

Brazilian Provinces Celebrate Centenary



On October 1, 2023, when the entire Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame celebrated 173 years of its founding, the sisters in Brazil added another solemnity to the occasion -- the 100th Anniversary of the presence of the Sisters of Notre Dame in Brazil.

In addition to gathering a large number of Sisters from the Holy Cross and Our Lady Aparecida Provinces for the occasion, the festivities also included several special guests. Sister Mary Ann Culpert, Superior General; and Sister Mary Kathleen Burns and Sister Maria Nonata Bezerra, members of the General Council came from Rome. Sister Maria Paula Wessel, Provincial Superior of the European Province, and Sister Josefa Maria Bergmann, former Provincial Superior participated in the special event.

The program for the day was developed at Colégio Notre Dame Passo Fundo, a school founded in 1923 and also celebrating its 100th anniversary. Archbishop Rodolfo Weber presided over the Solemn Mass. The Liturgy was followed by a festive dinner and a special program that included addresses by the Congregational and Provincial leadership, an account of the historical trajectory of the past one hundred years, publication of commemorative books and the exchange of gifts.

In her address, Sister Maria Paula recalled that “The first Sisters in Brazil were as alert as Sister Maria Aloysia, Sister Maria Ignatia and the first Coesfeld Sisters to what needed to be done in their time. I imagine that they had to be flexible in this country, which was unknown to them, where certainly not everything went as they had thought before.”

Sister Mary Ann used an image and referred to the parable of the Sower, to highlight the importance of the seeds of the Gospel sown by the missionary Sisters. She added: “And you continue this sowing today. You sow seeds of **hope** – in your social ministries to families and children in need of the basic necessities of life as well as words of comfort, compassion, and love. You sow seeds of **knowledge** – in your schools where thousands of young people have received an excellent education. You have sown seeds of **healing** - to people in great need through your ministries in hospitals, pharmacies, and clinics. You sow seeds of **justice and peace** - caring for those imprisoned, teaching and modeling reconciliation, and participating in and teaching care of our common home. You continue to sow seeds of **faith** – providing spiritual guidance and catechesis in parishes, youth gatherings, and retreat work.”

May this “memorable day of thanksgiving, when words, expressions, gestures, and symbols merge past and present together, serve as a new impulse for a greater fidelity to the mission God imparts to us for the future”, stated Sister Maria Nonata.