

FEATURE

Endowment gives teacher time for enrichment

By Lee Strong
Associate editor

A vacation trip to England often involves visits to quaint towns and villages to see the sights and get a taste of history. And for many tourists, an excursion to the theater is a must.

On her current trip to England, Sister Marion Hctor, SSJ, is indeed making trips to quaint communities. But in her case, they are Oxford and Cambridge universities, and the history she is tasting is being supplied in part by seminars on the medieval church and medieval politics.

As for the theater, the Nazareth College English professor did go to see a production of Sophocles' *Antigone* — performed in Greek.

During a July 29 telephone interview with the *Catholic Courier*, Sister Hctor acknowledged with a laugh that her itinerary would not be everyone's cup of tea.

"When really this is your field of interest, it's really quite delightful," she said from the home of a friend in Oxford.

Sister Hctor is in England from July 19 to Aug. 15 thanks to funds from Nazareth College's Caroline and Kilian Schmitt Endowed Chair for scholarly achievement. On May 1, she became the first person to receive the chair, the first such chair created at Nazareth College.

"I'm really very pleased about it, and

grateful that the college chose me for it," said Sister Hctor, herself a 1954 graduate of Nazareth. "I really felt the college was giving me a kind of reward."

Indeed, the honor was presented to Sister Hctor because of her long commitment to teaching, scholarship and the college, acknowledged Rose Marie Beston, Nazareth's president.

That commitment has involved not only her teaching duties since 1958, but also her work as vice president for academic affairs between 1973 and 1987.

The couple who gave the money for the chair — the late Caroline and Kilian Schmitt — were concerned with supporting quality education, giving money to the Rochester Institute of Technology and the University of Rochester in addition to Nazareth College, Beston said.

"Their philosophy of life was they wanted to give their wealth back to people,"



Sister Marion Hctor,
SSJ

Beston said. "When we talked to Kilian about the endowment, we talked about honoring the faculty of this college because they are the most important asset of the college."

The three-year endowment allows Sister Hctor to have a reduced class load so she can pursue studies — and requires that she give a lecture at some point about those studies. It also provides funds to help cover her salary, office space and research expenses, and for travel to pursue studies. The trip to England is the first use Sister Hctor is making of the endowment.

Over the next three years, she plans to enrich her knowledge of medieval history and politics, as she is doing at the seminars in England. Those studies will help provide background for the medieval literature courses she teaches, she said.

In addition, Sister Hctor plans to delve into T.S. Eliot's views of Greek drama — techniques of which he used in his own plays.

But her main focus will be to continue her research of Victorian writer Matthew Arnold, about whom she wrote her doctoral dissertation at Cornell University. That dissertation was published by the University of Chicago Press in 1968 as *Matthew Arnold's Essays and Criticism; First Series: A Critical Study*.

"What I'm interested in doing is reim-

mersing myself in some of that material," Sister Hctor said. "My real interest is in the the next cycle of works that he did."

In that next series of essays he tried to make sense of religion, Sister Hctor explained.

"He had a great admiration of Cardinal Newman," Sister Hctor continued, "and I think that may have had something to do with his trying to get into faith and not watching the religion of his time go down the drain."

Sister Hctor said one of the joys of the endowed chair is that she will have the luxury to pursue these studies — something she did not enjoy while teaching full time or caught up in administrative duties.

"You really do need some sustained blocks of time so you can get into some depth," she said.

Admittedly, the topics she will be researching are likely to prove too esoteric to share in any detail with her undergraduate students, Sister Hctor observed. But that's not the point of the chair.

"It's really to deepen and enrich my interest in areas I've had to put on hold because of my teaching," Sister Hctor said. "It's a way to keep interest alive and put some ideas together and make some interpretations you haven't seen anywhere else."

Even if they are Greek to most people.

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