

redemptive suffering and the goodness of God co-terminously in one single shape. To speak of the goodness of God on the very cross which is an instrument of suffering is to bring out once again the parallel with Julie's life; for she suffered, and yet she spoke only of God's goodness. The humility of the foundress, too, prompts the thought that the Notre Dame cross is not so much a badge of identification to show to the world, but rather a sign, like the divine sign within her, of which the sister must be the living expression.

That is why I could not work on something that would be more badge than cross. I had to avoid the kind of thing, which would attract by the graceful and pleasing line, something more suited to an ornament. There has to be austerity if the sign is to speak of strength and humility, and it is from these qualities that its beauty must derive. It was the clear and simple truth without embellishment or studied effect, which characterized all that Julie, said; that simplicity should also characterize this cross. Therefore the words must be

carved; they must be simple and rude rather than beautiful. The cross must be put on every day and worn in a spirit of gratitude and joy. The sisters must feel that it is living. It must appear old from the beginning.

The cross should be worn hanging from the neck, and this is a deliberate choice of style. It would be more practical to wear it as a pin. But what is practical must not take precedence here any more than it does in the liturgy. Rather, the sense, the dignity, the spirit take precedence. To hang the cross around the neck each morning is an act— that symbolizes the directing of one's life. To pin it on would make it a decoration. Moreover, this leaves the cross "free" — a worthier reflection of its significance.



SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME DE NAMUR

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PUT THIS
CROSS ON...



Ah!
qu'il est
BON LE
BON DIEU!

PUT THIS CROSS ON ...

Sister Colette Valschaerts, archivist of the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur, forwarded the words below which were found in the archives. They were spoken to each sister when she received her cross in 1966:

Put this cross on around your neck each day; it is an action, it is an orientation. This cross is not a sign chosen among others, it is the sign 'par excellence' of the "follower of Christ," the sign to which each Sister of Notre Dame adheres. This is the reason why the letters ND are inscribed at the center, at the heart of the Cross; it is a sign of our identification with it. The humility and the integrity of Julie Billiart inspired the austerity and the ruggedness of the design. The text, "Ah! Qu'il EST BON le bon Dieu" is purposely carved so as to cover the entire surface, thus reflecting the depth of the soul of one who knew suffering, yet who never ceased to speak of the goodness of God.



REFLECTIONS ON THE NOTRE DAME CROSS BY THE ARTIST, J. WILLAME

"I will give you an Institute which will be marked by my cross." These words were a part of Julie's vision at Compiègne and they bring out the importance and value of the cross as a sign of the congregation from the beginning.

Julie had a unique love of the cross, a love which inspired a profound self-emptying before Christ crucified and an openness to receive the riches won for us by his death. Her attitude was complete self-giving and complete receptivity. This suggests that, to express her spirit, one must remain

close to the simple idea of the cross. I had to avoid making something that would be merely a reminder or a remembrance. I had to do the very opposite: make a cross that would express the identification of the wearer with the mystery of the crucified Christ now, a cross which would be a living sign.

Such a sign cannot be a badge that you choose from among a variety of possible emblems, the cross being one of them. It must be a reality that is the very expression of the congregation's spirit, lived out in the firm adherence of the Sisters of Notre Dame to the cross of Christ. That is why the letters N D are inscribed in the center at the front of the cross, at the point of meeting, at its very heart. So placed, they express the self-surrender and receptivity of the sister in face of the love of Christ manifest on the cross, for the cross IS Christ's sign par excellence.

On the reverse side are the words that Julie used so often: "How good God is!" They are spread so as to, cover the whole available surface, with the idea of expressing the two concepts of