Eulogy for Sister Mary Kristin Battles, SND
Sister Mary Ann Culpert, SND,
Superior General of the Sisters of Notre Dame

Archbishop Gomez and clergy, William and Susan and Sr. Kristin's family, Sr. Mary Dianne and our United States sisters, especially our sisters from the California area, our superiors and representatives from our world-wide provinces, friends and acquaintances of Sr. Mary Kristin:

On behalf of the Sisters of Notre Dame, I extend our sincere sympathy to William and Susan and Sr. Mary Kristin's family and all who grieve her loss. We continue to accompany you with our loving thoughts and prayers.

It is my honor and privilege to reflect with you on the life of our dear Sr. Mary Kristin.
Kristin's life was marked by a beautiful and strong network of relationships. She was joyfully welcomed as the first child of William and Claire Battles. One of my favorite stories about her childhood was how her mother shared with her that she was soon to be a big sister. Kristin was gifted with a new baby doll and her mother told her when the new baby came, they would both take care of their babies together! When her mom fed her baby, Kristin would feed her baby. When mom bathed the new baby, Kristin would bathe her baby, and so on. What a wonderfully creative way to prevent sibling jealously! When Kristin learned that another baby, Susan, was going to join the family, she asked her father if she would once again get a new baby doll! Over the years, she knew that William and Susan, and Leslie and Ryan and their families were there to support her and that she was blessed by your love.

Kristin enjoyed exploring her genealogy and family tree. After completing her term as Superior General, she had the great joy of traveling to Ireland with Susan to visit the places significant to her Irish ancestors. She made this trip as a sort of pilgrimage to immerse herself in the beauty and richness of her cultural and ancestral heritage, not simply as a tourist site seeing. About this trip she wrote, "It was a blessing to visit Ireland and to come to understand and appreciate the life of my ancestors. The hopes, dreams and struggles they experienced all combined to create me."

Due to her father's work, Sr. Kristin's family moved several times during her childhood years. Her first encounter with the Sisters of Notre Dame was at Notre Dame Academy elementary school when her family lived here in Los Angeles. Her father's work required the family to move again but when they returned to Los Angeles, she once again came into contact with the sisters at Notre Dame Academy where she attended secondary school. Being in many different schools and living in different places helped Kristin to enjoy new experiences and meeting new people.

While cherishing these relationships with family and friends, another relationship was deepening that would chart the course for the rest of her life. The God who had called her into life was inviting her to consider religious life, a vocation that would allow her to use her gifts of seeing and nurturing the good in others, creativity, energy, and love for the mission of Jesus. She shared many years later with one of her sisters here in California that when reading the Bible as a teenager she found the key to everything and wanted to live it. In her autobiography, Kristin wrote, "[At Notre Dame Academy] we learned much about India and the sisters' work there. I also joined the Sodality and began nurturing my prayer life. In my junior and senior years in high school I began thinking about a religious vocation. I felt

drawn to religious life but actually hesitated entering as I also enjoyed what would have been called at that time 'worldly pursuits.'" In 1964, three months after her high school graduation, she entered the Sisters of Notre Dame and began a life of love and service that became an adventure she never dreamed of.

Sr. Kristin had natural leadership ability and enjoyed pursuing ideas and projects that would improve the lives of others and serve the mission of the congregation. As one of the sisters shared with me, "Sr. Kristin never met an idea that she turned away!" As a teacher, school principal, member of our Notre Dame Education Association, provincial council member, Director of Province Advancement, provincial superior, and superior general, she enjoyed building relationships and empowering her colleagues and sisters to be and give their best in service to others. Kristin valued education and was a life-long learner. She enjoyed reading, webinars and conversations that opened her to new ideas and different ways of thinking, and she stressed the importance of continuing education among our sisters. Speaking kindly and with a purpose, she was known to say to others, "Have a productive day!"

The source of her positive energy, care for others and passion for the congregation was Jesus, the center of her life. Her personal vocation could be expressed in Jesus' words to Peter after the resurrection, "Feed my Sheep." Kristin desired to bring others into relationship with God. As provincial superior of the California province, she used the image of a "circle of friends" as a theme for reflection with the sisters. In a circle, all are equal, all contribute, and all have the ability to lead one another to God. Her spirituality was rooted in the unconditional love of God, expressed in her devotion to the Sacred Heart, a love that invited a response of love expressed in service. She was certified as a master catechist in the Archdiocese and also received her certification as a Spiritual Director, confirming her desire to help others grow in their relationship with God. Even during her final illness, a sister observed, "I thought I was helping accompany her to heaven, but I realized in her surrender and peaceful acceptance that she was accompanying me closer to God."

In 2001, Sr. Mary Kristin became the Provincial Superior of the California Province. She wrote, "I loved the ministry of provincial as it gave me an opportunity to help the sisters in various ways and work hard to establish an atmosphere where each sister could feel she was making an important contribution to the mission of the province." As a visionary and collaborative leader, Sr. Kristin found great joy in working with Sr. Mary Sujita and the General Leadership team as well as our sisters in Covington to further develop the mission in Uganda that had been started by the provinces of Covington and Thousand Oaks in 1995, when Sister Mary Joell was Superior General. Sister Mary Kristin enjoyed watching this mission grow and flourish. Her passport reflects that East Africa was the last place she traveled this past December in order to accompany our sisters there on retreat.

In her own reflections on her time as Provincial, Sr. Kristin saw her strengths as a good communicator with her sisters, focusing on ongoing spiritual development, leading with a positive and hopeful attitude and bringing energy and perseverance to her tasks. Her sisters reaffirmed these insights, sharing that Sr. Kristin was a compassionate listener, encouraging each sister to reach her full potential.

At our General Chapter in 2010, Sr. Kristin was elected to serve as the Congregation's 10th Superior General, a ministry that expanded her network of relationships worldwide. Found in some of her writings, she outlined goals for this ministry: "to carry out the work of the Chapter, show compassion

and love to all the sisters and emphasize relationships, introduce new styles of leadership and educate others to new leadership styles and to use my strengths to their best advantage."

As Superior General for 12 years, Sr. Kristin's vision and collaborative spirit helped to implement projects and processes that continue to serve the congregation – the development of the Spirituality Renewal Program and the Christology retreat as well as the SND Forward Leadership Program, hosting international conferences for our sisters ministering in health care and formation, and gatherings for our young sisters. She was especially grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with all our provinces to establish the Congregational Fund which continues to serve the needs of people throughout the world. Sr. Kristin wrote, "It was a privilege to visit our sisters around the world and see the wonderful work they were doing incarnating the love of our good and provident God. I tried hard to encourage them in all they were doing and to show appreciation for their cultures and their unique way of living the charism."

Sister's letters, conferences and communications to the congregation challenged and encouraged us to be gospel women focused on incarnating the love of our good and provident God in our communities and ministries. She invited us to a more global vision, to embrace Pope Francis' call to an integral ecology and to integrate more synodal ways of relating.

When her illness struck with such intensity, Sr. Kristin faced this with the same spirit of faith and strength that had marked her whole life. She peacefully surrendered herself into God's hands and the loving care of her sisters.

Kristin, we thank you for your presence and service to the congregation for almost 60 years, and the great joy and optimism with which you incarnated the love of God to all those whose lives you touched. While we miss you, we rejoice that you are in the presence of the God you loved so well. Please continue to intercede for the congregation and all your loved ones. As you wished others a productive day, we wish you a productive and blessed eternity!