Themes of SSND Education Unfolding

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This morning we probed some of the deeper meanings of our definition of education. It helped us to remember who we are. In remembering we remain true to the mystery that is at work within and among us. This afternoon I would like to start with a poetic reading from Alla Renee Bozarth. It's entitled: "Passover Remembered" As you listen, see if you hear themes of the SSND story unfolding. (Ed. Note: Miriam chose segments of this poem to share. However the richness of the entire poem is included here with the permission of the poet.)

Passover Remembered

Ten years so far in the wilderness, ten summers and hundreds of spring storms since we few ventured out into the vast heartland.

How quickly it happened, only a few days' notice for some of us:

Pack nothing.
Bring only
your determination
to serve and
your willingness
to be free

Don't wait for the bread to rise. Take nourishment for the journey, but eat standing, be ready to move at a moment's notice.

Do not hesitate to leave your old ways behind—fear, silence, submission.

Only surrender to the need of the time—to love

justice and walk humbly with your God.

Do not take time to explain to the neighbors. Tell only a few trusted friends and family members.

Then begin quickly, before you have time to sink back into the old slavery.

Set out in the dark.
I will send fire
to warm and encourage you.
I will be with you in the fire
and I will be with you in the cloud.

You will learn to eat new food and find refuge in new places. I will give you dreams in the desert to guide you safely home to that place you have not yet seen.

The stories you tell one another around your fires in the dark will make you strong and wise.

Outsiders will attack you, and some who follow you, and at times you will weary and turn on each other from fear and fatigue and blind forgetfulness.

You have been preparing for this for hundreds of years. I am sending you into the wilderness to make a way and to learn my ways more deeply.

Those who fight you will teach you.
Those who fear you will strengthen you.
Those who follow you may forget you.

Only be faithful.
This alone matters.

Some of you will die in the desert, for the way is longer than anyone imagined. Some of you will give birth.

Some will join other tribes along the way, and some will simply stop and create new families in a welcoming oasis.

Some of you will be so changed by weathers and wanderings that even your closest friends will have to learn your features as though for the first time. Some of you will not change at all.

Some will be abandoned by your dearest loves and misunderstood by those who have known you since birth and feel abandoned by you.

Some will find new friendship in unlikely faces, and old friends as faithful and true as the pillar of God's flame.

Wear protection. Your flesh will be torn as you make a path with your bodies through sharp tangles. Wear protection.

Others who follow may deride or forget the fools who first bled where thorns once were, carrying them away in their own flesh.

Such urgency as you now bear may embarrass your children who will know little of these times.

Sing songs as you go, and hold close together. You may at times grow confused and lose your way.

Continue to call each other by the names I've given you, to help remember who you are. You will get where you are going by remembering who you are.

Touch each other and keep telling the stories of old bondage and of how I delivered you.

Tell you children lest they forget and fall into danger—remind them even they were not born in freedom but under a bondage they no longer remember, which is still with them, if unseen.

Or they were born in the open desert where no signposts are.

Make maps as you go, remembering the way back from before you were born.

So long ago you fell into slavery, slipped into it unawares, out of hunger and need.

You left your famished country for freedom and food in a new land, but you fell unconscious and passive, and slavery overtook you as you fell asleep in the ease of your life.

You no longer told stories of home to remember who you were.

Do not let your children sleep through the journey's hardship. Keep them awake and walking on their own feet so that you both remain strong and on course.

So you will be only the first of many waves of deliverance on these desert seas.

It is the first of many beginnings—your Paschaltide. Remain true to this mystery.

Pass on the whole story. I spared you all by calling you forth from your chains.

Do not go back.

I am with you now and I am waiting for you.

Alla Renée Bozarth

This is the SSND story, isn't it? Much like the Israelites we are on a wilderness journey. We draw our support from our faith in a loving God and from our love for each other. That's what Blessed Theresa did; that's what Caroline did. What they entered into was much more than an agreement to do something worthwhile, or a contract to complete a certain task. They entered into a covenant relationship with God that would impact generations to come. They had no idea of the outcome, no assurance of success still they reached for the unreachable. They longed for the more and they laid down their lives in the service of humanity. With each passing day and year their commitment deepened; their relationship with God led them to new lands to do the new and often the unthinkable. They applied their faith to new causes and they adapted to new circumstances. They grew in friendship as they told the stories. The maps they made, remembering where they had come from, were written down and passed on. They are our inheritance. So as Alla Bozarth reminds us at the close of her poem: "remain true to this mystery. Pass on the whole story. Do not go back. I am with you now and I am waiting for you."

