

Notre Dame Sisters: Dumbarton celebrations September 2012

The Cantata: Julie the Smiling Saint



Many Sisters, former pupils and friends gathered in St. Michael's Church, Dumbarton, on 5th September 2012, for the first event of the celebrations - a service, with Mgr. Clancy, parish priest, to celebrate and thank God for more than a century of dedication by the Sisters of Notre Dame to the people of Dumbarton.



The highlight of the occasion was the performance of the Cantata 'Julie Billiard - The Smiling Saint' by the children of St. Michael's Primary School. Apart from Primary 1, who behaved like 'angels', the whole school, led by Andrea Steele at the keyboard, sang 9 lively songs capturing key aspects of Julie's life - as a special person, a joyful child, the family living through hard times, her illness, the French Revolution, life at Compiègne and Amiens and the beginnings of the Sisters of Notre Dame



As the songs changed so did the tableaux (see the paintings to the left and above by Sister Callista SND) in which groups of children, in appropriate costume, glided up and down the centre aisle to the sanctuary to provide us with visual reminders of the era in which Julie lived and worked.



As the children waited for the service and cantata to begin, their faultless behaviour was assisted by the lovely harp music provided by Noel Donnelly. The photograph on the left shows him with Brother Stephen E Smyth, the author of the libretto of the Cantata for which Mgr Gerry Fitzpatrick wrote the music.

Julie McGrogan, the head teacher, and Sr Jean showed a fully justified pride not only in the delightful performance and behaviour of the children, but in recounting the years and the characters among the Sisters involved from the historic beginning more than a century ago up to the present day. We left the Church for a welcome cup of tea in the parish hall with the refrain ringing in our ears:

Oh, the good God, Oh, the good God, qu'il est bon, est bon le Bon Dieu.
Oh, the good God, Oh, the good God, the good God is so very good.



The last two pictures show sisters Pat and Maureen with the statuette of St Julie