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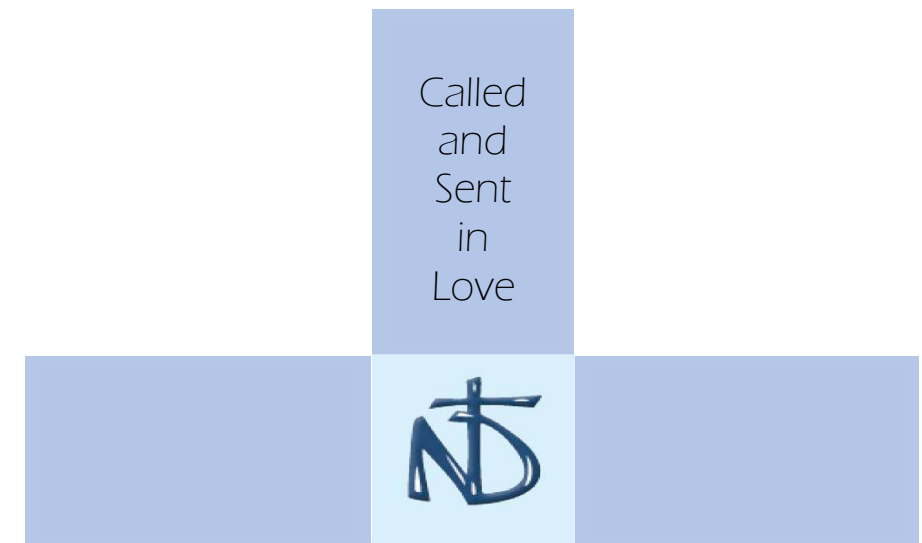
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## The Mission, Charism and Story of the Sisters of Notre Dame

*Called and Sent in Love* proclaims the presence and action of God in the life and unfolding story of the Sisters of Notre Dame. We invite you to reflect on this resource and encourage you to see yourself as part of this story as it continues to unfold.

God is Love.

God's love is absolutely present and active in the world.

God's love is God's mission.

## Mission Begins and Ends in God

**I**n the beginning (Gn 1:1) we see a God who is active, whose love and goodness bring about the creation of the world. And when the world was in need of healing and reconciling, God sent his son, Jesus, who came and dwelt among us.

In his life, death and resurrection, Jesus made the love of God visible in the world. Jesus is sent on mission to reveal who God is—One who loves us, draws us, challenges us, forgives us, lives within us, makes us one, and sends us on mission.

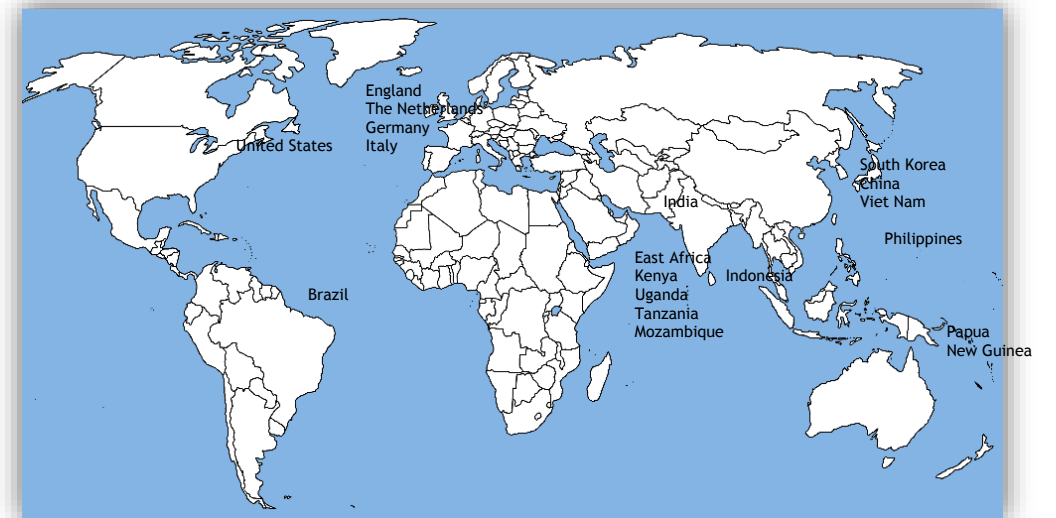
Baptized by water and the Spirit, we are called and sent as Jesus was to be God's love in the world and for the world. This is our mission.

