

VISION *and Challenge*

Sisters of Notre Dame • California Province

proclaiming God's goodness and provident care

bringing hope within a diverse society

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Fall 2010

Living in the Moment in the Philippines and Uganda

This summer, two Sisters of Notre Dame from California had the opportunity to serve in the missions. Sr. Mary Jolisa Lazaro taught English at the Notre Dame International House of Formation in the Province of Bataan, in the Philippines, and Sr. Cristina Marie served in the primary school at St. Julie Mission in Buseesa, Uganda. Both sisters appreciated the opportunity to immerse themselves in another culture.



As an American-born Filipina, Sr. Jolisa learned the traditions and geography of her parents' homeland but never traveled there. She knew of the poverty in the country and was happy when the Sisters of Notre Dame from Indonesia founded a mission on the island of Guimaris in October of 2000, though she never imagined that she would serve in the Philippines. Sister Jolisa gratefully accepted the invitation to give summer time service in Balanga, located in the mountains of Bataan. Sisters from Korea, India and the United States staff the International House of Formation and the Stella Maris Retreat Center, the only retreat center in Balanga.

Her students at the House of Formation included five Filipina and Vietnamese postulants and four Vietnamese novices. Each morning Sr. Jolisa taught the whole group for an hour and then gave lessons to three level groups in the afternoons. Some of her particularly meaningful experiences include attending the bishop's installation, surviving a typhoon, and visiting the Shrine of Valor, which honors the fallen soldiers of the horrific Bataan March.



Daily life included certain challenges. To attend daily Mass, especially during the rainy season, she and the sisters, postulants and novices would walk for eight minutes on a muddy road down a hill to retrieve their van near the paved road, drive to church, drive back, and then climb up the hill to rinse their feet and their flip flops before continuing with their day. Despite the poverty she witnessed, Sr. Jolisa was inspired by her journey.

*Top, Sr. M. Jolisa with postulants in Bataan.
Bottom, Sr. Cristina Marie teaching phonics.*

"I was taken aback by the beauty. It was beautiful and lush. The people are so happy with what little they have and they live in the present moment. They truly depend on God's providence," said Sister Jolisa.

Over six thousand miles away in Uganda, Sr. Cristina Marie

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From the Provincial...



Top: Sr. Kristin and her Provincial Council with Vicar General Sr. M. Frances Murray (far left) and Superior General Sr. M. Sujita (third from right) during their most recent visitation. Bottom: Sr. M. Anncarla Costello, incoming provincial superior.

Dear Friends,

The Sisters of Notre Dame are about to enter a very sacred time this fall beginning November 1. That is the opening of our General Chapter which will take place at our generalate in Rome. Once every six years sisters representing our 2,300 plus membership serving in 18 countries gather for approximately one month to discern together future directions for our congregation. At this time we also elect new international leadership, a superior general and five assistants who will collaborate with her in governing the congregation. We ask for your prayers during the entire month of November that the Holy Spirit breathes upon the members of the General Chapter those graces they will need to find God's will in all their deliberations.

The following sisters from California will be attending the General Chapter: myself, Sr. Mary Anncarla Costello, Sr. Gina Marie Blunck and Sr. Mary Colette Theobald.

Other exciting news includes the announcement that Sr. Mary Anncarla Costello has been appointed the new provincial superior of the California Province beginning December 12, 2010 when my nine-year term ends. Sr. Mary Anncarla will be supported in her office as provincial by a team of councilors, Sr. Mary Rebekah Kennedy, Sr. Mary Regina Robbins and Sr. Mary Lisa Megaffin. In our winter issue of Vision and Challenge we will feature these sisters so you become better acquainted with them. They are a wonderful group of women and will do a fine job in their role of leadership.

I wish to thank all of you, dear friends, for your wonderful support during my time as provincial and before that as director of development. Through this publication and in numerous other ways we have been connected for many years, all of them full of blessings. After the General Chapter and a little "rest" I will be launching into a new ministry still in the mind of God! I am sure our paths will continue to cross as we walk our God given journey.

Sincerely,

Sister Mary Kristin

Sr. Mary Kristin
Provincial Superior

Hearts Transformed by Service

by Sr. Val Roxburgh

Our community sponsors an annual summer volunteer service program for young adult women called Stretch Your Heart. As the coordinator this summer, I saw an inspiring level of dedication in our volunteers. A majority of the group took time off from work to participate in the five-day program. Seven women stayed with Sisters Shawn Marie, Mary Kristina, and me at our lodge in Pine Mountain Club. Five more volunteers who resided in Bakersfield met us each day at the St. Vincent de Paul Center in Bakersfield, California where we assisted people who are homeless.

