

First Interprovincial Planning Meeting



From November 1 to 3, 2024, the city of Passo Fundo, Brazil, hosted the First Interprovincial Planning Meeting of the Sisters of Notre Dame. The gathering brought together 116 sisters from the Nossa Senhora Aparecida Province (Canoas) and Santa Cruz Province (Passo Fundo) to collaboratively strengthen the mission and plan a number of unified activities for the coming year.

The planning sessions were guided by Sister Elisangela Pereira Machado of the Congregation of the Bernardine Sisters in an environment that fostered prayer and fraternity as well as an openness to new perspectives. The chosen methodology, **Appreciative Inquiry**, had previously been used by communities and groups known as cells in order to facilitate both continuity and synergy in the process.

Gathering around circular tables in the meeting venue encouraged both an exchange of ideas and collective reflection. Symbolic elements, such as roots and light placed at the center of each table, reflected Notre Dame spirituality. The roots suggested the Congregation's apostolic mission, deeply anchored in its foundational history, while the light represented the guiding presence of the Holy Spirit.

The meeting was also marked by deep spirituality and integration as evidenced by the following examples:

- **Celebration of Memory:** The lives of our deceased sisters were remembered at a special Mass and a visit to the Santa Cruz Cemetery.
- **Reflections on the Year:** Significant events that contributed to the history and mission of both provinces were highlighted.
- **Fellowship and Prayer:** Through reflection, sharing, and planning, community bonds were strengthened.

A key highlight of the gathering was each of the provincial leaders sharing ideas from the recent General Conference in Bangalore, India. These presentations offered valuable lessons and inspiration for the journey the local communities will make during the coming year.

At the conclusion of the meeting, each community received a fruit tree to plant at their house. This symbolic gesture reinforced the participants' commitment to bear fruit in the Notre Dame mission and ministries.

This first interprovincial planning meeting marked an important step in strengthening the Notre Dame mission and advancing the consolidation process of the Brazilian provinces. Together, the Sisters devised projects and defined actions for 2025, guided by shared dreams and the spirit of synodality.