## The Story of the Sisters of Notre Dame Begins and Ends in God

... unfolding in and for the world today

*"In the spirit of St. Julie Billiart, Sister Maria Aloysia, Sister Maria Ignatia and the first Coesfeld sisters, our congregation continues to witness God's goodness and provident care throughout the world today."*

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Pages xiii-xiv



| Year        | Call or Need   | Response of the Congregation  |
|-------------|--|---|
| 1993        | Called to Mozambique to open a mission station and to take responsibility for the multipurpose center of formation             | Five sisters were sent from Brazil  |
| 1995        | Called to Uganda at the request of the Bishop to educate the forgotten people of the Kibaale District.                         | Four sisters were sent from the United States: two from Kentucky and two from California. |
| 1999        | Called to The People's Republic of China to share the Notre Dame charism and spirit and to reach out to the needy of the area. | Two sisters were sent from South Korea  |
| 2000        | Called to the Philippines at the request of the Archbishop of Iloilo to work among the people of Sabang, Sibunag, and Guimaras | Four sisters were sent, three from Indonesia and one from the United States               |
| 2001        | Called to Kenya to meet the needs of the people  | A few sisters were sent from Tanzania   |
| 2005        | Called to Vietnam to share the Notre Dame charism and spirit and to reach out to the needy of the area.                        | Two sisters were sent from South Korea.   |
| 2008 - 2017 | Called to Nicaragua at the request of the Bishop of the Jinotega Diocese to meet the needs of the people                       | Four sisters were sent from the United States   |
| 2011        | Called to Peru to meet the needs of the people in the Archdiocese of Trujillo.   | Three sisters were sent from Brazil   |

*God in his boundless love has freely called us into being . . . Jesus Christ has redeemed us and through baptism called us into his Church . . . enabling us through the power of the Spirit to participate in this life and mission of leading all people to the Father.”*

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Articles 4 – 5



# Charism

## Begins and Ends in God

The Holy Spirit gifts individuals with special insights into the mystery of God. These deep and transforming heart experiences of God are called charisms. Charisms are blessings given to be shared with the church and the world.

Those called to share in a charism live from it, enrich it and deepen it. This special way of experiencing God becomes in them a living, active, transforming source of renewed life in the world.

The charism of the Sisters of Notre Dame is a deep experience of God's goodness and provident care.



| Year | Call or Need  | Response of the Congregation   |
|------|---|--|
| 1923 | Called to Brazil where a vast missionary field was opening up, while the growing power of National Socialism was closing Catholic schools in Germany. | Nine sisters were sent from Germany. (Eventually 178 sisters went to Brazil from Germany.) |
| 1925 | Called to The Netherlands to train teachers and establish an orphanage  | Sisters were sent from Germany.  |
| 1934 | Called to Indonesia to establish a hospital for the poor and a school for children of various backgrounds.  | Five sisters were sent from the Netherlands.   |
| 1949 | Called to India to open schools for the poor, especially for girls.   | Six sisters were sent from Cleveland, Ohio.  |
| 1961 | Called to Papua New Guinea to teach and evangelize.   | Four sisters were sent from Toledo, Ohio.  |
| 1967 | Called to South Korea to meet the needs of poor working girls.  | Three sisters were sent from Germany.  |
| 1992 | Called to Tanzania in answer to the Holy Father's call to send missionaries to Africa.  | Three sisters were sent from India.  |

The story of the Sisters of Notre Dame begins and ends in God  
 ... unfolding throughout the world  
 and throughout the years



| Year | Call or Need  | Response of the Congregation  |
|------|---|---|
| 1850 | Called in Coesfeld, Prussia (later Germany) to assist poor and neglected children who needed care and education.  | Sisters Maria Aloysia and Ignatia founded the community, which then established schools, a home for poor children, a teacher training institute, and more. By 1855 there were eleven professed sisters and twenty-two novices.                            |
| 1874 | Forced to leave Prussia due to religious persecution and called to the United States by the Bishop of Cleveland to minister to poor German immigrants and establish schools for children. | Accompanied by the superior general, eight sisters, including Sr. Maria Aloysia, arrived in Cleveland on July 6, 1874. (By 1877 there were almost 200 sisters in Ohio and Kentucky. Notre Dame Academies opened in both Cleveland, OH and Covington, KY.) |
| 1887 | Called back to Prussia by their bishop to begin activities the government would allow.  | Some sisters returned to Prussia while most remained in the United States.  |
| 1920 | Called to Italy to staff schools.   | Sisters were sent from Germany.   |
| 1923 | Called to England at the request of the Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster to accept responsibility for a school and domestic services at the priory.                                     | Sisters were sent from Germany  |

