

History of SSND Associates

Taken from: *Together in Mission: Associates and the School Sisters of Notre Dame. North American Major Area Guidelines, 2001.*

Through the centuries members of the laity have associated themselves with religious as hermits, oblates, and third order seculars. Today what is unique to the associate movement is the equal sharing of a congregation's charism and the energy connected with it.

Today, often as a result of new situations, many institutes have come to the conclusion that their charism can be shared with the laity...a new chapter, rich in hope, has begun in the history of relations between consecrated persons and the laity.

(Pope John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, 1996, no. 54)

A significant expression of lay people's sharing in the richness of the consecrated life is their participation in various institutes...as people who share fully for a certain period of time the institute's community life and its particular dedication to contemplation or the apostolate. This should always be done in such a way that the identity of the institute in its internal life is not harmed.

(Pope John Paul II, *Vita Consecrata*, 1996, no. 56)

It appears to take a renewed impetus from the Second Vatican Council, which encouraged the laity to take their rightful place in the Church. This is especially evident in *Lumen Gentium*, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church and in *Apostolicam Actuositatem*, the Decree on the Apostolate of the Laity.

Now, the laity are called in a special way to make the Church present and operative in those places and circumstances where only through them can she become the salt of the earth...Consequently, let every opportunity be given to them so that, according to their abilities and the needs of the times, they may zealously participate in the saving work of the Church.

(Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium* 33)

In the Church, there is diversity of service but unity of purpose. Christ conferred on the apostles and their successors the duty of teaching, sanctifying, and ruling in His name and power. But the laity, too, share in the priestly, prophetic, and royal office of Christ and therefore have their own role to play in the mission of the whole People of God in the Church and in the world.

(Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 2)

There is a great variety of associations in the apostolate. Among these associations, those which promote and encourage a closer harmony between the everyday life of the

members and their faith must be given primary consideration. Associations are not ends in themselves; rather they should serve to fulfill the Church's mission to the world.

(Vatican II, *Apostolicam Actuositatem* 19)

Following the Second Vatican Council the first seeds for associates for School Sisters of Notre Dame were sown in the Polish province with the Daughters of Mary, a group of lay women, who shared in the apostolic ministry of the sisters. (This was under communism) This innovation was reported at the first session of the 13th General Chapter in 1969. At the second session in 1970, the Chapter accepted the concept of affiliation, as it was then called. It was allowed to continue and become a topic for further study.

Daughters of Mary (Polish Province)

A follow-up report of an affiliate group of the Polish province called the "Daughters of Mary" was given by Sister M. Andrzejka Godziek. The membership now includes eleven women whose professional work includes teaching, nursing, and office work in State institutions, catechizing, working in homes for mentally handicapped children, and assisting in laboratory work.

The group gathers at the Motherhouse in Opole for a yearly retreat and other days of recollections. Regular meetings are held with conferences, study days, and discussion session to provide for their spiritual, social, and educational growth. Statutes of the "Daughters of Mary" have been submitted to the Generalate and a stronger bond of affiliation with the SSND Congregation is being sought. The Chapter approved the continuation of the affiliate program as it now exists. The General Council agreed to study the statutes as presented and to be ready to report at the 1974 General Chapter.

(Acts of the Fourteenth General Chapter, School Sisters of Notre Dame, 1972)

A proposal to admit Catholic laywomen as associates in the congregation was presented by the St. Louis province to the 15th General Chapter in 1974. The proposal was approved.

The concept of affiliation became known as association and was incorporated into *You Are Sent*, the Constitution and General Directory of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, by the 17th General Chapter in 1982. Provinces were given the opportunity to establish associations by which individuals enter into a special relationship with the congregation. The opportunity to establish associations was extended to regions and mission extensions in 1992 by the 19th General Chapter.

Because others are inspired by the same charism and spirituality as we, provinces, regions, and mission extensions may establish associations by which individuals enter into a special relationship with our congregation. Plans for province associations are

approved by the General Council; plans for regional and mission extension associations are approved by their respective provincial councils.

(*You Are Sent*, 1992, General Directory 9)

Law followed life. The first associates were received by the St. Louis province in 1976 and the first guidelines for associations were approved by the General Council in 1977-1978. Mankato was the second North American province to accept associates.

Dialogue was part of the process of introducing associations into provinces and regions and continues to be important in their growth and development. Though men were not considered in the initial proposal, they were soon included as associations were established.

The first interprovincial gathering of associate directors and associates took place in St. Louis in April 1990. Since then there has been a meeting of one kind or another involving associates and/or directors each year. In July 1994, eight associate directors and seven associates from the North American provinces came together in Bird Island, Minnesota to work on common guidelines for associates in the North American Major Area (NAMA). This task, assigned by the SSND Executive Committee and was completed in 1996.

The associate movement continues to grow and develop in the North American Major Area. The regions of Guam and Japan have associates. The seeds sown on another continent over 25 years ago continue to grow and flower. Associates are part of the SSND family carrying the charism of Blessed Theresa and Mother Caroline into the 21st century.

Province/Region Covenant with Associates

<u>Province/Region</u>	<u>Year</u>
St. Louis	1976
Mankato	1978
Canada	1983
Dallas	1986
Chicago	1987
Milwaukee	1987
Baltimore	1990
Wilton	1991
Japan	1993
Guam	1998