This afternoon we fix our gaze on this moment in time. The present belongs to us. So we must ask what does our reality look like? How is our educational vision to find expression in this time of globalization? Blessed Theresa and Mother Caroline each knew her own historical moment well and that knowing enabled them to respond fully to God's call.

We know that Blessed Theresa was caught up in a whirlpool of change and uncertainty. It. caused her to take seriously the call to come to America. We know that Mother Caroline rode the waves of industrialization. This era was fueled by advances in technology and communication. By the end of the nineteenth century the Industrial Revolution was well underway. Some have called it "the first globalization" or "globalization, Act 1". In the 19th Century millions of people left their homes looking for a better life; the steamship, the railroad, and the telegraph, brought people together; ideas collided and the world was changed. Everything was moving farther and faster and cheaper than at any other time in human history. ² It was a period of enormous social, economic and political change. It created a seismic shift in the way people were to be in the world.

Our SSND history chronicles our move from Europe to the Americas; from small towns and rural areas to America's cities throughout this phase of "globalization Act 1". It tells us how the sisters' work expanded. Our history echoes the pain and joy, the hardship and triumph of the times. It describes how the societal changes around us shaped the decisions of the community. It tells us how the sisters coped and how they fared. If you read closely, you will see how hope is penned in all the letters. There is much to learn from the story.

The era that followed, marked as it was by two tragic wars, saw the further development of communication and transportation technologies that have continued to alter our world and our world view. Wayne Ellwood in his work, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Globalization*, reminds us this phenomenon is not entirely new, "Globalization is a new word which describes an old process and that the entanglement of diverse cultures and economies has been spreading for centuries and our world has been shrinking as a result. ³

Globalization Today

What characterizes globalization today is the rapid rate of change. Everything happens faster. Michael Adams and Angelo Carfagna make the point in their book *Coming of Age in a Globalized World* that "As globalization integrates peoples, cultures, and nations, the need to keep pace, respond, and learn more about what is happening, what is new and what is not – in short, to learn more about each other- becomes imperative for our survival. We must understand the problems, and the challenges, and humanely direct the process." ⁴ Learning more about each other "becomes imperative for our survival. As the authors point out, we must understand the problems and the challenges we face and we must direct the process. And I might add we must use divine grace to accomplish that task.

"Globalization is bringing all of humanity into a single ecosystem of embedded, overlapping networks. Borders, boundaries, delineations and walls of any kind are slowly giving way to the compelling force of integration and interdependence." ⁵

Upon accepting the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, "We have entered the third millennium through a gate of fire. If today, after the horror of 11 September, we see better, and we see further - we will realize that humanity is indivisible. New threats make no distinction between race, nations or regions. A new insecurity has entered every mind, regardless of wealth or status. A deeper awareness of the bonds that bind us all – in pain as in prosperity- has gripped young and old. Today, no walls can separate humanitarian or human rights crises in one part of the world from national security crises in another." ⁶

The hope for peace and the establishment of justice ultimately rests with our awareness of our interconnectedness and our embrace of solidarity. Education in the age of globalization must be about building that awareness—that vision of solidarity—connecting the dots and forming new patterns of understanding. When we come to see what is happening, we become empowered to change and influence the forces of globalization for good—to improve individual lives and to build up our world of solidarity and right relationship.

We share everything. Every crisis has the potential to become a global crisis. Every epidemic has the potential to become a pandemic. HIV Aids has reached into every corner of the globe within the last 25 years. SARS became a global problem in 2003. The bird flu is the next potential global health risk. Recently a colleague of mine attended a conference on how to prepare for dealing with the disease. He said the experts are saying that it will take about 10 days for the bird flu to travel from the west coast to the east coast.

