

Osan Notre Dame Kindergarten Celebrates 50th Anniversary



Osan Notre Dame Kindergarten celebrated its 50th anniversary on October 2. The kindergarten began in 1972, when the pioneering sisters visited homes in the Osan area to survey the community's needs. They found a strong need for early childhood education. While preparing to establish a permanent kindergarten, some of the sisters operated a mobile kindergarten in the villages of Seori and Beoreumri, bringing education directly to the children. This initiative continued until February 1985.

In March 1975, a small kindergarten building accommodating 40 children was built in a pine forest, marking the beginning of what is now known as Osan Notre Dame's beautiful forest kindergarten. Sister Maria Hedwig Funke, a missionary from Germany, served as the first principal of Notre Dame Kindergarten, a role that was followed by 16 dedicated successors. Sister Maria Hedwig introduced Montessori education to Korea, laying a strong foundation for teacher training and children's education. To this day, her vision continues to shape the children of Osan Notre Dame Kindergarten in Montessori philosophy and pedagogy.

Reflecting on the school's spirit, Sr. Maria Alexandra shared: "Despite the significant increase in the number of children, we have maintained a family-like atmosphere. Children were able to move freely in the pine forest and the spacious kindergarten grounds. The teachers worked to bring out the treasures within each child, helping them become joyful and confident individuals and well-integrated members of the community. As a Catholic kindergarten, we strived to plant the seeds of love and courage for God in the children, hoping they would bear fruit later."

Thus began Osan Notre Dame Kindergarten, which this year proudly celebrates its 50th anniversary. Over time, it has nurtured 3,027 graduates, including five who went on to become Catholic priests.

The 50th anniversary ceremony brought together a diverse community of people. Among those in attendance were priests who graduated from Osan Notre Dame Kindergarten, sisters who had previously served at this kindergarten or were currently teaching in childhood education, as well as schoolchildren and their parents. In addition, many others who have had various shared connections with Osan Notre Dame Kindergarten attended this wonderful celebration.

As Osan Notre Dame Kindergarten celebrates its 50th anniversary and looks forward to another 50 years of educating young children, the community takes steps forward in faith and gratitude, praying for the day when we will gather again to celebrate its 100th anniversary.