Our entire group was impressed by the caring and positive attitudes of the staff and regular volunteers at the center. The people who come there are treated with great respect and dignity. The center provides food, clothing, shower facilities, a mail center, and also employment assistance. Our volunteers helped serve meals to over 125 people daily. They also assisted in the distribution and mail center.

A number of our volunteers had never done this type of service previously so the experience was quite an eye-opener for them. In sharing with one another, everyone mentioned how they came with the idea of “serving” the people at the Center, but discovered that they received so much more from their interactions with the people they met each day. We truly saw the face of Christ in the people we encountered.

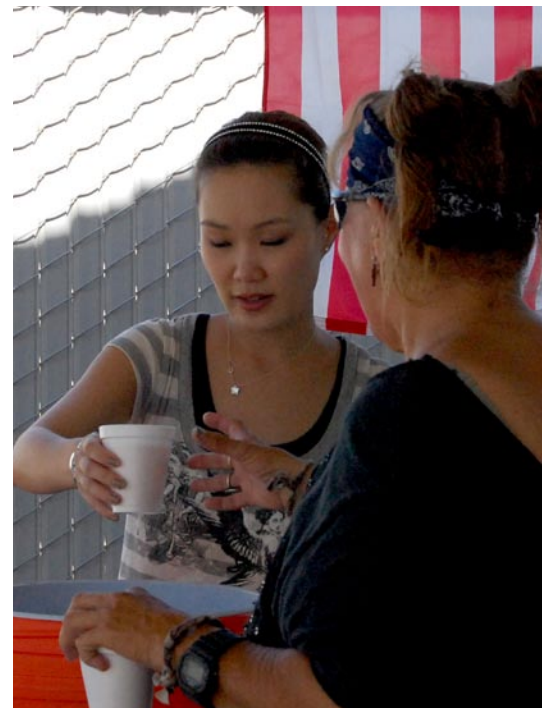
In one of St. Vincent de Paul’s letters about outreach to the poor, he stressed the importance of looking beyond external appearance and connecting with the individual person. Our group certainly found this to be true. People responded warmly to our smiles and desire to assist them. It was great to have time to talk with many of the people. It was an honor to see a glimpse into their lives.

In addition to the richness of our shared service experiences, the group that stayed at the lodge also participated in the rhythm of our daily community life as Sisters of Notre Dame. We prayed morning and evening prayer together, went to daily Mass, prayed the rosary together on route to Bakersfield each day, and enjoyed lively dinner conversation that included lots of laughter. After saying evening prayer together, we each shared how we experienced God’s presence that day. There was such depth to the sharing, and everyone truly

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Corina Gaytan sorts mail for people who use the distribution center as their mailing address. She said later, “I want to come back. They need so much help here.”



Stella Yun: I will never be able to be like Mother Teresa but I can try to imitate her and show Jesus’ love to the people around me.

Young Adult Outreach Continues

“Young adults are the future of our Church and their desire for prayer, community, and service fills my heart with tremendous hope for the future,” said Sr. Valerie Marie Roxburgh after a summer of working with young adults on a variety of projects, including Stretch Your Heart and Theology on Tap hosted by St. Cornelius Parish in Long Beach as well as other parishes throughout the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. ToT is a speaker series geared towards Catholics between the ages of 18-39. Srs. M. Kathleen Burns and Kristina Fuller and postulant Jane Leung also volunteered at Theology on Tap in Long Beach.

This fall, Sr. Val continues supporting college and parish young adult ministries. To connect with her e-mail sistervalnsnd@gmail.com or call 805-452-9699.



Message from the Development Office

A recent fundraising article related to the well-known “Benevon Model” has a paragraph that reads:

The natural human response when we have made a true contribution is that we want to share our enthusiasm with others. This does not mean we want them to give money to the organization, but merely that we want them to know about the great work of the organization—to check it out for themselves.

There are many blessings from our association with you to further the mission of Jesus. Our Sisters travel near and far accepting invitations for Mission Talks so parishioners gain knowledge of our work in California and Africa. We open our doors at Notre Dame Center welcoming neighbors, family, former students, old friends, new friends to catch up on the progress made in our work in parish schools, three independent Catholic schools in Southern California and Notre Dame Learning Center preschool. We continue to team up with other agencies including other congregations of women religious to address the issue of global human trafficking. The Associates Program has flourished in membership--sharing in the charisma, spirituality and mission of the congregation.

