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**PRESS RELEASE
IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

School Sisters of Notre Dame Elect International Leadership Team, Set Future Direction

SÃO LEOPOLDO, Brazil – The School Sisters of Notre Dame have elected Sister Mary Maher, from the United States, as general superior to lead the international congregation and have developed a directional statement which will guide their 3,700 members during the next five years.

Sister Mary will work with a team of six general councilors who also were elected during the 22nd General Chapter in October in Brazil. They include Sister M. Irene Ksiazak, vicar, Poland; Sister Carol Jean Dust, United States; Sister Katherine DuVal, United States; Sister Maureen McGoey, Canada; Sister M. Dominca Michalke, Germany, and Sister Marcela Rockenbach, Brazil. The newly-elected General Council members will begin their five-year term when they are installed on Jan. 20 at the Generalate in Rome, Italy.

Sister Mary, who is in her second year as provincial leader of the Atlantic-Midwest Province in the United States, is the 11th successor to the foundress of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Blessed Mother Theresa of Jesus Gerhardinger. A native of Oceanside, N.Y., Sister Mary entered the Wilton, Conn., Province of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in 1968 and had her formation and professed her final vows in 1979 in Wilton.

Sister Mary holds a PhD. in Theology from the Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C., and taught theology at the Washington Theological Union, Villanova University, and the Seminary of the Immaculate Conception in New York. She served as provincial leader of the Wilton Province for five years, and she was elected as the first provincial leader of the newly formed Atlantic-Midwest Province comprised of the former provinces of Wilton, Baltimore, and Chicago.

Sister Mary succeeds Sister Rosemary Howarth from Canada, who has been international leader of the congregation for the past 10 years.

The directional statement, “Call to Solidarity,” developed by the members of the General Chapter, was the result of a congregation-wide reflection before the Chapter and intense dialogue during the Chapter on the urgent cries of the earth and its people and the SSND response as educators.

The “Call to Solidarity” focuses on three elements essential to the life and mission of the School Sisters of Notre Dame in more than 30 countries: a deeper living of their internationality for

the sake of the mission, a recommitment to their call to education that transforms and a readiness to celebrate and live Eucharist authentically.

Sister Mary and the newly elected general councilors will be responsible for helping to animate the congregation to live out this new “Call to Solidarity.”

“One of the most vexing problems facing humankind today is our inability to deal with difference, with those who are ‘other,’ except by way of hostility and violence,” Sister Mary said. “This fracturing of relationships is destroying families, cultures, societies, indeed, even the planet itself. I am convinced that the call to apostolic religious men and women today is to direct our efforts and lend our charisms in the service of reconciling the estranged ‘other’ on all these levels.

“The unifying mission of the School Sisters of Notre Dame and our ministry of transformative education place us at the heart of the world’s longing to live as one interconnected community. We look forward to collaborating with all peoples who share this vision for the future.”

The end of the Chapter on Oct. 24 marked the beginning of the congregation’s 175th Jubilee Year.

“Now is the hour for which we were founded – the transformation of the world into that oneness for which Jesus Christ was sent,” Sister Mary said in her closing remarks at the end of the Chapter. “Perhaps we could say that today is our re-Foundation Day. For now, at the start of our 175th year, we find ourselves in the hour of our true international solidarity for mission.”

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