Systemic poverty, the cause of so much violence and civil disorder and suffering, erodes and undermines human dignity and frustrates every effort to build a just and lasting peace.

The potential benefits of our increasing globalization have failed to reach more than 1 billion of our brothers and sisters trapped in abject poverty. In fact, globalization has exacerbated poverty in much of the Global South.

Dangers of all kind, economic, social, environmental plague the human community. No one is exempt. The lack of food, water, medicine, decent housing, access to education, environmental degradation, diseases of every kind, war and terrorism threaten us all. The list is endless. The phenomenon we call globalization connects us all.

We would do well to remember that this phenomenon we call globalization can be either a force for good or evil. "We have to learn to tilt the scales toward the parts of globalization that empower us and away from the parts that alienate and dehumanize

us. Hanging in the balance is the future of our entire planet. Globalization has the unprecedented power to unify and the unmatched capacity to overwhelm everything in its path." ⁷

Globalization can be a positive force for change but only if we come to see that we are all brothers and sisters to one another—only if it leads us toward that oneness and unity for which all of creation yearns. Globalization can be force for good, a force for peace and understanding—a harbinger of the coming of the kingdom--but only if it is imbued with, motivated and directed by the virtue we call solidarity. Solidarity may just be the virtue of the 21st century.

Call to Global Solidarity

John Paul II spoke repeatedly and urgently about the need for the virtue of solidarity in this age of rapid globalization. Solidarity is the only way to offset the negative trends that we see evident in our recent experience of economic globalization. He called us to find new ways of encouraging the development of respect for one another and identified education, as the best means for developing in each of us the respect for others which lies at the heart of solidarity. Without knowledge, we cannot grow in our understanding of one another. Without understanding we cannot build a world in solidarity. Education strengthens civil society and can help to build a culture of peace which is grounded in solidarity and flows from respect for the dignity of all and the belief in God's love for all.

Fr. Bryan Hehir, speaking at the Woodstock Theological Center said it well, "Solidarity is about a fundamental vision of society, an affirmation of how we ought to see ourselves in relationship to others. Solidarity is a controlling vision in Catholic understanding of society. It is the conviction that we are born into a fabric of social relationships, that our humanity ties us to others, that the Gospel consecrates those ties, and that the prophets tell us that those ties are the test by which our very holiness will be judged." ⁸

We are one global family of God. We are each part of the other and kin with all creation. That is the fundamental truth of our being in the world. In this age of globalization the virtue of solidarity takes on global dimensions. We are called to live in solidarity beyond the limits of our biological families, towns and countries; beyond our provinces and religious congregations; beyond our race and religions; beyond even our own species. We are called to be in union with all of God's creation. Those ties will be the test by which our holiness is measured.

We School Sisters of Notre Dame have come from villages to towns, to cities, to new lands. We have come to see ourselves as national, then international, then global citizens. As I noted this morning, today we are coming to understand ourselves in the context of the larger story of the cosmos. We are still just in the early morning of understanding our place in the universe. We are coming to know that we dwell on a living planet. We are part of a greater whole that is the web of life. We share intimately in the dense network of interactions of all living things. As Thomas Berry says so

eloquently, "we must renew our human participation in the grand liturgy of the universe." ⁹This sacred story of creation, regardless of how it is told—in every culture, by every people—belongs to us all. We are rooted in earth—in the cosmos. We have the capacity for self-transcendence. This is the view of the future we must get into our heads.

SSND's Call in New Age

This vision of solidarity—of embracing all as our brothers and sisters, as our family, resides deep in our hearts and souls—in our unconscious. It springs forth from our spirituality. This vision is rooted in the Gospel, in the Social Teachings of the Church, in our charism, in You Are Sent, and grounded in our SSND educational vision as understood in this day and this time. As educators, we are called to identify the gaps that exist between what is and what ought to be according to God's design for the world. Human knowledge and human conduct, imbued with gospel values, have the capacity to change individuals, communities, and even whole societies.

YAS is our road map; it helps us engage with our tradition and it describes how we are to be in the world. Our call to unity, to make one, today is a call to global solidarity. Unleashing the power and impact of our educational vision in the 21st century is all about educating toward global solidarity. We say, "We choose to express our mission through ministry directed toward education." Theresa's educational vision is still valid, but the question is how are we applying it given our current reality?