We are grateful that you have paid attention to our work, have chosen to support us with your generosity, and have told others about us. We hope to have you on board as we get going on additional projects such as the preschool in Mpala, microfinance program in Buseesa, and teleconference networking to advance our mission in the United States.

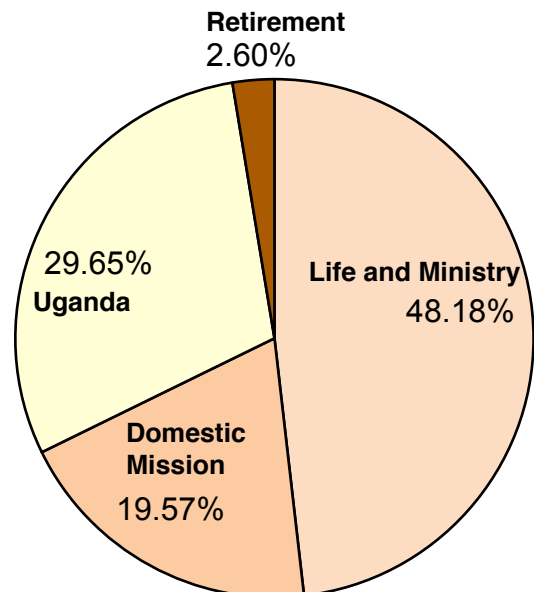
Sincerely

Carmela Burke
Director of Development

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Please remember the Sisters of Notre Dame in your estate plan. Our legal title is “The Sisters of Notre Dame of Los Angeles, Inc.” and our IRS non-profit identification number is 95-2005867. For further information, call 805-917-3714 or visit our website at www.sndca.org. Thank you and God bless you.

**Gifts to the Sisters of Notre Dame
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June 30, 2010
Total: \$ 343,253**



This pie chart is based on figures available as of August 31, 2010. A formal audit will be conducted and results made available in Winter 2010.

Donor Recognition

The Sisters of Notre Dame are grateful to our many friends who have made financial donations to the congregation between July 1, 2009 and June 30, 2010, including those who wish to remain anonymous. We also wish to thank our friends and family who made in-kind donations.

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Sister Mary Therese Celebrates 60th Jubilee



This summer, Sister Mary Therese Kirstein renewed her vows when she celebrated her 60th Jubilee as a Sister of Notre Dame with the California province on Saturday, July 10, and with her home province of Chardon, Ohio the following day. More than twenty relatives attended the Chardon celebration, which also honored the other sisters who made their vows in 1950. Many have changed their religious names since then, and Sister Mary Therese is no exception. Her many students in California and Ohio probably remember her as either Sister Jean Therese or Sister Mary Jane.

She was born Mary Jane Kirstein in Chicago at the height of the Depression, the youngest of four children, a sister who lived only two months and two brothers. Her mother died when she was about fifteen months old, and her father died just before she turned three. Both parents were buried in Cleveland, Ohio, and the Kirstein children were eventually rescued from a caregiver and an orphanage by their paternal aunts. “The providence of God sure came into my life,” she said. “I never stopped having a family. I was really fortunate. So many babies don’t have what I had.”

A different aunt raised each child because no one’s family could absorb all three children during the challenging times of the Depression. As a result, Sister Mary Therese has a multitude of cousins to visit when she returns to Ohio. “It seems each time I go home, there are more babies,” said Sister Mary Therese. “My cousins have been very good to me.”

She was raised by her Aunt Hannah, whom she considers her mother. As a child, she attended St. Stephen School, read voraciously, and played with her best friend. Like many young girls, she played school and dreamed of being a teacher and perhaps a sister. Her aunt, a religious woman, encouraged her vocation. During the Second World War, both her brothers served in the army. Her brother Eddie was killed in action when he was just nineteen, a tragedy that affected her deeply. She became an aspirant at Notre Dame Academy in Cleveland and then a postulant during her senior year. At the age of 17, she entered the novitiate.

Sr. Therese made her first vows in 1950. She was transferred to California in 1955, just as she made final

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A Day of Rejoicing SND Associate Program Welcomes New Members and Celebrates 10 Years

Sisters of Notre Dame and SND Associates gathered at Notre Dame Center in Thousand Oaks to welcome four new SND Associates and celebrate 10 years of growth in the associate program. Msgr. Joe Hernandez presided over the liturgy. Susan Kane, Barbara Vernon, Tom Ryan and Mary Voigt made their covenants as Associates of the Sisters of Notre Dame.

