

SSND Corporate DNA

Theme: Internationality

Story: After World War II SSNDs in North America sent Care Packages to European SSNDs, providing items that had become scarce in a post-war economy. However, our European sisters also gave gifts. In reviewing the chronicle entries there are two striking gifts that are mentioned.

- 1) The Munich Province sent the St. Louis Province a gift in gratitude for their help after World War II. It was a lovely violin that continues to be played on special occasions and has been passed from violin teacher to SSND students over the past 50 years. (More on this story is available in Sturdy Roots I, "Living in Wartime," "Care Packages.)
- 2) A second story is told by our German sisters of Fussen who fed American prisoners of war during World War II. In gratitude for their generosity, the American servicemen sent the sisters woolen cloth, toothbrushes, flour, etc. after their release and return to the States. (Ibid.)

Theme: Eucharistic Living

Story: The Nun Study is an example of Eucharistic Living as 678 School Sisters of Notre Dame have given their time and energy in yearly evaluations documenting their own diminishment to help in Alzheimer's research. Brain donation is also a significant part of their gift.

- 1) CNN created a documentary showing the School Sisters of Notre Dame of Mankato going through the yearly evaluations, conversing about aging, etc. The uniqueness of this presentation is that it is set in the context of Eucharist. (This is found in Sturdy Roots II, "The Nun Study," View CNN.
- 2) In "Living in Wartime," there is a letter written by Mother Almeda Schricker, SSND, describing the bombing of the Munich Motherhouse during World War II. The entire letter is written in the context of the liturgy of Gaudete Sunday and the hope conveyed in the midst of total devastation. This is found in Sturdy Roots I, "Living in Wartime," Bombing of the Munich Motherhouse.

Theme: Poverty

Story: Sisters living in Berlin, Germany, were divided by the Berlin Wall. The sisters living in East Berlin were allowed to care for babies born out of wedlock, until the age of 2, and then they were taken from the sisters to be placed in foster homes. They could also care for mentally challenged adults. All other ministries were forbidden to them. In 1989, years after the war, the Polish SSNDs sent a hand carved statue of Mother Theresa Gerhardinger to their sisters in East Berlin and one also to West Berlin.

Read the story of the difficulties the German sisters in East Berlin had in receiving the statue from their Polish sisters. (This can be found in Sturdy Roots II under "Communism," Statue of Mother Theresa.)

Theme: Ministry to Immigrants

Story: One of the constant aspects of SSND ministry has been service to immigrants. From the beginning Mother Theresa and Mother Caroline were both conscious of serving German immigrants primarily through education.

- 1) Read their letters on first-impressions of American Children found in Sturdy Roots I, "Education," American Children.
- 2) Look at Sturdy Roots II, "Expansion," Immigrants, and choose one story related by SSNDs currently working with immigrants in the U.S. and South America.

Theme: Fostering the Role of Women in the Church

Story: Mother Theresa was one of the first women in church history to lead a women's congregation with no male director over her. This desire for justice within the Catholic Church is based on Jesus' respect for the gifts of women, found in the New Testament.

- 1) Read one letter that Mother Theresa and her council wrote to Pope Pius IX asking for his consideration of this "new" way to govern women religious.
- 2) Consider her role of reconciliation with the hierarchical church throughout her turmoil in attempting to dialogue. This can be found in Sturdy Roots II, "Being Church."

Theme: Love of Earth and Respect for Creation

Story: Consider the life of Dorothy Olinger, SSND, and her education on the Universe Story as related in Sturdy Roots II, "Voices of Change." In her essay she describes herself as very conservative and doing only what would be approved by authority. A precious moment is related in her biography that changed her life and ministry.

- 1) Read her essay and note how eating an apple opened her to a new paradigm, a cosmic consciousness that energized her educational ministry.
- 2) The importance of Earth and all creation is part of the mandate for the congregation in the next five years. Share the mandate as found in Sturdy Roots II, "Creative Fidelity," Chapter Themes, 22nd General Chapter. This lets our public know what our priorities are for the next five years internationally.

Theme: Love for the Poor, Youth, and Women

Story: The School Sisters of Notre Dame have expanded to various cultures throughout the past 175 years. In *Sturdy Roots II*, “Expansion,” examples of missionary activity exemplifies this theme, both in establishing education for women and surviving the crises of evacuation due to political turmoil.

- 1) Read through the various accounts of deciding to send sisters to Africa, Asia, Central and Latin America and see this basic theme as our motivation.
- 2) The sisters’ story of going to Liberia carries these desires and also the sadness of needing to evacuate and leaving those they loved.

Theme: Desire for Justice

Story: Various cultures would have examples of taking some action for justice on the part of School Sisters of Notre Dame. As an international congregation we have chosen to be part of the United Nations as a Non-Governmental Organization.

1. Consider the advocacy for Women and girl-children by reading through the ministry of Ann Scholz, SSND and “SSND at the UN.”
2. The role of the SHALOM Network is another example of educating for justice through SHALOM Clubs.
3. Another aspect of justice and peace-making may be found in “Voices of Change,” especially in the life story of Margaret Ellen Traxler, SSND and others listed with her.

Theme: Education

Story: The role of education is basic to understanding the corporate personality of the School Sisters of Notre Dame. From Mother Theresa’s views on education to examples that go beyond formal classroom education, SSNDs continue to share the Mission of Jesus as educators.

1. Read the two classic letters of Mother Theresa and Mother Caroline on American children found in *Sturdy Roots I* under “Education.”
2. Reflect on the experience of Kathleen Spencer, SSND, in her role as educator with the immigrant community in St. Paul, MN under *Expansion*, “Immigrants.”

Your ideas?