

UNITED IN MISSION

ATLANTIC-MIDWEST PROVINCE

Transforming the world through education

Spring/Summer 2023

Sponsorship & our Prophetic Witness to the World!



LIVING into a
PROPHETIC
WITNESS
of Universal
COMMUNION

"Sponsorship refers to the mutually beneficial and dynamic relationship between the congregation and an organization in which the SSND charism and educational vision are defining characteristics of the organization." (*You Are Sent* 22)

The recent Annual Leadership Meeting, a meeting between the Provincial Council and the leadership of our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries, engaged both, the theme of the upcoming 25th General Chapter, and the topic of Sponsorship. While 'Sponsorship' is a legal term, defining the relationship between the Catholic Church, SSND and a SSND sponsored ministry, this legal relationship translates into a relationship for educational ministry, thus providing a framework and container that enables people to reach the fullness of their potential and thereby changing the world through the transformation of persons. Sponsorship - and the evolution of sponsorship as necessary for our times with decreasing number of Sisters in

active ministry - ensures SSND to respond to God's call as heard in our times. This includes educating in evolving areas of urgent need and continuing being sensitive to the needs of youth and women, preferring people who are poor. It also safeguards the Catholic identity of the ministry as the religious congregation - in our case SSND - serves as a link between the institutional Catholic Church and the ministry. Thus, sponsorship is a structured and accountable relationship embodying the Spirit of the Gospel and the Spirit of our foundress, Blessed Theresa Gerhardinger.

With an increasing number of lay leaders in sponsored and co-sponsored ministries, the need to break open the concept of sponsorship and sharing the spirit of sponsorship increases. To that end, the 2023 Annual Leadership Meeting focused on *Sponsorship as Prophetic Witness to the World*. Keynote speaker Fr. Charles Bouchard, OP, introduced the topic with a ["Five Minutes of Sister History"](#) video. He then provided a

brief overview on why the Church has institutions, and why we have begun to call our commitment to these institutions 'ministries'. Explaining the nature of 'charism' and what the Church and world demand of our charism today led to the topic of sponsoring an institution and the prophetic role of sponsorship today. Fr. Charles highlighted that **"the prophetic role of the sponsor is particularly important today, as prophets speak God's word so powerfully, that it changes the world and the people of God."**

Following, please find several accounts of leaders in our sponsored ministries, detailing their evolving understanding of sponsorship and how sponsorship translates into their everyday work and experience. You will read how lay leaders are empowered to establish and grow a culture in their ministry in which Mother Theresa's spirit and the SSND charism of unity is alive, and how the communal

(Cont'd)

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approach is called forward to the work of mission and the transcendent purpose of the ministry, i.e. to preach the reign of God. One leader reflects on the wholesome support that comes with sponsorship, i.e. the sponsor's belief in the ministry's mission, their support in prayer, the mentoring of lay leaders and the sponsor's financial support.

Please find the entire keynote by Fr. Charles Bouchard, OP [1h37min] [here](#). Subsections of the keynote are provided on the Resource page (pg. 6) as well. Thank you for engaging the work of sponsorship and co-sponsorship, and by doing so participating in its evolution, thereby carrying God's mission as lived through the SSND lens, into the future.

May you have a restful and restorative summer,



Yvonne DeBruin
Director, Ministry Services



Helen Ramos Paiz, Executive Director, Caroline House - Bridgeport, CT



Helen Ramos Paiz

This leadership meeting provided me with the opportunity to reflect on how I would like to pursue my own leadership as an Executive Director to cultivate a spirit of unity and “women for others” at Caroline House. The true passion that the Sisters in attendance displayed for working together for the common good stood out to me and made me realize the importance of emphasizing the responsibilities we have to one another in the pursuit of the greater good.

The lives of our students can only be affected by our mission if we come together as one and support them through their struggles and celebrate them while they succeed. By fostering this culture of support, we perpetuate our belief of unity as a way of betterment, which they then perpetuate within their own families and communities. Further adopting this philosophy of unity at Caroline House will allow us to help women achieve the fullness of their potential.

There is also room to create a collective approach that follows this mentality among different missions, such that we are better able to provide our beneficiaries with the services they need to succeed. - Helen



Juan Pablo Padilla, Executive Director, Corazón a Corazón - Blue Island, IL

On June of 2022, I had my first encounter with a sponsored ministry, when I arrived at a small organization named Corazón a Corazón. My purpose for being there at the time was for an interview, and it was there that I met Sister Miriam “Pat” Cummings and learned of the wonderful work, mission, and ministry of the School Sisters of Notre Dame (SSND). Since then, I have taken on the role of executive director of the organization and have learned of other sponsored ministries of the SSND.

