

UNITED IN MISSION

ATLANTIC-MIDWEST PROVINCE

Transforming the world through education

December 2019



A message from
Patrick Laorden

In these first few weeks as Associate Director of Ministry services, I've been fully immersed learning the SSND mission and charism. In many ways, I feel like I have come home, having had SSND roots since I was little. Growing up, I had the privilege of encountering SSNDs in religious education and having the Sisters as mentors when I was in formation as a Dominican Brother. To appreciate the context of my new role, I need to understand the roots of the province and the department. Doing so requires me to delve into the stories of the Sisters, Associates, and the staff. Slowly but surely, I come to see the bigger picture and the richness of this heritage. The opportunity to help carry on a 186-year-old mission is both an honor and a privilege.

I encountered an expression that's been said frequently in my first weeks, by the Sisters and my col-

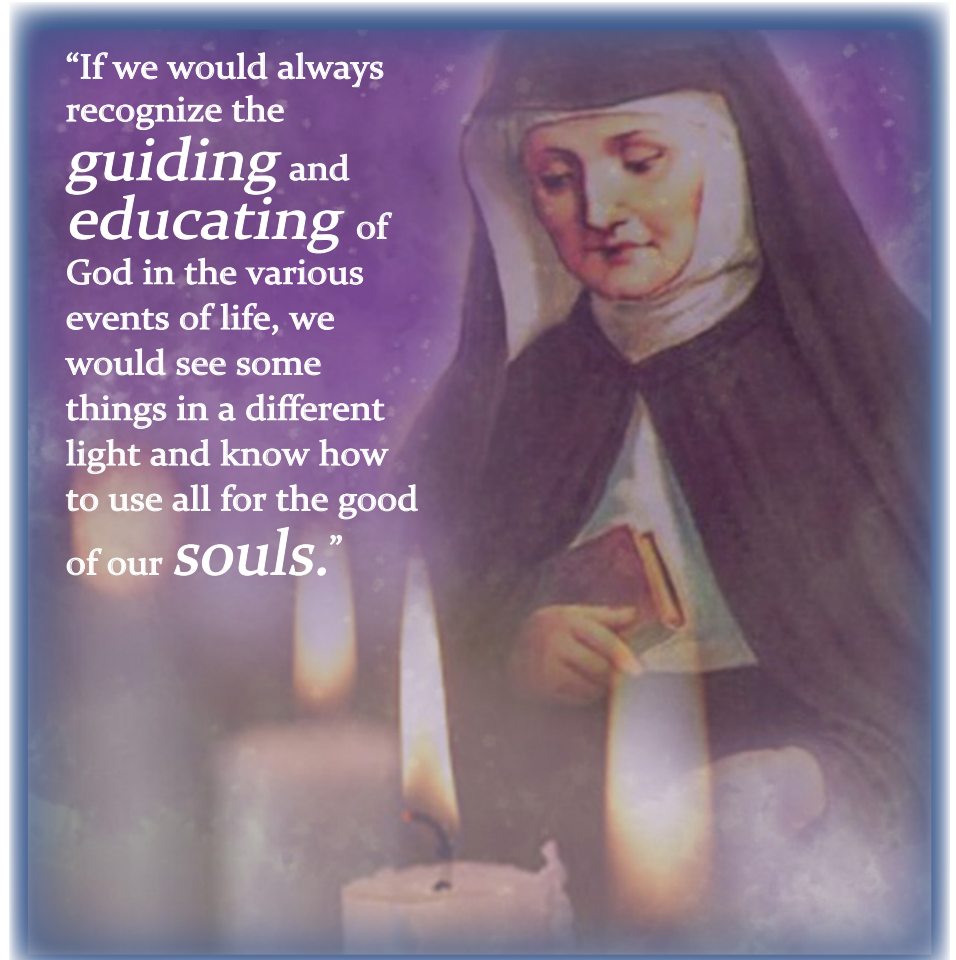
leagues: "Trust and Dare." I hearken the words of Mother Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger, which I hold dear, "If we would always recognize the guiding and educating of God in the various events of life, we would see some things in a different light and know how to use all for the good of our souls."

As the season of Advent is upon us, we are invited to step back and reflect on where we have come from and where we are going. As Mary pondered the things in her heart, we are called to ponder on our experiences, most especially those

that have been formative for us in ministry. In these moments, we are called to see our experiences as Mother Theresa envisioned, trusting that God put us here in the moment and daring to move forward with confidence that God will get us through.

In this issue of United in Mission, in light of Advent, I offer my thoughts on my experiences these first few weeks of getting to know the SSND mission and charism, my entering the Ministry Formation Process and my introduction to an integral vision.