The members of the first associate group also celebrated their 10-year anniversary. Sr. M. Kristin Battles presented each of them with an SND crucifix hand-carved by Sr. M. Frances Wahl. After a festive lunch, the “jubilarians” presented the province with a tree as a symbol of their spiritual growth.

Photos on p. 7, from top left: New SND Associates Susan Kane, Tom Ryan, Mary Voight. Next row: New SND Associate Barbara Vernon, crosses carved by Sr. M. Frances Wahl. Bottom photo, left to right: Joan Tyhurst, Lois Harrion, Tom Grasmehr, Nancy Grasmehr, Prudiel Libatique, Sr. Cristina Marie Buczkowski and Annabelle Gordon celebrated their 10-year anniversary.





Nine Years of Blessings

As leadership in the California province transitions, a look back reveals all that has moved forward over the past nine years under the promptings of the Holy Spirit and the hard work of sisters, associates, collaborators and benefactors.

Notre Dame Schools—La Reina High School in Thousand Oaks and Notre Dame Academy Elementary and High School in Los Angeles—have become separately incorporated institutions with strong Boards of Trustees composed to lay persons and Sisters. This change has brought the professional gifts of the laity to the tasks of policy making and strategic planning for the school. The governance structures have also shifted to a president/principal model. These changes have placed the schools in the best position for sustainability moving into the future.

Notre Dame Center in Thousand Oaks opened a preschool on the provincial house campus and now the joyful voices of preschoolers can be heard Mondays through Fridays. Six Sisters of Notre Dame minister at Notre Dame Learning Center, working hard to lay a foundation of confidence and curiosity in the lives of its students.



The mission in Uganda expanded to a second site between Entebbe and Kampala where young Ugandan SNDs can live and attend college and where ministries to help women and children are now being initiated. Within the next months a preschool will be opening and classes for local women are in the planning. Much effort went into establishing the Sisters of Notre Dame as a registered NGO (non-government organization) within Uganda. Within the past year a micro-finance project was begun for the residents of Buseesa Village and the surrounding area. This center is known as Buseesa Community Development Centre and is sponsored by donations from SND benefactors. A volunteer program has been established and information about this is posted on www.snduganda.org.

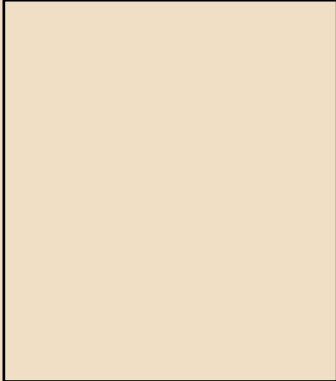
Sr. Anna Maria teaches at Notre Dame Academey, Sr. M. Colette Theobald serves as a missionary in Uganda.

Our minstries now include involvement in issues such as human

Reflections from Sr. Kristin and the Outgoing Council

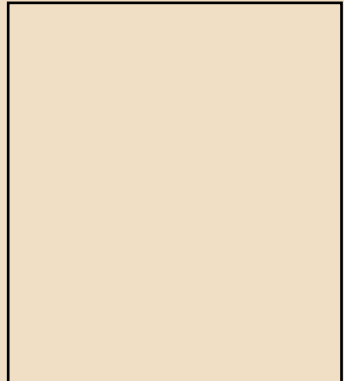
*Sr. Mary Kristin Battles,
Provincial Superior*

I have loved working with the sisters, getting to know each of them better and assisting them in using their gifts and talents to serve God's mission. t has really been a privilege to have been allowed to contribute to the life and ministry of the province in such a focused way. We have great women in our province and we are about great ministries



Sr. Mary LaReina Kelly

As a result of my ministry in council service my world is wider; my love for people deeper; my acceptance of complexities is greater; my trust in the action of the Spirit is profound.



trafficking and ESL classes for immigrants through LAMP (Los Angeles Ministry Project). Sisters are engaged in more works that directly assist the poor and marginalized. Sisters are now involved in retreat work, spiritual direction and programs that promote spiritual growth. A number of sisters returned to school for advanced studies so they would be well prepared, especially in the area of theology.