Today it seems harder to make the connection between the vision that resides in the heart and service that we give to building God's kingdom. The layers of complexity cause us to lose focus. We need to make the connections between understanding the vision and living it out in our ministry. We are apostolic women in mission. We are educators in all that we are and do. It is our identity. We School Sisters are about something profoundly important... the transformation of the world. We are called to conversion, and more; we are called to reconciliation and even more; we are called to be transformed and to transform our world–bringing all to oneness in God. The originating grace of our founding, is needed now more than ever. Its new name is GLOBAL SOLADRITY. Solidarity is hardly a new word for us; certainly not a new idea for us. This call to unity—this longing for oneness—this virtue of solidarity resides in our heart—in the very marrow of our bones. What we need now is, to put flesh on this spiritual vision. To be in solidarity, to live in solidarity—investing in solidarity, teaching solidarity, promoting solidarity, this is our 21st Century call.

Pedagogy of Solidarity

As educators, we must, above all develop a pedagogy of solidarity. Solidarity must be the heart of the educational process as we go forward. Education for solidarity is about the serious development of the mind and the absolute development of a personal commitment to others—to all of God's creation. Global solidarity requires greater awareness of who we are and how we are to be in this world. It binds us together; it combines justice and compassion. And it requires that all of us embrace education and learning that are global in scope, content and pedagogy.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame are in a unique position to create a world of justice through education. We know from 173 years of experience that people who feel loved and secure can learn to live in right relationship with one another and with their planet home. We know when faith and learning meet transformative change is possible. The actions we take, in and out of the classroom, must take us toward greater solidarity. Whether we are involved in formal or non formal education the agenda is the same. Every idea, every action, lays a new footprint leading others to greater wholeness or to further disintegration. Change is accomplished in gradual stages, through small measures. We know that small steps have enormous impact. The everyday work of Blessed Theresa, Mother Caroline and that of the women and men who followed in their footsteps changed the course of human history. They sprinkled the world with sanctifying grace as they educated people and empowered them to transform their part of reality and their part of the world. Education is a very local experience with enormous global consequences.

Each of us can give examples from our everyday experience of the kind of transformative power of education. A couple of weeks ago, as I was developing these presentations I had such an experience. One of the programs offered at the College of Notre Dame is a non credit program through the English Language Institute. The Institute is 25 years old now. About 250 students pass through the institute annually for the purpose of learning English. Most come directly from abroad. The population is very diverse. Obviously this is a great way to learn a new language. It is also an excellent way to learn about this world of ours. Usually there are about 50 students enrolled in any one session. We all know how tough it can be to learn a second language—we've all tried. The students struggle to communicate; it's a slow process. One of the consequences of this study—intended or not—is that it creates a wonderful experience of multicultural community. Students from around the world study together, they go on local trips together, they party together, they struggle together and through all of it, they learn language. At the end of each session there is the closing party and recognition ceremony. In just eight short weeks each of them has made progress toward English proficiency and we take time to recognize their accomplishments. Some leave, some stay on for another session—all are changed. It's remarkable. Two weeks ago we had the closing of the summer session. There are always lots of hugs, writing email addresses down so they can stay in touch with their new friends who are now off to the far corners of the globe and lots and lots of picture taking—so they will remember. But the picture that sticks in my head from this past session is that of the Palestinian with one arm wrapped around a Saudi student and the other around a guy from Columbia, South America. The Saudi student told me that what he learned was not what he expected. He expected his English to improve and it did, but what surprised him was that he made new friends. He so appreciated that people took time to learn about him and his culture. He said, "We have a better understanding of each other. We are friends now and we respect each other." Transformation occurred.

I know these fifty students see the world differently. Their worldview has changed. Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Columbia, Korea even the United States, these places all

have human faces now. Hopefully these students are more tolerant. Hopefully they are better able to work for global understanding and peace. Hopefully they have begun to practice the virtue of solidarity.