"If we would always recognize the *guiding and educating* of God in the various events of life, we would see some things in a different light and know how to use all for the good of our *souls.*"



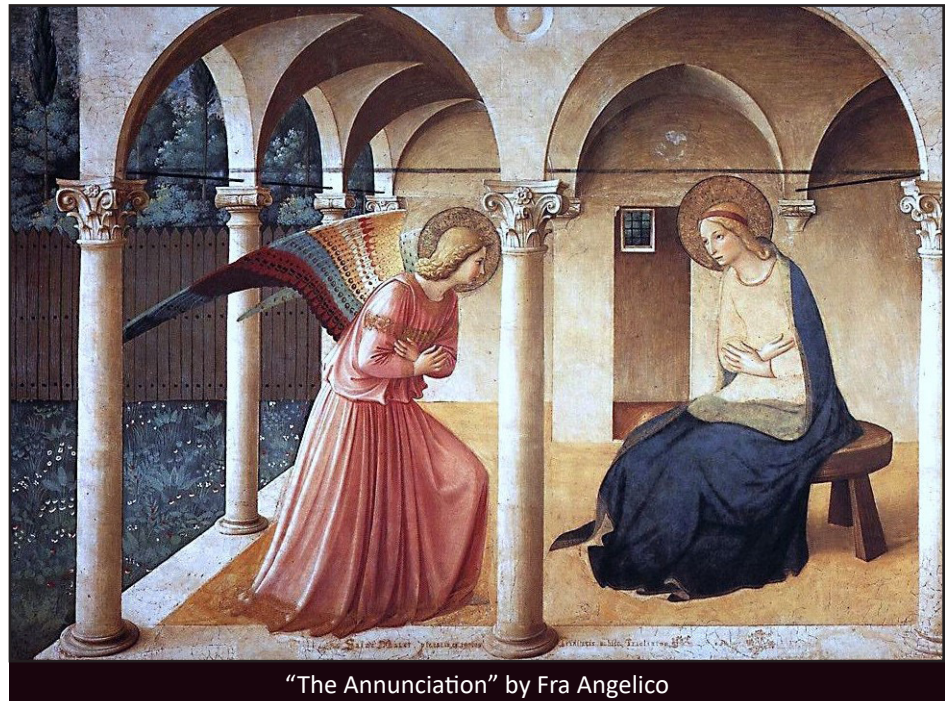
Made *for* MISSION



From the moment we are baptized, we are claimed by God and sent forth on a mission. Our lives are made and should always be oriented for mission. I recall such words from *You Are Sent*:

“Like Mother Theresa, we are ready to serve wherever we are called. We are conscious that we share in Christ’s mission not only through our active ministry, but through our prayer and suffering, through our whole life and our death. We support one another in our various ministries, recognizing each as a part of the corporate ministry of the congregation.” (YAS, GD 32).

Everyone who works in the province has lives that are oriented towards mission, guided by the SSND charism and values. How we think, act, and speak should reflect Mother Theresa’s spirit. We can look to the second chapter of Luke when the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and said, “Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people,” (Luke 2: 10). This message reminds us to have courage, and that when God meets us where we are at, he always comes bearing Good News. Later on, Luke writes, “But Mary kept all these things, pondering them in her heart,” (Luke 2:19). This is an essential element in Marian spirituality, a window into how Mary prayed, constantly reflecting on her experiences and living in the moment. The same can be said for Mother Theresa, that she was conscious of her own mission, that she was sent. It’s this constant reflection that calls us to step back for a



“The Annunciation” by Fra Angelico

moment, pause, and dialogue with God through prayer asking: “What is it that you have called me to?”

In my experiences thus far, I’ve realized that we are all sent for mission, to proclaim the oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent. Yet, this realization calls us to understand things from a more integral perspective. Recalling from *You Are Sent*, “Our life in mission is an integrated whole: prayer, community life, and ministry flow from and into one another.” Thus, to live more integrally, we are called to a life of constant prayer and reflection, for whatever time our daily routines permit, community that has foundations in strong relationship building and dialogue, and ministry which reminds us that we are part of a something bigger.

Participating in the Ministry Formation Process has been a tremen-

“What is it that you have called me to?”

dous experience thus far, with special opportunities to meet leaders of our sponsored ministries and province departments. The recent ministry formation session I attended focused on Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation as lived and promoted through SSND, as well as Catholic identity and Catholic Social Teaching. This one, as well as upcoming sessions, are great opportunities to withdraw from current obligations, reflect on the SSND mission and charism, connect with leaders from other sponsored ministries, build community, and strengthen one’s personal relationship with God. Please find some photos of the recent session and the preceding ministry visit to Caroline House throughout this reflection.



Ministry Formation Session 3 Participants at Villa Notre Dame in Wilton, CT - October 2019

In addition, as part of my orientation, I have the opportunity to visit some of the sponsored and co-sponsored ministries. What I have noticed in my initial visits is that there is an emphasis on looking at the human person as a whole, a holistic mission. It reminds me that a holistic mission is born of a holistic life. The Ministry Formation

Process is a great opportunity for the lay leaders of our sponsored ministries, because it provides a holistic foundation that will enrich one's prayer; strengthen community among the ministries, SSND, province departments, and continuum of care centers; and provide a deeper understanding of one's own ministry. The opportunity to meet

