

SND USA Gathering



They came from 14 US States as well as Rome, Nicaragua and Uganda. They traveled by plane, bus and car. They shared. They laughed. They sang. They listened. They showed enthusiasm for the future of religious life and they all wore the cross of The Sisters of Notre Dame.

More than 400 Sisters of Notre Dame from the four USA provinces gathered in Columbus, Ohio, for the SND USA “Embracing Our Shared Future” meeting as the USA provinces move toward “Becoming ONE” by 2020.

Sisters began arriving on Thursday, July 23, they participated in liturgies, listened to a keynote address on Friday morning by Sr. Kristin Battles, Superior General, and participated in table discussions so individual sisters could respond and share their hopes and dreams with each other. Throughout the weekend “Becoming One for the Sake of Mission,” “Implications to Becoming One,” “Governance and Becoming One,” and “Next Steps to Becoming One,” were addressed. Table discussions followed each topic. Sisters were arranged at tables to encourage exchange between members of all four provinces. The culmination of those considerations occurred at the Sunday morning closing session.

Sr. Leanne Hubbard of the California Province said, “I felt heard, valued and validated in a future together. Every conversation surfaced the need for a vibrant local SND community who discern the needs of the times in light of our shared charism and individual gifts. I could live and minister with anyone from Table #18, none of whom was from my province, so the strictly provincial identification seemed much less important than before our gathering. For this, I am grateful and hopeful.”

Donna Fyffe and Mark Clark of CommunityWorks, Inc., helped facilitate the discussions. CommunityWorks is a consulting firm that engages organizations in creating vision, a unity of purpose, and a commitment to take action for social transformation. For the past 20 years they have explored and developed new governance structures with religious communities. “In Toledo we have been working with Donna and Mark for a few years as we have examined the sale of our provincial center property; they have also been assisting the four

USA provincials as we continue to move forward as ONE province,” said Sr. Mary Delores Gatliff, Provincial from Toledo.



In addition to the general sessions, lunch reunions were held for “Becoming Fire” renewal groups as well as various Golden Jubilee and Profession Groups. In addition, ministry interest groups also gathered to explore the Texas Immersion Experience, Hispanic Ministry, the JPIC Human Trafficking Soap Project and several others. The lunch gatherings helped the sisters meet more sisters from other provinces and get to know each other in new ways. The evenings provided time for the sisters to enjoy games of all kinds, to dance and to relax.

Liturgies were held on Friday morning and Saturday afternoon. Fr. Charles Singler from the Toledo Diocese and Bishop Roger Gries, OSB, from Cleveland celebrated the liturgies and in their homilies both highlighted the joy associated with the Sisters of Notre Dame across the USA. Both homilists pointed out that “Joy is a sure sign of the presence of God!”

Sr. Sally Huston, from the Chardon Province who helped plan the gathering said, “The joy was tangible. There was so much positive energy in the room because each sister brought her own vitality!”

Carrie Boors, the Double Tree Hotel Event Coordinator, expressed to the sisters who planned the meeting, “The Double Tree staff really appreciated the many thank you’s they received. We’ve never had a group like this!”

“Our group was uplifting and full of energy. Being with SNDs from across the USA affirmed our ‘oneness’ for me,” said Sr. Jean Marie Hoffman from the Covington Province. “It was a great experience and lives on in my mind. I really look forward to what lies ahead and I’m sure happy to be a member of the Sisters of Notre Dame!” she added.