As School Sisters of Notre Dame, as educators, we have a special responsibility to critically examine this phenomenon of globalization that is so affecting this world of ours and all of God's creation. We have to figure out how to humanize it, how to harness its energy for the common good, how to transform it to work as a positive force for all.

It is really not nearly so complex or overwhelming as it seems. We just need to take it in bite size pieces. As you stand at the front door of your place of ministry ask yourself: What's going on inside? Is what I am doing, what we are doing, leading others toward greater solidarity? We need to shine a spotlight on movements of solidarity. We need to recognize positive momentum and help others recognize it and claim it. Naming it is so important!

Where should we be placing our efforts—our time, our resources—NOW? So much comes across our desktops. There are so many demands on our attention and every issue seems to require responsible action. We know education without action is insufficient, yet the agenda is endless and everything is urgent. There is never enough time. It seems we're always scrambling to keep the lids on the boxes. We can't figure out how to fit the pieces together so it's easier to ignore it. The good news is--we're in this for the long haul; it's a lifetime commitment. As Billie Holiday sings, "The difficult-I'll do right now. The impossible -will take a little while." 10

Adopting a Justice Lens

It will help to adopt a "justice lens". The way we look at the curriculum, develop programming and activities, examine polices and procedures, create community, provide spiritual opportunities, comes into focus if it grows out of our vision of global solidarity. Everything is evaluated in terms of whether or not it helps to build a culture of justice and peace. In doing this we are developing a pedagogy of solidarity and our educational ministry—in whatever form it takes—serves to build God's kingdom.

The global agenda for the next 15 years has been set. When we're wondering what the signs of the times are calling us to do, we need look only at the UN Millennium Development Goals. If the global community pays attention, works to achieve these goals, the world will be better. There will be greater solidarity. When we bring our spiritual and educational gifts to bear on this agenda we contribute to the creation of global peace and global solidarity.

It's very easy to find the School Sisters of Notre Dame's place in many of these goals: eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, ensuring access to quality primary education for all boys and girls, promoting gender equality and empowering women, ensuring environmental sustainability, developing global partnerships for development. Each of these goals can be operationalized at every level of formal and non formal education.

What if we took just one of the Millennium Development Goals, it could be poverty eradication or goal two on the right to education or goal three on empowering women and girls or goal seven on environmental sustainability and institutionalized it in our ministries, made it a focused priority for the next three years in our school activities, our parish programs, our conversations and our prayer ministry? How would it change our ministry, our ministerial efficacy, if all of us at our place of ministry, worked on this issue and every aspect of our work folded into this larger vision? Would we and those we minister with come to a better understanding of global poverty and discrimination against women and girls? Could we design professional development opportunities to enrich our own and our colleagues' understanding of the issues? Could we develop experiences which build solidarity? Can we find the necessary resources to support education about these issues? Do we have the personal reflection time necessary to internalize the depth of spiritual meaning needed to connect the dots and embrace global solidarity?

It's all there in our SSND educational vision. We just need to apply the justice lens to our ministry and integrate more deeply the fundamental values of justice and solidarity that underlie our vision. The way we School Sisters of Notre Dame do justice is through education. Education by its very nature is action for justice – leading to individual and social transformation. It's about setting things right, establishing right relationships—building global community—practicing global solidarity.

We're seasoned educators and we stand on the shoulders of holy women. We know how to reach the five year old, the child in middle school, the teenager, the young adult, the disenfranchised, the single mom, the new immigrant, and the elderly. We've been there, done that. We take our professional expertise, the wisdom of our years, the spiritual gifting of our vision, and apply it to the daily reality of our ministry, in this time and this place, in this age of globalization. In so doing we are naming our reality, helping people put words on their experience; we are leading others to a new place. This kind of qualitative change is called transformation.

We need to harness our good work and coalesce the energy among us. When avenues for global cooperation exist we should take advantage of them. We need to shine a spotlight on movements of solidarity. There are so many opportunities to use modes of communication to connect School Sisters of Notre Dame, our colleagues, students and friends in SSND ministries and educational enterprises around the world. We need to build these relationships and celebrate our solidarity. These networks will become even more important for us and critical for our world as we go forward. As an international congregation we are poised to be a powerful force for good in this global age.

