

## Congregational Pilgrimage, Passo Fundo, Brazil



**“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” 1 Thess 5:18**

It is hard to relate our feelings regarding our experiences during the Congregational Pilgrimage. However, with the words *“How good is the good God”* we want to express our deep gratitude and joy that we belong to the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame and are able to live and witness to its Charism. For us pilgrims, this time was a profound experience of our internationality and a strong motivation for personal and spiritual renewal.

We had the opportunity to immerse ourselves in the origins of the Congregation, visit some historical sites and attend an audience with Pope Francis, a man with a big heart and sensitive to everyone, especially, children and people who are ill. It was very touching!

In Germany, we studied the beginnings of the Sisters of Notre Dame. We also visited our sisters in Münster, Vechta and Mülhausen, the place from which the first missionaries departed for Brazil.

In Bremerhaven, we visited the port and toured the ship-museum in which there is a recreation of the travel conditions of that time. The museum also holds documents relating the stories of the people who left Germany and emigrated to North and South America. On that day, we were overcome with emotion but we also felt certain that only faith in the good and provident God provided support and hope for our Sisters as well as for the many families searching for better and safer living conditions.

In Namur, Belgium, we had the opportunity to learn about the history of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, which was displayed in the Heritage Center where the relics of Saint Julie are kept. We also visited the first SND house in Namur. How impressive it was to walk on the same grounds where Julie Billiart had trod.

In Rome, we visited churches and magnificent basilicas, catacombs, historical monuments and learned their history. At each of these places, we spent time in silent prayer and reflection about our history and mission as consecrated religious.

Another wonderful opportunity was our visit to the Mother House and the chance to learn about its organization, to meet the sisters who minister on behalf of the Congregation and to experience our internationality as evident by its diverse cultures and languages.

Now we are back in Brazil and it is time to say thanks: thanks to the good God for all His protection during our travels; thanks to our Province for making the pilgrimage available to us; thanks to the sisters of our Province for their prayers and for making our absence from the apostolates possible; thanks to each one of the sisters at the Mother House and to the communities of Coesfeld, Vechta, Mülhausen, Tegelen and Namur for their warm welcome and for hosting and guiding us with tireless dedication during these special days.

With profound gratitude for everything, the pilgrims: Sister Maria Iris Marcolin, Rita Amalia Haubert, Irene Comiran, Marli Fatima Auziliero, Julia Rodrigues dos Santos and Marisa Winter.