

Experiencing God's Goodness and Provident Care, Chardon, OH, USA

The Sisters of Notre Dame of Chardon, Ohio have offered the Experience of God's Goodness and Provident Care (also known as the Charism Experience) to lay educators and sisters from secondary and elementary schools staffed by the Sisters of Notre Dame.

Sr. M. Lisa Novak and Sr. Donna Marie Paluf, co-coordinators of the Experience, explained: "Two members of the lay faculty/staff and one sister attend. The Charism Experience helps the educators learn about and resonate with our charism. It is not a note-taking workshop; it is not an employee orientation; it is not a quiet, prayerful retreat. It works on interaction. Each Experience has been unique because of those involved, but all have common results: participants learn to name what animates their school because SNDs are and have been part of it. They leave with a renewed spirit."

Since 2000, over 270 lay colleagues from different educational institutions, 154 sisters and 59 SND associates have participated in the Charism Experience. This year's Charism Experience took place from April 2 through April 4. Participants minister at Cardinal Gibbons High School, Raleigh, North Carolina; Clearwater Central Catholic High School, Florida; Cleveland Central Catholic High School; Julie Billiart School, Lyndhurst, Ohio; Metro Catholic School, Cleveland, Ohio; Notre Dame Academy, Covington, Kentucky; Notre Dame College, South Euclid, Ohio; Notre Dame Elementary School and Notre Dame-Cathedral Latin School, both in Chardon.

The lives of Sister Maria Aloysia and St. Julie reflected a profound experience of God's goodness and provident care. Prayer services, small and large group discussions and presentations helped participants recall times of seeing God's goodness and provident care in their own or others' lives. Participants took a guided tour of the provincial center property and chapel, and shared coffee and conversation with the sisters.

Participants were asked: "How are we/you called to be a living expression of God's Goodness and Provident Care today?" and "Whom on your staff can you name as being a person who ministers in the spirit of St. Julie Billiart, Sister Maria Aloysia?" They discussed ways to bring the fruits of the Experience back to their respective schools.

Many commented on how the Experience changed their entire outlook on life. One participant said, "I was looking at the Coesfeld Cross thinking of how in Jesus' greatest moment of weakness He became our deepest inspiration. And then I was thinking of the charism. It's not what we do. The charism to me is all about God—it's God's passion living through us for others and expressed as goodness and provident care. It's all about passion—God's passion for us, alive in and through us."



Sr. M. Jean Hoelke explains the heritage devotional space in the provincial center chapel.

by Sister Donna Marie Paluf



In the gathering space of the chapel, Sr. M. Emilia Castelletti, Vincent Bonacci, and Sr. Donna Marie Paluf converse in front of the sisters' individual tiles.



Sr. M. Carol Ziegler and Katie Callahan enjoy conversation over coffee.



Current staff members of Cardinal Gibbons High School, Raleigh, North Carolina (back) Sr. Mary Jean Korejwo, Crista Anders, and Hal Sargent, meet with (front) former principal Sr. M. Teresita Gresko, and former teacher Sr. M. Lenette Marcello.