

REPORT for the meeting of Notre Dame Communities 8-11 May 2023 in Rome

I want to convey the greetings of all the sisters of our Congregation of School Sisters de Notre Dame based in Bohemia to you, and to assure you that they accompany us with their prayers.

The period since the last meeting of the Notre Dame Communities (2019 in Budapest) has been marked by unforeseen events. Life was greatly affected by the coronavirus pandemic, the decrease in new vocations, the increase in the departure of sisters after many years of consecrated life, and also the Synod on synodality.

Our Congregation of School Sisters de Notre Dame has undergone many changes since the last meeting. In August 2022, a new General Leadership was elected at the General Chapter:

General Superior: M. Metoda Piatničková

General Vicareess: sr. Xavera Gubrická

General Economist: sr, Karin Steinerová

General councillors: sr. Thekla Hofer

sr. Mary Ann Zimmer

All Provinces have new provincial leadership: In March 2019, the Leadership of the **Czech Province** changed, and **Sr. Václava Kubovcová** became the new provincial superior. From August 2022, the **American Province** has a new provincial superior - **Sr. Rita Maria Ostry**. In the **Bavarian Province**, at the same time, it became a new Provincial superior, **Sr. Theresia Hauthaler**. Finally, the **Slovak Province** also have a new leadership from November 2022. The Provincial superior is **Sr. Cordia Litváková**.

Now I will present to you our Congregation:

Province	Number of communities	Postulants	Novices	First vows	Final vows
American	4	-	-	-	30
Bavarian	6 5 in Bavaria 1 in Austria	3	8	5 1 6	53 2 55
Czech	4	-	-	-	36
Slovak	10 9 in Slovakia 1 in Kazachstan	-	1	1	68 3 71
Spolu	24	3	9	7	192

Looking at the statistics, we realize that the numbers are not flattering. Cardinal Braz de Aviz encourages us on one occasion: "We must serve the Lord when there is plenty, as well as when our cows, are lean and our pastures are empty (cf. Gn 41:1-4). We must learn to live faithfully even with our difficulties, when the Lord may not manifest himself in abundance."

The great hope is the Bavarian Province, where new vocations are being added to us. We currently have 8 novices and 4 postulants who should enter the novitiate in August of this year. Three novices will make up the first vows.

In the **American Province**, the sisters participate in the running of the Notre Dame House (Notre Dame Housing), offering residents participation in spiritual programs. They are also engaged in various services: medical and hospice care, parish and hospital pastoral service, spiritual guidance, volunteer service - homeless, immigrants, involvement in groups involved in issues of social justice,

climate change... They always place great emphasis on prayer and common a life that underlies everything they do. Praying together and being together is very important for them.

In the **Bavarian Province**, after the large departure of sisters in 2002, new vocations have been increasing in recent years, which is a great hope for this province but also for the entire Congregation. In 2017, they opened a new community and ministry in the pilgrimage town of Maria Schutz in Austria. In April the same year, they opened a new dental clinic in Auerbach, as two young sisters are dentists. They came to Congregation as doctors with experience. Sisters work in Realchule in Auerbach, in school clubs and in kindergartens in several places. In the mother house, they organize prayer meetings for young people, spiritual renewals... They feel like they are witnessing hope and looking at the cross, at the secret of the victory and fruitfulness of the crucified Christ. He, the living Lord, accompanies them with the power of his Spirit throughout history. With Mary's help, they try to open the doors wide of their hearts to meet Christ because Mary wants to bring them to him.

The **Czech Province** has also experienced several changes. The house in Kardašová Řečica, was canceled, and the sisters moved to Hradec Králové, whose premises were adapted for the care of older sisters. In 2019, the decision of the General Chapter from 2016, was implemented on the abolition of the "Motherhouse" and the affiliation of the sisters to the province they decide for themselves. All sisters, except one, decided for the Czech province. The Czech Province is the founder of the kindergarten in České Budějovice and operates a care facility for its own elderly and sick sisters in Hradec Králové. Sisters are engaged in parish catechesis, teaching in church schools, children from socially weak classes, migrants, etc.

The **Slovak Province** is the most numerous. The sisters are mainly engaged in education and teaching in Church and State schools, and it itself is the founder of a kindergarten, elementary school and high school. The civic association "Nodam" has been successfully operating here for years, covering care for children and youth. Sisters organize spiritual renewals, holiday camps, tourist and sports trips, cultural events - carnivals, balls, Mother's Day celebration. A trio of sisters has been working on missions in Kazakhstan for almost 20 years. Several sisters have already taken turns in this service. They are happy that they can announce Christ to people who have not had the opportunity to know him until now.

In each province, we have developed cooperation with the laity. They form a separate group, a spiritual family, which the sisters take care. They regularly meet with them, invite them to joint celebrations and pilgrimages. The members are grateful for every meeting, mutual encouragement and attention, and the opportunity to participate in the fulfillment of our mission through prayer and particulate service.

Sisters are constantly form, spiritually and professionally. They participate in various seminars, organized within individual conferences of higher religious superiors or by their own province. They go on various pilgrimages, meetings and spend rest days together. In every province, they take exemplary care of their own aged and sick fellow sisters.

Currently, the Church lives with a Synod on synodality. The Synod is a Church moment, and the principal actor of the Synod is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads us where God wants us to go, not where our personal ideas and tastes would lead us.

We need to be receptive to God's Spirit and faithfully live out our consecration. We need the ever-new breath of God, which frees us from all confinement, revives what is dead, loosens chains, spreads joy.

"Let no one steal from you the joy of following Christ and the courage to offer him to others as the way, the truth and the life. Let's get up! "Let's get to work" (see Ezra 10:4). It's time to start the journey" (Holy Father Francis).

Thank you for your attention

M. Metoda Piatničková
General Superior