

Alumni E-Newsletter, February 20, 2025



Sisters Celebrate Two Major Anniversaries This Month

We're delighted to dedicate this issue of our Alumni newsletter to the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur. This issue features two important anniversaries celebrated this month: Foundress Day (February 2) and the martyrdom of Sr. Dorothy Stang (February 12).

We're so proud to be a Notre Dame Learning Community and to be guided by the wisdom and insights of the Sisters' Hallmarks.



Foundress Day Features Renewal of Vows and Reflection



221 years ago, amidst the backdrop of the French Reign of Terror, St. Julie Billiart, Francoise Blin de Bourdon and Catherine Duchatel consecrated themselves before God, and promised the Almighty that they would devote themselves to stand with those in need, especially poor children. They vowed to focus their efforts on education, which St. Julie called "the most important work on earth." From that moment on, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur (SNDdeN) have sought to make known God's goodness. Each year on February 2nd, Sisters around the world come together to honor the beginning of the congregation and to renew their vows of poverty, chastity and obedience.

We recently had the pleasure of speaking with two Sisters who also serve on the NDNU Board of Trustees, Sr. Louise O'Reilly and Sr. Nancy O'Shea, to find out how they marked this important occasion.

Sr. Louise recounted, "This year's celebration included a lovely prayer service, renewal of vows and a luncheon with the Sisters and Associates. We also honored the Sisters who were commemorating a jubilee year." She continued, "Personally, I started my day off with a reflection on the liturgy of the day. I also took time throughout the day for reflection."

"I really look forward to Foundress Day," says Sr. Nancy, "In addition to gathering in person at the Province Center in Belmont with our Sisters and Associates in the west, we met on Zoom so that

Sisters throughout five sites in the US East West Province could be together at the same time, which makes the experience so much bigger than just ourselves. Similar events are happening throughout the Congregation across the world. This year, we had wonderful photos and quotes from each Sister celebrating a jubilee year. It was especially joyful for me as I have been able to meet many of them over the years and look forward to honoring them during their jubilee year."

20th Anniversary of Sr. Dorothy Stang's Passing



Earlier this month, the Notre Dame community gathered for a special mass to commemorate Sr. Dorothy Stang's life and legacy. Says Sr. Louise, "It was a such a wonderful opportunity to come together and hear from former Director of the Sr. Dorothy Stang Center, Jim McGarry. His words truly reflected Sr. Dorothy's story and mission. It reminded me of a quote from Gustavo Gutierrez, 'how do we say to the poor, God loves you?' Sr. Dorothy's life *showed* God's love for them. She made their fears and trials her own and advocated for justice." (Click [here](#) to read full text of Jim McGarry's remarks.)

When asked about Sr. Dorothy Stang, Sr. Nancy noted, "I was lucky enough to meet Dorothy on a few occasions. After her passing, I visited the site where she was killed in Brazil and paid my respects. I am struck by Sr. Dorothy's fearlessness in the face of knowing that she was a target. I draw inspiration from her commitment to standing up for her beliefs and standing with the people to both help them and protect the earth. She understood that the work was urgent and longstanding."

Sr. Nancy added, "We celebrated in a special way on February 12 here on the Belmont campus with all the institutions represented. A tree was planted at the preschool in Dorothy's honor by representatives of the preschool, NDE, NDB, NDNU and the Province Center. It was a wonderful occasion to celebrate and remember Dorothy into the future."

Additionally, on an international level, there was also a very notable event in Rome on January 10. On that day, Sr. Dorothy Stang joined other Christian martyrs from around the world by being recognized with a permanent memorial at the Basilica of St. Bartholomew on Tiber Island. She was the first woman from the United States to be so honored. Her memorial includes a relic that the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur have preserved through the years: a small amount of blood-soaked soil from the site of her martyrdom.

Sr. Dorothy Stang: a Life Committed to Social Justice

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice for they shall be satisfied."

These are reportedly the last words of Sr. Dorothy Stang before being shot by hired gunmen on February 12, 2005 in rural Brazil. For 40 years, Sr. Dorothy lived in the Amazon forest, dedicating her life to protecting the poor farmers and indigenous peoples against illegal loggers and powerful landowners bent on destroying the land upon which these people lived. Despite facing constant threats and danger, Sr. Dorothy remained steadfast in her mission for land reform and environmental protection until her tragic death.

Her final words have become emblematic of her legacy and the ongoing quest for justice. Even today, Sr. Dorothy continues to inspire those who challenge powerful interests in pursuit of a more just and sustainable world.

For more information on Sr. Dorothy Stang, please visit [this link](#).



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