperate people do desperate things. Yet, deep faith in God who has carried them this far now uplifts people to go on.

Sister Barbara says that she finds daily that it is a privilege to be with them and the Solidarity community, working with others from around the world to give all they can. “There is no doubt that the joys and hopes, the griefs and sorrows of the people are ours.”



Sisters Barbara Paleczny, Rose Cecile Espinos and Ginny Bobrowski with a group in the In-Service Teacher Training Program in Old Fangak, South Sudan.

For more information: www.solidarityssudan.org

SSNDS VOLUNTEER IN HEALTH, EDUCATION IN SOUTH SUDAN

Four School Sisters of Notre Dame traveled to South Sudan earlier this year to join Sister Barbara Paleczny, SSND, for two months as volunteers with Solidarity with South Sudan.

Sister Yvonne Conley taught nurses and midwives. Sister Peg Malone taught the final year of in-service for teachers in Rumbek, and Sisters Ginny Bobrowski and Rose Cecile Espinos joined Sister Barbara to teach students in Old Fangak.

“It was so wonderfully special to have them in Old Fangak where people survive with the food brought in helicopters by the World Food Program and the blessing of delicious fish from the river right there,” Sister Barbara said. “‘Trust and Dare’ is truly our way.”

At the Catholic Health Training Institute (CHTI), which provides training to empower Sudanese to be health leaders in their communities, Sister Yvonne assisted with restoring internet service and removing computer

viruses, and she taught classes covering everything from basic knowledge of Word and Excel to everyday uses of technology in medicine.

“The staff members were from Kenya, Italy, Nigeria, Ireland, New Zealand, the USA, Poland, Australia, India and South Sudan working together in harmony with South Sudanese students from all the various states,” Sister Yvonne said. “After three years, these young people graduate as midwives and nurses and return to their respective villages and provide health care in clinics, hospitals or out in the bush country. CHTI was for me an oasis offering hope and solidarity in a troubled and desperate nation.”



Sister Yvonne Conley advises an instructor at the Catholic Health Training Institute on how to properly scan a USB drive for viruses before opening files she receives from students.



Sister Ginny Bobrowski with some of the students in the In-Service Teacher Training Program for Fangak County, South Sudan.

Inspired by SSND

“I am just overwhelmed with gratitude to be able to give back to those who helped me on my path and journey so many years ago.”

– Eileen McGartland

Eileen McGartland



Daughters Faith (far left) and Annie (far right) with their parents, Eileen McGartland and John Clarke, and their dog, Bo.

School Sisters of Notre Dame have a way of coming back into people's lives and offering new gifts as Eileen McGartland well knows.

Eileen, who is the SSND wellness director in St. Louis, Missouri, remembers that on her first day of work she

had to take a driving test. While settling into the room, she looked around and saw her former high school English teacher, former spiritual director and former pastoral associate – all SSNDs.

“It's rare enough when we can say ‘thank you’ to those who helped us so long ago,” Eileen said. “I am able to support my former American history teacher around her health issues, and my current position allows me to express my appreciation to those who affirmed me and what I was doing all those years past.”

Eileen also believes that it was SSNDs who lifted her up during some of her dark times in 2012. Her beloved nephew was murdered that year, and then the funding for the position she had held for 15 years ran out.

“I was emotionally upended after experiencing such tremendous loss,” Eileen said. “I reached out to a contact at SSND and was offered the position. I was unsure if I could accept it, as I needed full-time work with benefits for my husband and daughters. The sisters came through and offered me a full-time position, giving me hope and possibility for my future.”

Beyond this experience, Eileen says that the sisters' prayers and kind thoughts have helped her oldest daughter complete high school and are supporting her while she and her husband add a third daughter to the family.

“I am just overwhelmed with gratitude to be able to give back to those who helped me on my path and journey so many years ago,” Eileen said.

Brother Aristide Oben Biney, C.S.C.

Brother Aristide Oben Biney, C.S.C., is filled with nostalgia whenever he picks up his bag to head to Mary Queen of Peace in Cape Coast, Ghana, where he teaches in the same school where School Sisters of Notre Dame gave him his educational foundation.



Brother Aristide Oben Biney with students at Mary Queen of Peace.

“Working with my alma mater makes me feel a sense of pride and above all a deep sense of fulfillment that the seed sown by SSND sisters fell on good soil,” Brother Aristide said. “What I find enriching is their constant and unflinching dedication and determination for the mission and caring for school children. Simply put, the sisters believe in everyone they encounter.”

He attended Mary Queen of Peace from preschool to junior high school before entering high school at St. Mary’s Boys’ School and then Catholic University of Ghana. The first student from Queen of Peace to become a religious brother, he did his national service at another SSND school, Notre Dame Senior Secondary School in Sunyani, Ghana.

“Working with my alma mater makes me feel a sense of pride and above all a deep sense of fulfillment that the seed sown by SSND sisters fell on good soil.”

– Brother Aristide Oben Biney, C.S.C.

The sisters, he said, instilled in him the values of charity, compassion and virtue.

“When I started working with the SSND sisters, I felt very proud of myself,” Brother Aristide said. “I feel the pride of giving back to my alma mater as I stand at the threshold of educating tomorrow’s leaders today. There are no words that can express how it feels to return to my roots to nurture the new generation who will become the future.

“Often I try to compare my good old days to this current generation of Queen of Peace students. There is clearly a generational gap that has to be filled, and that is one of my tasks as I give back to Queen of Peace as a past student and a teacher.”

