

# **25th Anniversary of the Religious Profession of Sr. Patricia McCarron, SSND**

## **Introduction**

Let me begin by wishing the entire Notre Dame Prep community a happy Catholic schools week. While some of you may have been hoping to celebrate it with a little more snow, I, for one, am happy we could be together this morning, and for three reasons: First, it is my first opportunity to visit NDP and I'm glad it wasn't further delayed; Second, we are celebrating the 25th anniversary of Sister Patricia's profession as a School Sister of Notre Dame; Third, we also celebrating her tenth anniversary as headmistress of NDP and her 30th year of teaching at NDP. I think we'd all brave a blizzard to celebrate all that!

So, I'd like to speak for just a few moments about what all these anniversaries of Sr. Patricia means not only to NDP but also to the whole Church and to the wider community. And Sister Patricia, I hope you won't give me a detention for putting the spotlight on you!

## **Doing Good Work Well**

Let's begin with a simple fact. The School Sisters of Notre Dame are superb educators. Working side by side with a corps of dedicated lay women and men professionals, they provide their students with an education that is second to none. Success is measured not merely in test scores and other educational metrics but also in the truths, the values, and the virtues that take root in the minds and hearts of students who are blessed with an SSND education.

The alumnae know this and are grateful for the wonderful foundation they received here at NDP for their calling in life and for their professional lives as well. The Board knows this and were very smart when, ten years ago, they tapped Sister Patricia to be the headmistress. You are to be congratulated on making a wonderful choice! Parents who are investing in their daughters' futures know this and thus are willing to make the necessary sacrifices. But most of all, you the students are aware that

being at NDP is the opportunity of a life time.

The School Sisters of Notre Dame are doing a good work well. Sister Patricia exemplifies this beginning with her work as a math teacher at NDP some thirty years ago. (She began teaching here when she was only ten!) She does her work as a consummate professional, an innovative educator, and a great administrator—and the results are in to prove her effectiveness. So let's first express our appreciation for Sister Patricia's tremendous contribution to the educational excellence of NDP!

### **A Work Consecrated by the Love of Jesus**

But you, know, there are many wonderful educators in the world and over the years many of them have really changed our lives for the better. But there is something special about how the School Sisters of Notre Dame go about the work of educating and forming young mind and hearts. For the Sisters and their co-workers education is not merely good work it is a mission that is deeply rooted in the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ.

To see this, all we have to do is to recall the holy woman who founded the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1839, Blessed Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger. She understood the power of education to serve a vehicle for bringing to young minds and hearts the astonishing truth and joy of God's love. In fact, the good news of God's love for us was summed up in today's 2nd reading from the 1st Letter of John, where he writes: "Love, then, consists in this: not that we have loved God but that He has loved us and has sent his Son as an offering for our sins." The Mission Statement of the School Sisters of Notre Dame picks up on where it says: "Our Mission is to proclaim the good news as School Sisters of Notre Dame, directing our entire lives towards that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent. As He was sent to show the Father's love to the world, we are sent to make Christ visible by our very being, by sharing our love, faith, and hope."

In 1839 Blessed Theresa saw the need for young women to receive a good education yet what inspired other women to join her in that mission was the love of God that shined through personality and her energy. And so, Blessed Theresa, "longing for the oneness of all in God, grounded the School Sisters of Notre Dame in Eucharist, anchored it in poverty and dedicated it to Mary." She gathered together a group of

smart and dedicated women who, in the spirit of today's Gospel reading from St. Mark, were willing to leave everything behind to follow Jesus and to adopt a style of life that bears eloquent witness to the Gospel - a life of chastity, poverty, and obedience - in short, a life of self-giving love. Happily for the Archdiocese of Baltimore and for the Church in our country, the School Sisters of Notre Dame came here in 1847.

Twenty-five years ago, Sister Patricia was professed as a School Sister of Notre Dame, making vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience - embracing together with her fellow sisters a life of self-giving love, a love that is truthful, sturdy, and transformative. This isn't something she packs in her briefcase every morning or a persona that she dons just to get through the day - No, as the mission statement of the SSND's puts it, she is "making Christ visible" to you and to me "by her very being". It isn't just what she does or how she does but who she is as a School Sister. And because she and her fellow sisters share this charism so generously, happily it rubs off on us all and makes NDP a very special place indeed!

## **Conclusion**

So, Sr. Patricia, today we all want to offer you our heartfelt thanks on this day when we celebrate your multiple anniversaries, but especially the 25th anniversary of your religious profession. I pray that many young women will seriously consider following in your footsteps and that your witness to Christ through Catholic education will bear abundant fruit in the lives of many for many years to come!

God bless you and God keep you always in His love!