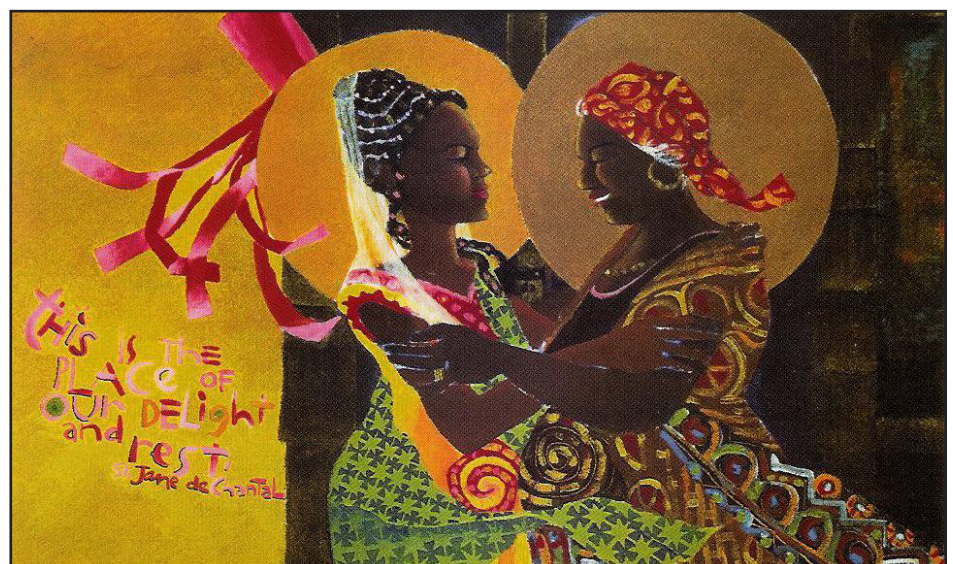
the leaders during the formation sessions and subsequently visit them at their place of ministry offers me an opportunity to learn how the Ministry Services Department can assist the ministries and province departments to live out the SSND charism in ministry with the goal of mutual transformation of oneself and the people we serve.



Staff and former students of Caroline House in Bridgeport, CT

An Integral VISION

In Mary's humility, she remained close to our Lord throughout his life. I recall Jesus at the Wedding Feast at Cana in the second chapter of John, "His mother said to the servers, 'Do whatever he tells you,'" (John 2: 5). In this attentiveness and constancy of being close to the Lord, I am reminded of Elizabeth's expression to Mary during her visitation, "Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled," (Luke 1: 45). In light of



The Windsock Visitation by Br. Mickey McGrath
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Mary's experiences, as I stand on the threshold of a new ministry, I hear the challenge to remain close to the words of Jesus and Mother Theresa. I see this Advent as an opportunity to further grow in the SSND mission and charism to fulfill what I am sent to do.

How is the word of the Lord being fulfilled in me this Advent?

The Directional Statement from the most recent General Chapter, *Love Gives Everything*, underscores seven points that, as a whole, provide an integral vision. Since its release, the Provincial Council has animated its implementation. A series of videos called the "Integral Vision Series" is being produced. They highlight different aspects of an integral vision for SSND, the most recent focusing on the theology and spirituality at the heart of the integral vision. The videos can be watched [here](#). To be integral means to be es-

What can I/we do to strengthen our communion for the sake of mission within community and/or place of ministry?

sential. The integral vision looks at the SSND mission and values with a holistic view, to see as Mother Theresa sees.

I understand the integral vision as calling for a renewal of vision, for ourselves, for the community, and for our ministries. The renewal is to see as Mother Theresa sees. If Mother Theresa were alive to witness the activity in our ministries, what would her impressions be? Would it be a testament to the vision she had for the congregation 186 years ago? As *You Are Sent* reminds us, prayer, community life, and ministry are part of an integrated whole and flow from each another. I am aware that witnessing the SSND charism is stretching my

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prayer life and is guiding my relationship building with the Sisters, my colleagues, and our ministries. In addition, my understanding of ministry being expanded.

An integral vision calls me to right relationship, mutuality, and cooperation with our sponsored and co-sponsored ministries, with all those I work alongside in the province and those I serve through the department of Ministry Services. I come to understand that an integral vision is one of several elements to achieve communion in mission. Perhaps in this Advent and Christmas season, we can all – whether Sisters, Associates, administrators, faculty, staff, and board members – be vigilant for opportunities to grow our communion for the sake of mission.

Thank you to the Sisters, Associates, ministries and province staff for your warm welcome and your generous support as I continue grow in my new ministry.

Together with my colleagues from Ministry Services, we wish you all a blessed Advent, a joyful Christmas and a happy New Year.

Patrick Laorden

Yvonne DeBruin

Grace D'Amico, SSND



Resources:

Integral Vision Video Series
<https://atlanticmidwest.org/integral-vision-series>

2019 "In Mission" Issue
<https://gerhardinger.org/in-mission-2019/>

A Chance to Have Your Say

In January, Ministry Services will conduct a survey among our readers regarding future content of this newsletter. We would like to know what topics are of interest to you, keep you updated and serve you in your ministry. Thank you in advance for participating.

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