Vocation work has been a priority. A full time Vocation Director was named for the province and a program was begun that allows women considering a religious vocation the opportunity to live in community for 3-6 months to aid their discernment. This experience is known as the “Live-in Experience.”

Collaborative endeavors have been initiated with other SND provinces. The four American provinces collaborated on establishing a National Education Office and a National Novitiate located in the California Province was opened in Long Beach. The Korean province was invited to send Sisters to California to live with Sisters of the California Province and minister in Korean parishes in Los Angeles. These endeavors have been life giving.

Renovations were made in the provincial center. Administrative offices were moved into one wing for greater accessibility of personnel and sharing of business machines and equipment. Another area of Notre Dame Center was renovated for senior sisters, the Health Care Center was refurbished and a second, larger elevator added.

Serious research was done to make the best plans for financial sustainability and for the long term care of sisters needing custodial or skilled care. These studies have assisted in making important decisions regarding life and ministry in the future.

Many other innovative programs and activities have enhanced the life and ministries of the province over the past nine years. We give thanks for all of these and wait in openness for the blessings of the future.



Sr. Mary Lynn raised money for Get on the Bus, which takes children to visit their parents in prison; Sr. Valerie Marie gives a vocation talk to youth.

Sr. Betty Mae Beinlien

I learned that our sisters are all great and heroic women, each in her own way. I am humbled to have been a part of such a sacred trust.



Sr. Mary Kathleen Burns

I think my greatest joy in this ministry has been to be able to see all the good things our sisters are doing for the people of God.

Sr. Mary Judeen Julier

It was amazing being a part of this ministry for the common good of the province and the congregation, feeling the movement of the Holy Spirit and knowing of the prayerful support of the sisters.





Sr. Jolisa with the SND novices (left); Stella Maris retreat center (above).

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made a similar discovery as she traveled into the bush to serve at St. Julie Mission in Buseesa, Uganda. Sister Cristina Marie took over Sister Mary Janet’s classes for almost five weeks. “I taught P4 spelling and phonics, P5 reading and religion, and P6 religion,” Sr. Cristina Marie said. “Throughout the day I had to teach all those different levels and subjects, which was quite different for me.”

During her visit, Sister Cristina Marie attended the first Mass of two newly ordained priests. One was at Sister Mary Sunday’s village near Buseesa which has provided six vocations to the church. A few weeks later, Sister Mary Immaculate’s brother Emmanuel was ordained and celebrated Mass for the first time with many of the Notre Dame community in attendance.

Sister Cristina Marie participated in another sacramental occasion at the combined Ugandan Martyrs parish and school Confirmation ceremony hosted by St. Julie Mission for over 120 confirmandi. During this joyful occasion, however, St. Julie mission was rationing water for the children, faculty, and staff due to extreme dryness. Everyone prayed very hard for “good rain.” In God’s provident goodness the rain finally arrived and replenished the water tanks sufficiently to last the school until the trimester ended.

At the Notre Dame Education Center in Mpala, Sr. Cristina visited with Sr. M. Colette Theobald. Sr. Colette is assisting in the formation of Ugandan women considering religious life and preparing to open a preschool.

“It was so evident to see God’s goodness,” Sr. Cristina said when she returned to California. “I think the greatest lesson I learned was living in the moment. You are so dependent on God’s goodness and provident care, for your water, for the food, for your safety, for everything.”

Left: Sr. Cristina Marie with St. Julie students just outside the mission; the community of Sisters of Notre Dame at St. Julie Mission.





Stretch Your Heart Participants at the St. Vincent de Paul Center in Bakersfield, CA.

spoke from her heart.

Several of the women commented that Stretch Your Heart felt more like a retreat than a service program. This feeling might have come from the fact that we were away from the city, surrounded by lovely pine trees, fresh air, and beautiful night skies. They also had no cell phone or internet reception at the lodge, and no television. This absence created a peaceful and reflective living environment. There was a sacredness that permeated our time together.

We began our week as strangers to each other, but as our time together came to a close, we felt a special bond with one another and the people we met at the St. Vincent de Paul Center. Although we came from different backgrounds and life experiences, we shared the common denominator of our Catholic faith. Our hearts were stretched in such positive ways through reaching out to our brothers and sisters in need. As our spiritual mother St. Julie says, “You are not asked to do all the good in the world, but just the bit that lies in your power.”



Teresa Castillo: Every time I see someone in poverty I want to do something about it. I just want to help them out.



Janelle Rodriguez: I saw it in the bulletin and I thought, I think God's calling me to do something.