During these past months, my understanding of sponsorship, and perhaps the way I can best describe it, is the act of trusting and entrusting the vision, mission, and charism of the SSND, to organizations rooted in communities of need. (Cont'd)



Juan Pablo Padilla

Juan Pablo Padilla - Cont'd

I've also come to the realization that sponsorship is a blessed stewardship, that comes with the humbling responsibility of budgeting and allocating funds adequately to assist those we serve. At Corazón a Corazón for example, sponsorship helps to provide a sacred space for learning, an English as a Second Language workbook, computers for our After School Achievement Program, and all in the name of uplifting the dignity of everyone that walks through our doors.

I personally have experienced an appreciation for sponsorship because I view it as a direct extension of Blessed Mother Theresa Gerhardinger's passion for serving God's people, and just as she sent forth and trusted Mother Caroline Friess, we are also trusted and sent forth to serve in marginalized communities. Sponsorship, in my opinion, also brings to life the possibility of intentionally bringing the living Jesus to the communities we serve. One of my favorite Bible readings is "The Way to Emmaus" found in the Gospel of Luke, and just as Jesus walks with and accompanies the two that are saddened, our sponsored organizations also accompany those in need.

Sponsorship goes far beyond that the financial realities interwoven with sponsoring, it also uplifts and promotes organizations to serve as prophetic witnesses of God's love, and run back to Jerusalem, just as in "The Way to Emmaus". Yes! Our mission is also to announce The Good News.

As executive director of Corazón a Corazón, a sponsored ministry of the SSND, it is reassuring to know that I, and our organization, have the support we need to achieve self-sustainability and continue to exist for those that will continue to need the services we provide. One of the best feelings I've had is the sense of community that is being fostered among colleagues, and it is affirming to know that Corazón a Corazón is not alone. In my heart there's no doubt that the charism of the SSND will live on as we continue to create a culture of community among the diverse sponsored ministries of the SSND and build a prophetic community of communities.

Sponsorship is...



The act of trusting and entrusting the vision, mission, and charism of the SSND, to organizations rooted in communities of need. -Pablo

Judy Ekberg, Board Chair, Notre Dame Learning Center - Rochester, NY



Judy Ekberg

Attending a leadership meeting is always an opportunity to reflect: What am I doing? Why am I doing it? How am I doing it? What am I achieving? These questions were called into focus as we looked at our successes and challenges.

The real heart of the meeting was addressed by Fr. Charles Bouchard in his keynote. His definition of charism expanded my own understanding. It is more than just looking out for others. It is "preaching the reign of God." We do not have to do it alone. As a sponsored ministry, we are part of the whole mission, with other ministries also spreading the charism.

Fr. Bouchard spoke of the role of sponsors, which we also recognized as some of the guidelines set out by the Council for sponsored ministries.

I think our job as leaders in our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries is to extend the mission of caring and ensure that we are a voice in the community preaching the reign of God through our charism. (Con'td)

Judy Ekberg - Cont'd

This may seem a daunting task when we look at the people we serve – people of other cultures, other faiths. How then do we preach the reign of God? It comes back to our understanding of God and His care for all of us. We “preach” through our actions, which, it is said, speak louder than words.

Sometimes that takes a helping hand, and often it's from an unexpected source. We must be open to all possibilities, and gracious in our responses to others' needs. Charism is, after all, “a gift given for others for the common good.”

This brings me back to my opening questions. *What am I doing?* I am trying to make the world a better place for a handful of children in Rochester by helping them learn to read and understand math.

Why am I doing it? Because the need is there. Poor families struggle and still seem to get nowhere. Options are closed for them. The children in these families deserve the same opportunities as other children but are ill prepared for them. That can only be changed through educating the children to be better prepared for opportunities that arise.

I want to know that I'm doing something to solve the problem.

How am I doing it? By serving as Chair of the Board of Notre Dame Learning Center. The Board has worked diligently to re-energize and expand our out- reach. It is no small task, but we're up to the challenge. I also tutor a child twice a week at Notre Dame Learning Center.

How then do we preach the reign of God?

It comes back to our understanding of God and His care for all of us. We “preach” through our actions, which, it is said, speak louder than words. – Judy



Sister Cathy Feeney, SSND, SSND Educational Center - Woodhaven, NY

Our recent Annual Leadership Meeting exceeded my expectations. I found it engaging, informative, and reflective. Fr. Bouchard's conversation on *Sponsorship and Our Prophetic Witness in the World* was the highlight for me. It provided me with the opportunity to explore prophetic witness within the context of sponsorship.

