

POWER OF ONE: Impact of St. Julie Billiard

By Sister Huguette Georges, SNDdeN

St. Julie Billiard died on April 8, 1816 in Namur, Belgium.

As she was dying, she sang Mary's *Magnificat* in French.

"My soul magnifies the Lord... All generations will call me blessed."

Like Mary, for whom she named her Congregation, Julie made a lasting impact on our world, especially on five continents where the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur live and serve in ministry. Her life, spirituality and values have inspired and influenced generations of children and adults **for two centuries**.



Students in Namur celebrate St. Julie.



Sr. Suzanne DeMeersman discusses plans for the Bicentenary with Directors of Notre Dame schools.

At a March 2015 gathering of Directors of Schools in Belgium and France, Sr. Suzanne DeMeersman, Province Moderator, stimulated ideas and touched hearts for celebrating this anniversary of St. Julie Billiard's death. In June 2015, Sr. Marie-Thérèse Béget gathered a committee of school directors, alumnae/ alumni, the General Archivist and Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur from the two Belgian Provinces. Beginning with an inquiry sent to schools for proposed activities, the planning evolved for **ways to celebrate the 200th anniversary as a Notre Dame Family**. School administrators, teachers and staff agreed on the importance of networking for this bicentenary and working as colleagues in a united effort.

The festivities will begin on **April 8, 2016** and conclude at the time of Christmas vacation. All schools are sending information and plans to Sr. Marie-Thérèse by September 2016.

Some ideas for all the schools are already in process:

- A **flash drive** containing information about the life of St. Julie and her founding of the Congregation will be distributed to all schools.
- A **newspaper**, called *The Julie Relay*, will include news and information about bicentenary activities/events in the schools.



The choir from the school at Saint-Hubert prepare to sing on St. Julie's anniversary at St. Gilles Church.

- **Plaques** will be posted on April 11, 2016 at the entrance of all schools in Belgium and France. These plaques will say:

“You are here in a school which lives the values of St. Julie Billiart and where each person finds his/her place and works with joy.”

This effort emphasizes the strength of an educational system in which all experience joy and a sense of belonging.

- On the 8th day of each month, **good words** of St. Julie will be given to students and teachers for reflection and for learning life lessons taught by Julie.
- Groups of students and teachers will visit the **Heritage Centre** in Namur so that they will know and remember for a long time the origins and life of our Congregation.



Certain schools in Belgium and France have planned varied celebrations:

- In **Berchem**, a digital screen will appear in front of the school with images and quotations from St. Julie. All girls with the name Julie will receive a gift.
- In **Namur**, on May 3, 2016, the students will release hundreds of white balloons with cards attached, rising in the sky in Namur. On each card will be written the sentence: *“I feel deeply for Namur something which touches my heart.”* Who knows if one of these balloons, landing on firm earth, will be a messenger of the spirit of St. Julie for one or other person picking it up on the side of the road or in the center of a garden.
- In **Saint-Hubert**, the school is making a CD with songs on St. Julie which will include also those of Sr. Marie-Ange Bonmariage.
- In **Orvilliers-Sorel**, the school is inviting all groups of pilgrims to come while they are visiting the birthplace of St. Julie in Cuvilly.

Will you join these schools in organizing some event or project for the Bicentenary Year? The schools in Belgium and France **invite and encourage other schools** on five continents to communicate any events and activities that you will be doing this year.

Has **the power of this one person, Julie**, influenced you and does she have an impact on your life today? How will you celebrate the life and gift of St. Julie Billiart? May this Jubilee Year strengthen the bonds of our Notre Dame Family and announce to the world that *God is Good.*