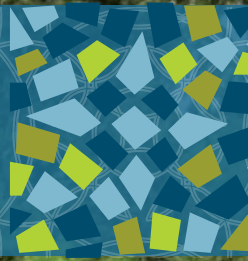




# School Sisters *of* Notre Dame

Central Pacific Province



Spring 2012



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# 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.

— *You Are Sent*, Constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame

## FROM THE PROVINCIAL LEADER

Sister Mary Anne Owens, SSND

I begin this message with a grateful heart, grateful for your friendship, your support and your prayerful partnership. Each day, we walk together in the ordinary events of life. Recently, many of you joined us in special luncheons and concerts celebrating women, recognizing our sisters' achievements and sharing in the remembrances of our deceased sisters. Life events seem to multiply during this time of the year as we celebrate First Communions, weddings and graduations. We also continue to experience illness, loss and deaths. In the natural order of the seasons, we plant seeds in flower pots and gardens while farmers put in their crops for their livelihood. In our own way, with each transition in our lives, we each care for, nurture and water pieces of new life.

Your generosity brings hope to us as we envision a future full of possibilities. Your financial support for our sisters' ministries and retirement needs is a gift beyond measure. You help us provide a hopeful future for people in need.

In this newsletter, we offer glimpses into the ministries of our sisters who accompany individuals on their faith journeys. They offer spiritual direction, provide retreat environments and experiences. All of us pray daily for others, for ourselves and for the needs of the world. Prayer nurtures our relationship with God. As Blessed Theresa reminds us, "prayer is the most necessary element for our souls, as water is for fish."

As each of us seeks nourishment for our faith journey, let us keep one another in prayer, support one another in whatever ways we are able and partner in the mission of Jesus to bring all into oneness with God.

## WALKING WITH GOD

*"I see spiritual direction as a very special friendship in my life. Where else can I go or whom else can I talk to about my relationship with God and be assured that they will openly, whole-heartedly listen to me? All too often today, people don't want to talk about their deepest feelings of faith. I appreciate having someone to whom I can express who God is for me and how this continually plays out in my life." ~ Jean*

Since the early 1970s, many School Sisters of Notre Dame have embraced God's call to become spiritual directors. In this ministry, they provide spiritual direction, retreats, programs and pastoral support designed to connect individuals and groups with their deepest spiritual values







Photo by Sister Theresa Dietz



Photo by Sister Joan DiProspero



and motivations. Spiritual direction is an opportunity to speak about life in an intimate way with the focus on the person's religious experience: the quality of important relationships, the attitude toward work or career, hopes and worries, struggles and goals, joyful memories and regrets.

Sister Rosemary Schwalbe shares her thoughts on spiritual direction: "The Spirit is at work before, during and after our session. As spiritual directors, we are the ones who need open hearts and spirits to notice that work.

"Some persons will come with a list of concerns. Some come not knowing what they are going to say," Sister Rosemary continues. "Either way, the Spirit is present guiding each of us to say what needs to be said. We need to listen carefully but we are not there to solve their problems. We are there to support and encourage their relationship with the All Merciful One."

*"Over the last 10 years, I have experienced deep darkness in my life, but I could always know that for that one hour a month my spiritual director would remind me how God was with me in my state of hopelessness, that I was not alone. She would bring a perspective of faith to my situation to help me see I had the strength to survive, that I would never be abandoned and I was surrounded by love." ~ Jean*



Sister Rosemary Schwalbe

In the early 1970s, Sister Joanne Dehmer was invited by the community to receive training in spiritual direction. "The call to become a spiritual director first came from the community. In the midst of studying and preparing, I came to discern it was God's call for me to enter this ministry."

Sister Joanne began spiritual direction and retreat ministry in 1974. She had been a teacher, then served as director of pastoral care ministry in parishes. For many years, part of her job description included spiritual direction and retreat ministry. Sister Joanne currently is a full-time spiritual director and retreat minister at Loyola Spirituality Center in St. Paul, Minn.



Sister Joanne Dehmer

"As a spiritual director, I witness the mystery of God's presence in another's life, holding hope for those who struggle to find hope and meaning in their lives. I listen to the myriad ways God is manifest in the person's life and how God might be inviting this person to healing and forgiveness and the discovery of their own goodness. I wait with people as they discern the next steps in their life. I hear the joys and the daily call to be faithful in the ordinary days of life."