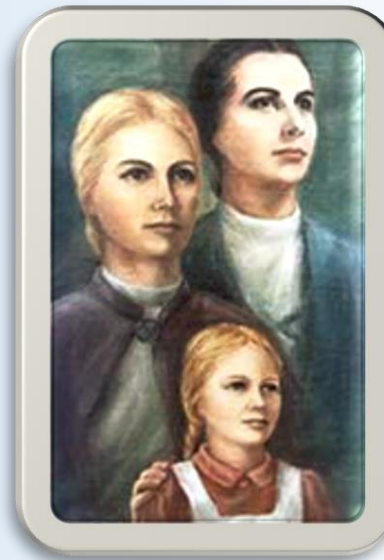
Charism is . . .

- a grace given by God for the sake of others
- a living, ongoing way of experiencing God
- a gift that develops in and through those that are called to share in it
- a life-giving, healing response by God to some human need
- an expression of God's continuous care for creation
- a seed germinating in mission to the Church and to the world
- a fire transforming those who are touched by it
- a path through time and space where people can encounter God

## Charism Opens Out Into Mission

Impelled by our charism, we participate in the mission of Jesus Christ. Impelled by our charism we seek to let God's goodness and provident care work through us, helping people, especially those who are poor and marginalized, come to the full human life that God wants for all.

The charism is present and active in us and in those drawn to minister with us on mission.



*“We have received as our heritage the apostolic spirit of St. Julie, Sister Maria Aloysia and Sister Maria Ignatia, which comes to us through the living tradition of our congregation. We are sent, as they were, to be witnesses of Jesus Christ who reveals the goodness of the Father. In fulfilling our ministries we act in the spirit of simplicity, seeking only God’s greater glory. We rely on the guidance of the Spirit rather than on our own strength and plans so that Jesus Christ in his love can minister through us.”*

Article 65  
Constitutions of the Sisters of Notre Dame

## The Story of the Sisters of Notre Dame Begins and Ends in God

... unfolding in its early years

The first sisters were in the Coesfeld area for about twenty years, actively involved in the care and education of poor children. They were also engaged in other ministries, among them a boarding school for those who could pay, a day care center, and a teacher training institute.

Political conditions and religious persecution during the Kulturkampf (1874-1887) made it impossible for the sisters to remain in Prussia, the German state in which most of them were living. This need to relocate was the first of many calls that the congregation would answer in extending the mission of Jesus Christ throughout the world.



*"Our charism and spirit remain alive in the Church through our witness of life and apostolic service. In fidelity to our charism we participate in the mission of Jesus Christ witnessing God's goodness and provident care to others. The Church sends us through our congregation to assist our sisters and brothers to direct their lives to God in faith so that all may experience God's love."*

Article 3  
Constitutions of the Sisters of Notre Dame

## The Story of the Sisters of Notre Dame Begins and Ends in God

God called into being the Congregation of the Sisters of Notre Dame, and in the unfolding of its history we recognize the signs of God's goodness and provident care.

... unfolding in its Founding Story

The international congregation was founded in 1850 in Coesfeld, Westphalia, Prussia (western Germany today), during a time of religious and social need. Orphaned as a child, Hilligonde Wolbring, had experienced God's provident care to a remarkable degree in her own life. With the help of her friend and fellow teacher, Elisabeth Kühling, she began to provide a caring home where neglected children could live while attending school. Both women had been formed in the spiritual and pedagogical legacy of the great German master teacher, Reverend Bernard Overberg. Thus they saw their work as an expression of God's provident and caring love.

After consulting their parish priest, Reverend Theodor Elting, the two young women decided to continue their mission as members of a religious community. They were introduced to the Rule and formed in the religious spirit of St. Julie Billiart by the Sisters of Notre Dame of Amersfoort, The Netherlands. Hilligonde became Sister Maria Aloysia, known as the foundress of the congregation, and Elisabeth became Sister Maria Ignatia. Other women were drawn to the congregation.

The new religious congregation, the Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld, was born of the deep experience of God's goodness and provident care.



*St. Julie Billiart, foundress of the Sisters of Notre Dame deNamur, is the Spiritual Mother of the Sisters of Notre Dame of Amersfoort and the Sisters of Notre Dame of Coesfeld.*