

Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur complete merger

Exactly 169 years after the first Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur arrived in Cincinnati to establish schools in the U.S., the sisters from the Ohio Province officially welcomed members of the congregation's Maryland Province as the two provinces completed a merger Oct. 31.

"There is a feeling of coming home for us," said Sister Marian Schaechtel, the former provincial of the Maryland Province and member of the transition leadership team. "Doors and hearts have been flung wide open to us, and we look forward to carrying on the 205-year-old mission of this congregation as members of the Ohio community."

Cincinnati will serve as the administrative headquarters for the combined communities, which will be led initially by a transition team of six sisters.

Ohio Province Leader Sister Marilyn Kerber said she was "delighted" to welcome the Maryland sisters.

"This change will expand the reach of our ministries and strengthen our community and mission," she said. "The merger increases the number of sisters from the new Ohio Province by 100 to a total of 271, and expands the reach of our ministries to 15 states and five countries."

To celebrate the merger, a special ritual was held simultaneously in Stevenson, Md., and Cincinnati, where the two communities have been administered. Trees were planted in Maryland and Ohio as a symbol of new life and growth - each bearing an engraved plaque with the words of congregation foundress St. Julie Billiart, "By this union we can become more."

Worldwide, the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur congregation is divided into 17 provinces. An international leadership team of five, headquartered in Rome, administers broad policy for the local provinces. With the Ohio and Maryland merger, there are now seven provinces in the U.S, each with leadership teams

holding canonical and legal responsibilities.

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur congregation was founded in Amiens, France in 1804. Today, 1,600 sisters serve in 32 states throughout the United States and in Belgium, Brazil, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa and Zimbabwe.

The Ohio Province was established on Oct. 31, 1840 and is the first Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur community in the United States.

The Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur are active in a wide array of ministries within the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Among the institutions they serve include St. Agnes Hospital in Baltimore, Our Lady of Good Counsel in Baltimore, St. Ursula School in Parkville, Sisters Academy of Baltimore, Maryvale Preparatory School in Brooklandville, Trinity School in Ellicott City, St. Vincent Care Center in Emmitsburg and Villa Julie Residence in Stevenson.