Sister Joanne reflects: "Through spiritual direction and retreat ministry, I become more aware of God's presence in my life, and I am called to fidelity to my own spiritual path. I am both humbled and honored to give witness to another's sacred story."

## STANDING ON HOLY GROUND



St. Mary of the Pines Retreat Center in Chatawa, Miss., lies midway between Jackson, Miss., and New Orleans, La. What a spiritual impact the School Sisters of Notre Dame have had on the great number of participants served at this retreat center since it opened in 1988.

In earlier times, the Choctaw Native Americans inhabited this land, followed by the Redemptorist Fathers. Realizing the land was not suitable for their needs, the Redemptorists invited School Sisters from Milwaukee to open a boarding school for girls on the 300-acre campus. In 1879 the Redemptorists sold the property to the School Sisters for \$9,000. Over the next 100 years, this purchase by Mother Caroline proved to be a remarkably wise decision. What began as a thriving boarding school became an aspiranture for young girls considering religious life, and finally has become a retirement home for sisters and the retreat center.

Because of location, the retreat center is protected from the activities of city life. The outdoors are conducive to the peace and tranquility needed for reflective time. Ample space includes a cosmic walk through the woods, an outdoor way of the cross, a labyrinth and a small lake.

The retreat center, a three-story residence and formerly the sisters' convent, was renovated to accommodate 60 guests. The center includes a reflective chapel, library and rooms for spiritual direction. Large porches with rockers add to the comfortable Southern ambiance. Two hermitages were built in 1997. To meet retreatants' physical limitations, accessible, private bathrooms will be added to seven guest rooms this August.

Several sisters staff the St. Mary of the Pines Retreat Center with warm southern hospitality. Sister Helen Roper is the director of the center and responsibly provides for the needs of each group from registration to departure. Sister Dorez Mehrtens is the resident director of private retreats.



*Sister Helen Roper*





**JULY 15-21**

**CONFERENCE RETREAT:  
“REMEMBER TO LIVE!”**

**St. Mary of the Pines, Chatawa, Miss.**

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For more information or to register for a retreat,  
please contact Sister Helen Roper.

St. Mary of the Pines, Box 38, Chatawa, MS 39632

**Phone:** 601-783-3494, **Fax:** 601-783-3984

**E-mail:** [retreatcenter@ssniddallas.org](mailto:retreatcenter@ssniddallas.org)

The sisters and staff strive to make Christ visible by their very being, sharing their faith, hope, love and the natural beauty of Chatawa with all.

More than 1,000 group participants and individuals from various faith communities in diverse geographical locations attend retreats. Many, including couples, students, ministers, diocesan priests, members of religious communities and twelve-step groups come yearly and make their reservations far in advance. Themed retreats are also popular and include quilt-making, icon writing and painting. Those who come acknowledge they are on holy ground.

Many have spoken of the peaceful atmosphere of St. Mary of the Pines. Recently a retreatant wrote, “I love coming here for retreat because it gives me another opportunity to be with the sisters. An added advantage is the wooded setting because it allows me to absorb nature as I walk the property.” After a time of renewal, another guest commented, “As always it was a time of peace, quiet and prayer: a true mountain top experience. I deeply need the affirmation God offers me when I am here, so I look forward to future visits.”

*Come... the welcome mat awaits.*



*Sister Dorez Mebrtens*



# CELEBRATING A CENTURY ON THE HILL



*Photo by Sister Mary Kay Gosch*

School Sisters of Notre Dame from the Milwaukee Province arrived in Mankato, Minn., in 1865 to staff a school at SS. Peter and Paul Parish. This foundation became a center for dozens of sisters who were sent to establish schools in 25 towns in central and southern Minnesota.

In 1910, the sisters, encouraged and supported by leaders in the Mankato community, broke ground for a motherhouse and an academy for girls on Good Counsel Hill, which opened in the fall of 1912. This was made possible by generous donations from Mankato citizens.

The Hill has been, and continues to be, a center of PRAYER. Daily celebration of Eucharist, community and personal prayer are at the heart of the life of the sisters. They make the needs and concerns of the world their own and are often blessed by members of the broader community who join in worship.

The PRESENCE of School Sisters of Notre Dame has been a continuous gift to those who experience the warmth and welcome, the peacefulness, prayerfulness, beauty and sacredness of the Hill.

Wherever School Sisters are present, they endeavor to foster unity as they gather with others who join them in prayer, ministry, care of the earth and in promoting justice and peace. Since 1987 the Hill has been a designated peace site. More recently, a Peace Pole has been erected where prayers for world peace are held monthly on the 11<sup>th</sup>.