Witnesses of Hope

It's not easy to admit that we can't do what we use to do. None of us, no matter our age, hear as well as we used to hear, see quite as far or as clearly as we used to or even remembers as easily what happened just this morning. Diminishment is a fact of life for all of God's creatures. The challenge is to reinvent ourselves for a new age. As

Dorothy Day put it "No one has the right to sit down and feel hopeless. There's too much work to do." Some of us are in the second act and some in the third act of our lives—but none of us knows how many acts there are in this production of ours. Recently an article appeared in several national publications on <u>The Nun's Study</u>. It was titled "Offering an Education in Aging." The lead for the story read, "Nuns who spent their careers teaching give lessons through Alzheimer's study." Further along it stated "The School Sisters in (David) Snowdon's study left the classroom behind long ago. Now they're teaching a larger audience what it means to age well and with dignity." ¹¹ In the article Sister Genevieve Kunkel, 95, summed up our call well. "I feel whatever I can contribute to the future, I should. Otherwise, I'd never have been an educator." ¹²

In each issue of *Currents* (SSND publication) we read how School Sisters are in ministry. In the most recent issue of *Currents*, Sister John Baptist Schneider's ministry of prayer and presence was the lead story. The title, "Bringing Out the Best in Others" something she's been doing for 75 years. When I turned the page Sister Tereseen was smiling back at me, her faith life mirrored in her poetry, "Hope – melody for the future, Faith – Dancing to it." Right across from her was Sister Sharon Rempe, pictured at a desk collating papers, 60 years of faithful service. Turning the page again I saw Sister Pat Hall leading parishioners in prayer at Sacred Heart Parish in Columbia. The headline read "Educating with a World Vision". More pictures followed under the title "Carrying Our Mission Forward". That says it all, I think.

Tomorrow we take time to give thanks for the celebrated lives of 30 Jubilarians, women of hope, educators all. Each of us is called to carry this vision into the world through our lives and ministries bringing others along with us in this wonderful enterprise. We all come from that deep desire for oneness. It is the wellspring of our being. All of us are constantly challenged to figure out new ways to be in ministry that is faithful to this call. These Jubilarians give witness to this challenge and serve as powerful examples of the charism at work in our midst.

Sisters, we have all that we need. The courage and compassion of our story offers us hope--hope comes from deep faith. The vision and spirit of our sacred story continues to nourish our souls. We hear Blessed Theresa say to us, "Despite all of the discouraging things you see, you must completely trust in the Lord." We are people of hope. We must bless one another with hope. We cannot teach someone to hope. We give hope by living out of hope.

Think of those giant sequoias in the redwood forests. They are so strong and tall, so breathtaking in beauty. They are huge and endangered. They reach to the heavens, hundreds of feet tall, and they reach to each other and are intertwined at their roots. You never see a single sequoia. They depend on each other for their root system. You would think their root system would be hundreds of feet deep to anchor them and hold them up. Not true. Their roots go out to each other. They are held up by each other. They stand in solidarity. They draw their life from each other. Some sequoias are strong and sturdy, others further back in the forests stand in the shadow of the sun

and aren't nearly as tall and strong. Some are old and crooked, knotted, showing the wear of time and the elements, and some are young and not as weathered. They are a national treasure. The ground cover is filled with delicate flowers and foliage and fauna. The flowers don't take away from the redwoods and the redwoods don't stomp the flowers. They live simply and completely in solidarity with each other.

We must all be sequoias. We all have the same root system, when we are transformed the whole root system changes. When our individual faith is strengthened, community faith is strengthened. Our root system is old and deep and entangled. It's our life source. It's our treasure and it's intended to be shared.

I invite you to look at the quote of Blessed Theresa on the card, reflect on it for a moment. "May no one cast into the grave after me the accusation that I have undertaken too much here, that I have begun too grandly and extended the work of God too widely. The future will give a fuller explanation." (#736) Think of what this quote represents, it is one hundred and seventy three years of history with a root system that reaches to 35 countries on 6 continents. I invite you now to think of yourself as saying it about yourself. Think of your story, the footprints you left, the sanctifying grace you've sprinkled around on this good earth. The future will give a fuller explanation of your goodness.

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