Theresa Amarante: It makes you appreciate what we have and also how connected we are as a family.



Ashley Schwartz: It really made me understand my homeless friends more. I'm a lot more compassionate than when I left.

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Remembering Sister Mary Christopher

Sr. Mary Christopher passed away very suddenly on the morning of August 2, 2010. She was up, dressed and ready for Mass when she suffered a major heart attack and met her God far beyond the essentials of the Eucharist. The previous day Sr. had begun her annual retreat, which brought her into that unitive experience of the Christ in His full glory.

Diane Smetanka was born in Cleveland, Ohio, the third daughter of George and Florence Smetanka. The family setting was richly Catholic, providing the children with good values and much love. Sr. Mary Christopher first met the Sisters of Notre Dame while attending St. Stephen Elementary and High School in Cleveland. She entered the Sisters of Notre Dame because she was attracted to the sisters' life of joy and happiness. In 1961, Sr.'s mother moved to California due to ill health. Soon after her graduation from St. John's College, Sr. Christopher was transferred to California and her Sr., Georgia and family, followed the next year.



Sr. Mary Christopher was a wonderful example of a joy-filled person who was very aware of God's presence in persons and nature. Her greatest joy was to bring nature into her surroundings with various arrangements of natural settings for flowers, rocks, tree bark and plants. Sr. Mary Christopher was also a great baker of breads, cookies, cakes, lemon bars and much more. No feast day went without some culinary contribution from Sr. Mary Christopher.

The joyful simplicity of Sr. Mary Christopher stemmed from her great love for children. She was an exemplary primary teacher for more than 35 years. Her deepest love was for the children and families she ministered to in South Central Los Angeles. Working to empower the underprivileged was a motivating goal for her ministry. No effort was too great for her when it came to providing food, clothing and encouragement for those in need.

For five years, Sr. Mary Christopher worked at the Archdiocese of Los Angeles Office of Religious Education as Coordinator of Preschool and Elementary School Sacramental Religious Development Programs. She was noted for her many workshops and seminars in teacher training for staff members of the religious education programs in parishes. This was a ministry which gave her much life, satisfaction and joy.

In her retiring years, Sr. Mary Christopher provided many services for the sisters at the provincial center that brought much joy to everyone. These activities included receptionist, adoration sister and support services. We are confident that Sr. Mary Christopher rests as a loved child in the arms of a loving father. May she rest in peace.

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vows and completed her studies at St. John's College. Eventually she received her degree in absentia and continued her studies at Mount St. Mary's where she earned a Master's in education. Though she found herself most comfortable with younger children, Sr. Therese taught in grades one through eight, wherever she was needed. Later as a principal she continued to teach part-time and often taught religious education classes on Saturdays. Now that she has retired, Sr. Therese enjoys assisting in the sacristy and the Health Center Chapel as well as serving as a receptionist at Notre Dame Center.

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Corrections

Please accept our apology if we have omitted a donor's name or made a spelling error. Kindly notify the Development Office at 805-917-3714 and/or carmela@sndca.org. We will make the correction in a future issue. Thank you!

California Grapevine

National Novitiate Returns...



Two novices from the Chardon, Ohio province joined Sr. Mary Kristina Fuller (*pictured left*) at Providence House in August. Sr. Lynette Miryam Krych (*center*) is a former CPA from Cleveland who met the Sisters of Notre Dame while pursuing her Masters in Theology at St. Mary Seminary in Wickliffe, Ohio. Sr. Angela Marie Salazar of Albuquerque, New Mexico has taught both violin and early intervention programs for children with autism. Her pastor introduced her to the Sisters of Notre Dame. Formation Director Sr. Kathleen Burns will guide the three novices through their canonical year, a special time of spiritual formation filled with study and prayer.

Computers for Buseesa



This summer Sr. Cristina Marie Buczowski carried a very special package of five XO laptops to St. Julie's Mission in Buseesa, Uganda. Money for the laptops was raised by seventh grade students after Sr. Mary Paulynne Tubick, a former missionary now teaching at St. Hedwig School in Los Alamitos, California, arranged for Sr. Mary Colette to visit the school and share about her life in Uganda.

Under the direction of their teacher, Keri Flynn, the seventh graders wrote letters to local businesses soliciting contributions. They raised \$1300, which covered the cost of the battery powered laptops and extra luggage fees.

Read about Sr. Cristina's trip on page 8.

More news at
www.sndca.org/news