The SERVICE of the School Sisters of Notre Dame reaches out from the Hill and embraces the needs locally and beyond. Service has been mutually enriching for all who have been a part of our ministries.

The century of EDUCATION on the Hill has been and continues to be directed toward the transformation of the world through the transformation of persons. Together, we help each other reach the fullness of our potential and direct our gifts toward building the earth.





The Hill is presently home to Loyola Catholic School; In My Vision, a wood sculpture studio; conference center; Sacred Space ministry; Center for Earth Spirituality and Rural Ministry; community gardens; Foot Reflexology; several artists and centers for crafts and ceramics; and the Learning Center with its outreach to students of all ages and nationalities, including many immigrants.

Come join us as we celebrate a century of PRAYER, PRESENCE, SERVICE and EDUCATION!

School Sisters of Notre Dame of the Central Pacific Province live and minister from coast to coast as well as Guam, Nepal, Japan and beyond.

Contact the Mission Advancement department at [missionadv@ssndcp.org](mailto:missionadv@ssndcp.org) or

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262-787-1036

#### OUR LADY OF GOOD COUNSEL

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**Cover Photo:** A porch rocker at St. Mary of the Pines Retreat Center offers a tranquil space for reflection.

*Transforming the world  
through education*



## OUR ABUNDANT BLESSINGS



*Photo by Patrick Flood, courtesy of the Fond du Lac Reporter newspaper.*

“We have no lasting dwelling here; our true homeland is heaven.”

— *Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger*

On June 3, the School Sisters of Notre Dame will bid farewell to Our Lady of Mount Carmel Convent in Mount Calvary, Wis., with a Mass and open house. Friends and neighbors are invited to help the sisters celebrate 160 years of the abundant blessings God has provided at Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Established in 1852 by Mother Caroline Friess, the convent became the first SSND branch house west of the Allegheny Mountains when Novice Petra Forreria and Candidate Frances Mueller were missioned by Mother Caroline Friess to teach at the Carmel school.

For almost 100 years, the convent complex grew – adding buildings and barns to create a working farm that provided sustenance for the sisters. Because of the invigorating air of the Wisconsin countryside, the convent became a home for retired sisters. Most recently, the property of 36 acres of farmland was the first site for Sunseed Eco-Education Ministries.

After studying the buildings' possibilities, looking at the property's safety and maintenance issues and considering the decreasing number of sisters living at Mount Carmel, the decision was made to sell the property.

Leaving Mount Carmel is hard, but the memories will remain in our hearts as we heed Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger's words, “We have no lasting dwelling here; our true homeland is heaven.”

*Contact Sister Maxine Bauer at 920-753-2131 or [mbauer@ssnd-milw.org](mailto:mbauer@ssnd-milw.org) if you are interested in attending the June 3 celebration.*



## CELEBRATING OUR SISTERS



**Sister Louise Marie Benecke** (Douglas, AZ) was honored by Rosati-Kain High School in St. Louis, Mo., for her work in health care and our multi-cultural community working with the people of this US/Mexico border community. A graduate of the class of 1951, Sister Louise Marie received the honor on March 10 at the school's 100th anniversary celebration gala.

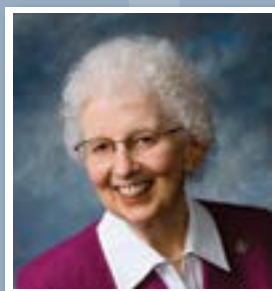
She was also honored with an award for being a committed and exceptional woman, making a difference in the community. On March 27, the City of Douglas presented the award in connection with International Women's Day at the Mexican Consulate. Sister Louise Marie's volunteer ministry includes obtaining health care resources for clinics that serve people living in communities on both sides of the US-Mexico border.



**Sister Shawnee Daniels-Sykes** (Milwaukee, WI) received The Merit Award for service, professional and academic excellence from the Spelman College's National Alumnae Association on May 19 in Atlanta, Ga. Sister Shawnee is assistant professor of theology and bioethics at Mount Mary College, Milwaukee.



**Sister Linda Kremer** (Cumberland, RI) received the "Companions on the Journey" Award given by the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. Bishop Thomas J. Tobin of the Providence Diocese presented the award on March 11. Sister Linda ministers as the director of religious education for St. Joseph Parish in Cumberland.