As a leader in an SSND sponsored ministry, I am aware of the difference it is from my work in previous ministries. I enjoyed and was enthusiastic in a parish school setting and later on a parish team. Yet, I felt a strong pull toward living the charism more intentionally. The difference, I find, has been the freedom to be prophetic and to en flesh Mother Theresa's spirit in today's world. Theresa wanted us to be communities in mission.

The circle of province liaison, board, staff, those served, and director form a community that I believe witnesses to her dreams.

The SSND charism of unity is very real when our staff can take aspects of the Directional Statements of General Chapters and incorporate them into the curriculum or at prayer time. Those women and children who are poor gradually become a part of the SSND life circle. Together we are becoming “prophets of universal communion.”

The keynote address confirmed my convictions that sponsorship is a unique way to continue the legacy of our foundress. Throughout the conference, I was encouraged by the interaction among marvelous lay leaders. They are the prophets of the future.



Cathy Feeney, SSND

Sponsorship continues the legacy of our foundress.



Throughout the conference, I was encouraged by the interaction among marvelous lay leaders. They are the prophets of the future. - Sister Cathy

Patricia Banks, Executive Director, SisterHouse - Chicago, IL



Patricia Banks

SisterHouse is an organization that serves a population of women who are often-times overlooked or written off by society. Society, as well as family and friends deem these women damaged and broken beyond repair. Here at SisterHouse, we are committed to helping women who struggle with having an addiction to drugs and or alcohol. We educate and empower these women to live sober and fulfilling lives by providing a safe and structured living community. We work hard to help our women take their rightful place in the community and society as a whole.

Being unable to control their compulsion to use drugs and alcohol has affected many areas of the lady's lives. Going to any length to get more drugs, some of the ladies now have criminal backgrounds.

They became financially irresponsible unable to report to work and continue to pay bills. Their families have broken off ties, friends turned their backs, and as a result, they become homeless. With homelessness came failing physical health and well as mental health challenges. They come to SisterHouse and are emotionally, mentally, and spiritually bankrupt.

For forty years SisterHouse has been a pillar of our community providing faith-based practices helping these women overcome their barriers. We partner with these ladies to tackle all life occurrences that has hindered them in the past. Our staff, consist of our Behavioral Health Specialist, who works with the ladies providing group and individual therapy. She helps them to identify behavioral challenges that have distorted their way of thinking as well as helping to develop a plan of care centered around their recovery.

As the executive director of SisterHouse Chicago, I have come to understand just how important it is to have great support and to partner with those who are vested and equally yoked in our purpose.

Being sponsored by the SSND offers the up to 16 women housed at SisterHouse holistic support. Sponsorship offers the hope and teachings of Christ our Savior and the belief that people in the world can change. The SSND's financial contribution and commitment is greatly appreciated and needed to fuel and power SisterHouse. What is just as vital is the prayer offered for us and belief in our mission. This helps the organization thrive. SSND also offers support to the staff of SisterHouse in the form of a mentoring program to influence and offer guidance or direction.

Sponsorship was best described as a partnership; the relationship of two parties that have agreed to have a shared interest and mission, responsibility, and collaboration of one's ministry. I find this to be particularly true for the SSND and SisterHouse.

Sponsorship is...

Putting your hand in my hand, and together we can make it! - Patricia





Events

June 25- 28, 2023

Claiming the Fire Within Retreat
Malvern, PA

October 20-21, 2023

Ministry Formation Session III
Baltimore, MD

Resources



Keynote Address 2023 Annual Leadership Meeting

"Sponsorship and our Prophetic Witness to the World"

by Fr. Charles Bouchard, OP

To see sections of keynote, please click links below:

"Five Minutes of Sister History"

Sr. Charmaine with SSND specifics [min. 10:16 - 17:30]

Why does the Church have institutions? [min. 17:31 - 29:19]

Why have we begun to call our institutional commitments
"ministries" [min. 29:19 - 44:35]

Renewing the SSND Charism in a changing world
[min. 44:35 - 52:05]

What is a sponsor? Why do we need one?
[min. 52:06 - 1h29:29]

Boards Cont'd

Board Member Matrix

Board Evaluation Forms

How to be a Super Board Chair
by Stanford Social Innovation Review

Ecological Examen Prayer

Free Online Class!

Boston College - Synodality:
Common Discernment &
Decision Making in a Synodal
Church

See an introduction to:
The Theology & Practice of
Synodality

Boards

Sr. Charmaine's Video to Ministry Boards

General Chapter Prayer

Video Meditation

Blessed Theresa Feast Day
Meditation [min. 3:16]

United in Mission is a quarterly publication of the Department of Ministry Services - School Sisters of Notre Dame, Atlantic-Midwest Province.



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