Maura Hall

As a student at St. Teresa in Trumbull, Connecticut, Maura Hall eagerly stole away across the blacktop after school to the convent where Sister Cecile Amore, SSND, lived. On particularly fortunate days, Maura visited her for a lesson during recess as well. Sister Cecile taught Maura piano from fourth grade until college.

Sister Cecile was also the convent’s cook, and during lessons, she would excuse herself to go stir the pot for dinner. If Maura was caught up with her piano lesson, she might get a tip or two on cooking as well. Sister Cecile’s impressive work ethic extended to everything she did, whether it was preparing a meal or sewing on a button.

On February 18, 2016 – a day after her 111th birthday – Sister Cecile passed away in Wilton, Connecticut, leaving a legacy of love for music and lessons of character. Maura, enriched by that legacy, now teaches at Etudes Studio, which she founded, to pass along her own love of music.

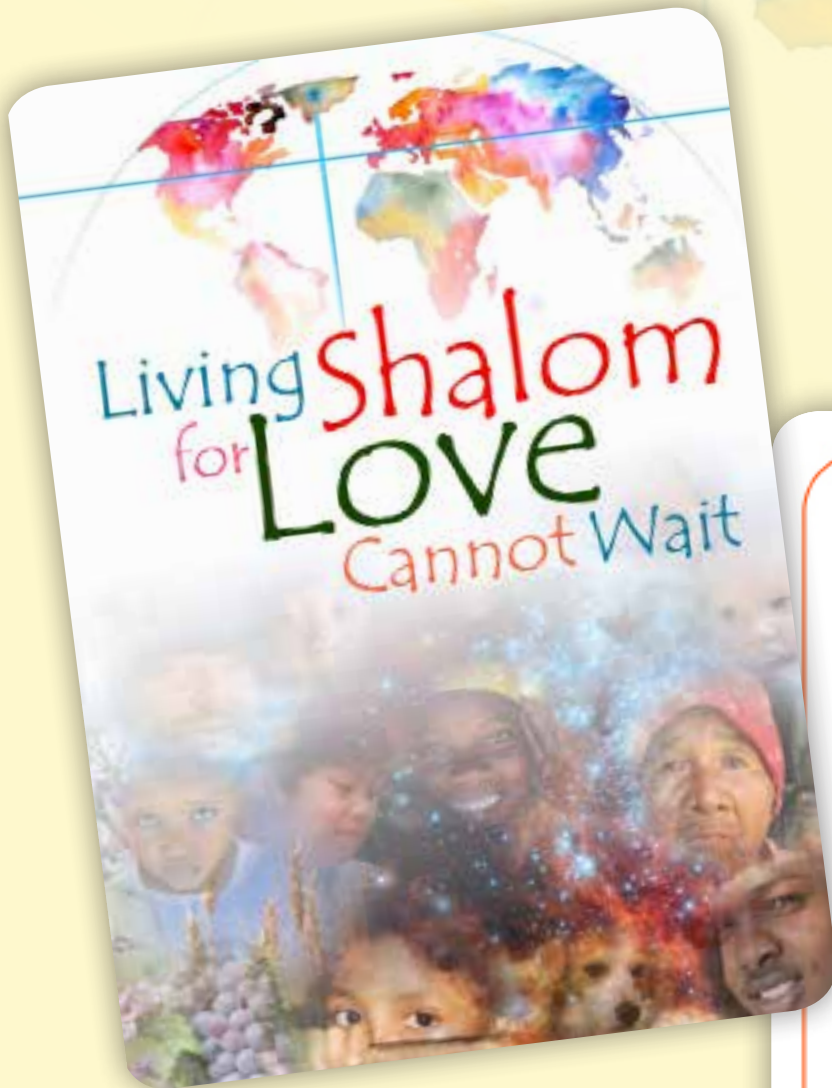
Sometimes Maura’s students notice Sister Cecile’s long, thin, spire-like handwriting in the corner of a music page. Sister Cecile’s influence, however, extends beyond the music itself. Her meticulous teaching style emphasized the importance of her students achieving proficiency. She demonstrated a strong sense for effective communication and the value of speaking concisely. She would often say, “Know what you’re saying, say it, and then listen.”

In honor of Sister Cecile, Maura gives a “Sister Cecile” award to one music student each year. Because of Sister Cecile’s unwavering, consistent effort in all her endeavors, Maura chooses the recipient based on effort. Many years from now, when the spire-like handwriting in the corners of the music sheets has faded and the pages have become brittle, the language of music and Sister Cecile’s lessons of character will live on.



Inspired by her SSND teacher, Maura Hall now teaches piano.

In honor of Sister Cecile Amore, Maura Hall gives a “Sister Cecile” award to one music student each year.



*Download and print
the Spirit of Shalom Prayer card:
bit.ly/spirit-of-shalom-2016*

Spirit of Shalom,

Ignite us with the fire of your love.

Enflame our hearts with courage
to embrace dialogue that transforms
and truth that frees.

Kindle our love with kindness
to heal divisions
and reconcile relationships.

Light our imaginations with insight
to envision and create a world
where all are one.

Stir our actions with justice and peace
to engage critical concerns
and cherish all of life.

Fire our lives with audacity and hope
to risk all for God's mission,
for love cannot wait.

Prayer by Roxanne Schares, SSND
Graphics from a design by Glen Cassani, SSND • Watercolor Map: Elena Romanova
Card produced by Patricia Stortz, Congregational Communications



School Sisters of Notre Dame