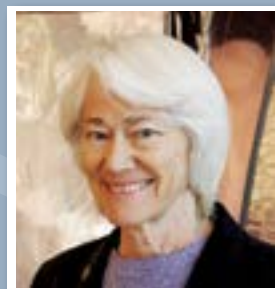


**Sister Joseph Marie Flynn** (Milwaukee, WI) book, *Rescuing Regina: The Battle to Save a Friend from Deportation and Death*, was chosen to receive the "Honorable Mention" in this year's Kingery/Derleth Book-length Non-Fiction Contest sponsored by the Council of Wisconsin Writers.



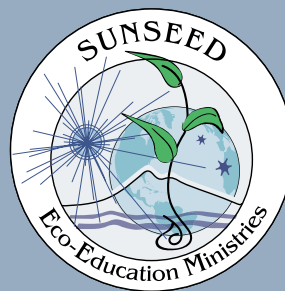
Sister Mary Ann Osborne (Mankato, MN) woodcarving, "The Heart of the City," was selected for the Sacred Art Exhibition titled "Seeing God." She received third prize during the exhibit held at the Benedictine Center of St. Paul's Monastery in St. Paul, Minn.

Visit Sister Mary Ann's ministry, *In My Vision*, at Our Lady of Good Counsel.



**Sister Carolyn Sur** (St. Louis, MO) received the Aquinas Institute of Theology's second annual St. Rose of Lima Society Award recognizing women who have made significant contributions to the life of the Catholic Church and the ministry of Jesus. She and four other women were honored as

pillars of Dominican spirituality on March 29. Sister Carolyn serves as a member of Metropolitan Congregations United, seeking better living conditions for citizens of Saint Louis.



Sunseed Eco-Education Ministries (Mount Calvary, WI) was highlighted in the Archdiocese of Milwaukee's Catholic Herald. The story recounted Sunseed's start in 2000 at Our Lady of Mount Carmel. **Sister Mary Ann Srnka** felt called to develop

organic gardens on the community's acreage and asked **Sister Mary Beck**, who had farm background, to join the venture. **Sister Suzanne Moynihan** became the director of the program and the endeavor expanded to include advocacy and education at other locations.

## HONORING WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP



Photo by Linda Behrens

“For us, education means enabling persons to reach the fullness of their potential as individuals created in God’s image and assisting them to direct their gifts toward renewing the earth.”

— *You Are Sent*, Constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame

In the spirit of our understanding of education, International Women’s Day in March was an occasion to formally honor women in leadership with events in Milwaukee, Wis., and St. Louis, Mo. Luncheons offered women leaders of all ages the opportunity to reflect on the integration of the spiritual and professional dimensions of leadership.

Dr. Eileen Schwalbach, President of Mount Mary College in Milwaukee, spoke to 125 participants on the Notre Dame of Elm Grove Campus. She centered her comments on the theme of “Educating to Transform the World.”

We are especially grateful to Notre Dame of Elm Grove major event sponsors: Mount Mary College, Mark and Sharon Cameli, and Reinhart Boerner Van Deuren S.C., Attorneys at Law.

In St. Louis, Maureen Hermann, President of Marian Middle School, addressed 80 attendees. She shared the school’s mission of serving economically disadvantaged girls, preparing them for college preparatory high schools and beyond. At a second event the following Sunday, some 70 donors and sisters enjoyed a musical program featuring the works of women composers. The concert was presented by bassoonist Dr. Christin Schillinger and pianist Jed Moss who generously donated their performance. Dr. Schillinger is the Assistant Professor of Bassoon at Miami University, Ohio. Jed Moss, a collaborative musician and soloist, has performed with musicians from the nation’s top orchestras.

We appreciate the generosity of Sancta Maria in Ripa’s major event sponsors: Teresa Howe, Ann Kampeter, Dr. John D. and Mrs. Ingrid G. Kay, Claribel Lagomarsino, Marybeth and Greg Lernihan, Mary Kim and Bernard Schreck and reception sponsor, Elizabeth Pfaff.



*You are invited* to sponsor one of our upcoming events: June Golf Outing and Card Party, July Ice Cream Social or another event. Please review the events listed in the sidebar.

Contact Joyce Prahm, Mission Advancement at 507-389-4212 or [missionadv@ssndcp.org](mailto:missionadv@ssndcp.org) for sponsorship opportunities.

## LEAVING A LEGACY

“God has helped wondrously till now; neither will God abandon us in the future.”

