

Celebrating Nano Being Declared Venerable
Sandy's Nano Celebration Reflection from Cork - November 21, 2013
November 21st ... A Profound Experience
By Sandy Butler, PBVM, NL Canada



November 21st, 2013!!!! How does one ever capture the words to express the energy and excitement among those gathered in St. Finbarr's South Church in Cork, Ireland, to celebrate the recognition of Nano by the Universal Church as a woman of great courage, faith, and heroic virtue! Of course, many of us far and near have most likely known this for quite some time.

I woke up that morning and looked out at the sky from Ballygriffin, where Terry Abraham, Mary Hanrahan and I had stayed the night before. I wondered how many mornings Nano must have woken up to this same sky as a young girl.

When we arrived at the church, there was already great bustling taking place as last minute preparations were put into place. In proper Presentation style, we had a practice for the various rituals that were to take place and so there was a beehive of activity ... children practicing a dance, the choir doing last minute fine tuning on some of their songs, others bringing up different items in procession. In the midst of all this, Frances Murphy, one of the Congregational leaders, and who was here for IPA, as some of you might remember, was doing her best to organize those of us who were carrying banners and lanterns to represent our Presentation presence in different parts of our world. What was a little chaotic beforehand turned into a beautiful celebration.

After the practice, we headed to the graveyard where Nano is buried to participate in a ritual there. There was singing, readings, prayers and an army band whose music filled the air. With the band leading us, we then marched to the church where 800 hundred people had gathered ... full capacity for this small church, where Nano had spent many hours in prayer. There were probably about 500 sisters and distinguished guests and 200 from the parish in attendance. The liturgy began with a beautiful processional dance by the children from Scoil Aiseiri Christ School who carried flags representing all the countries where there is a Presentation presence today. I thought how delighted Nano would be to have the children involved.

Sr. Mary Hoare, the Leader of Southwest Province, gave a warm welcome to all present, followed by a procession of significant symbols, led by Sr. Anne Lyons ... the book of life with all the names of the sisters who have died, the annals from South West Convent, the Earth Ball representing our presence throughout the world and our connection with the universe, water from the Blackwater and soil from Nano's beloved Ballygriffin. Bishop Buckley was the main celebrant and there was a fine show of many clergy from the surrounding areas.

Sr. Lucy Troy, who was appointed Postulator for the Cause of Nano Nagle in Rome, gave the reflection and spoke about the significance of Nano's decisions to enter the novitiate in France and then the decision to return home to Ireland. Sr. Mary Deane, Congregational Leader, gave a wonderful thank you to all who came and participated and to those who gave so much of their time to get ready for this momentous occasion. One of the people Mary mentioned specifically was Sister Pius, whom I understand was relentless in her pursuit of having Nano recognized by our church in this manner. I heard many say that day, Pius had to do the remaining work from the other side!!!

When the time came to carry the banner and receive our lantern, a symbol to fan the flame and carry Nano's light forward into the future, I felt privileged to represent us and carried all of you in my heart. It was a very moving experience as Kathleen Fahy from the Galway community and I and walked side by side ... the connections between our homeland and Galway being even more prominent for me in that moment. There was great energy as Presentation Presence filled the altar space. And as we all proudly processed out of the church carrying our banners and lanterns high, Nano's words, "If I could be of service in any part of the world, I will willingly do so" and "There is no greater joy than to be in union" filled my mind and my heart.

What a privilege to be part of such a momentous event. I am truly grateful for having been given the opportunity.

With much gratitude and love,
Sandy

