

## **School Sisters of Notre Dame—Province of Africa**

The School Sisters of Notre Dame is an international congregation of women religious founded in 1833 in Germany by Mother Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger. By 1847, Sisters were sent to the United States to help educate children of the German immigrants. Currently there are over 2,000 Sisters ministering in 30 countries around the world.

In the early 1970s, several bishops in Africa requested School Sisters of Notre Dame to come to their dioceses to help improve the quality of life and the level of education for the girls and women. Sisters were sent to begin ministries in Kenya, Ghana, Nigeria, Liberia and Sierra Leone. In 1990, Sisters from the Polish province began two missions in The Gambia.

Our charism calls us to education in its broadest sense, helping all people to reach the fullness of their potential. Education of the girls in Africa lags far behind that of the boys. Because of this, Sisters work in many secondary schools for girls in rural areas where the girls have little opportunity for education. We also have Sisters teaching in already established primary and secondary schools as well as on the tertiary level in the newly begun Catholic University in Sierra Leone and at Tangaza College in Kenya.

SSND has a clinic with maternity facilities in Ghana that caters especially to the poor women and children but treats all who come, whether they can fully pay or not. In that same area a Sister is director of the Orthopedic Training Centre to provide physical rehabilitation for children and adults maimed due to accidents.

In 2010 at the urging of the Bishop of Homa Bay Diocese in Kenya, we began an outreach program to some of the 8000 children orphaned by AIDs. This is in a very rural area near Nyalienga. The Sisters care for approximately 250 young people and their guardians.

We are blessed with many vocations in Africa. We have a postulancy in Kisumu, Kenya and our African novices participate in our International Novitiate in Rome. Currently we have eight postulants and eight novices. Because many of these young women enter the congregation without advanced education, each year a number of Sisters are working toward either a degree or certification for a lifetime of ministry.

The Sisters in Africa do a great deal of ministry beyond their primary work. Many of them work with youth groups or parish organizations. Often those working in schools also mentor the younger teachers to improve the quality of teaching. Those Sisters who work as nurses do much teaching of the patients concerning how to prevent disease, how to give the children good nutrition using the local foods and what proper sanitation can do for the families.

All the Sisters also encourage the youth to think about whether they are called to a life of the priesthood or to become a consecrated woman religious, or a religious brother. There are 85 School Sisters of Notre Dame in our African Province. Of these, Sisters 71 are African women. These Sisters touch the lives of thousands of men, women and children each day through the schools, clinics and hospitals and the parishes. Lives truly are transformed!

We cannot do it alone. We need your prayer and generous support for the upkeep of the Sisters as well as for their ministries. Particularly in this time when Covid 19 has disrupted the work of the schools, we welcome your support!