— *Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger*, January 7, 1864

We School Sisters of Notre Dame began educating girls and young women in Bavaria in 1833. Since then, our ministries have expanded throughout Europe, the Americas, Africa and Asia. From the start, we have depended on the generosity of our friends. Together, we express our mission through transformative education ministering especially with women, youth and those who are economically poor.

We know that education is a lifelong process of growth and change. Some sisters featured in this edition enable others to reach their potential through retreat work and spiritual direction. These sisters walk with others in healing life's hurts, dealing with loss and embracing new life at each stage of their spiritual journey.

There are a number of ways you can support our mission. Some donors make cash donations on a regular basis. Others make contributions of stock and appreciated assets. And, a number of donors include the School Sisters of Notre Dame in their estate plans, leaving a gift through a will, annuity or insurance policy. Contact your financial or legal advisor for assistance with making a planned gift. Our legal name is *School Sisters of Notre Dame Central Pacific Province, Inc.*

If you would like more information about the School Sisters of Notre Dame, please contact the Mission Advancement office. Your generosity enables our ministries to flourish far into the future.

You help carry forward the ministry Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger began 179 years ago with your financial contributions, prayerful support and encouragement.

Let us continue to walk life's journey as partners in hope.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### JUNE 26

SSND GOLF OUTING AND CARD PARTY  
Daytona Golf Club; Dayton, MN  
Contact Joyce Prahm at 507-389-4212  
or [jprahm@ssndcp.org](mailto:jprahm@ssndcp.org)

### JULY 6-8

DISCERNMENT RETREAT WEEKEND  
FOR SINGLE WOMEN  
Villa Notre Dame; Wilton, CT  
Contact Sister Barb Linke at 262-787-1016  
or [blinke@ssndcp.org](mailto:blinke@ssndcp.org)

### JULY 15

ICE CREAM SOCIAL  
Our Lady of Good Counsel; Mankato, MN  
Contact Joyce Prahm at 507-389-4212  
or [jprahm@ssndcp.org](mailto:jprahm@ssndcp.org)

## DIRECTED RETREATS

Offered: June 2-9, June 9-16, June 18-25,  
July 9-16, July 17-24, July 30-August 6.  
Our Lady of Good Counsel; Mankato, MN  
Contact Sister Mary Jo Welter at 507-389-4266  
or [mjwelter@ssndmankato.org](mailto:mjwelter@ssndmankato.org)

## MINDFULNESS MEDITATION GROUP

Tuesday evenings – ongoing  
Notre Dame of Elm Grove; Elm Grove, WI  
Contact Sister Suzanne Moynihan at  
262-787-1011 or [sunseeddirector@ssnd-milw.org](mailto:sunseeddirector@ssnd-milw.org)

## PRAYER FOR PEACE

11<sup>th</sup> Day – occurs monthly  
Our Lady of Good Counsel; Mankato, MN  
Contact Sister Joyce Kolbet at 507-389-4296  
or [jkolbet@ssndmankato.org](mailto:jkolbet@ssndmankato.org)

## TAIZÉ PRAYER

Third Sunday, every other month:  
July 15, Sept. 16, Nov. 18  
Sancta Maria in Ripa; St. Louis, MO  
Contact Sister Joyelle Proot at 314-633-7015  
or [jproot@ssndcp.org](mailto:jproot@ssndcp.org)

Visit [www.ssndcentralpacific.org](http://www.ssndcentralpacific.org)  
or [www.facebook.com/ssnd.centralpacific](https://www.facebook.com/ssnd.centralpacific)  
for additional information and descriptions  
of the events.



"We trust that God always calls us  
to fullness of being."

— *You Are Sent*, Constitution of the School Sisters of Notre Dame



## Fire

What makes a fire burn  
is space between the logs,  
a breathing space.  
Too much of a good thing,  
too many logs  
packed in too tight  
can douse the flames  
almost as surely  
as a pail of water would.

So building fires  
requires attention  
to the spaces in between,  
as much as to the wood.

When we are able to build  
open spaces  
in the same way

we have learned  
to pile on the logs,  
then we can come to see how  
it is fuel, and absence of the fuel  
together, that make fire possible.

We only need to lay a log  
lightly from time to time.  
A fire  
grows  
simply because the space is there,  
with openings  
in which the flame  
that knows just how it wants to  
burn  
can find its way.

~ Judy Brown ~

*How does this poem relate to your spiritual walk?  
What words or phrases speak to you?*

