

**Tribute to the Music Ministry
(instrumental, vocal, choral, [school and
parish], and orchestra) of Sisters of St.
Joseph of Sault Ste. Marie
(Prepared by Sr. Mary Sammon)**

**Brief summaries of each deceased Sister
Music Teacher's Music Studies and
Music Ministry (more complete
biographies – where available – are in
the Life Story and Deceased Sisters
Binders).**

(Researched by Sr. Marie McGirr)

**Our living Sisters involved in the
ministry of musical education;**

Sr. Immaculata

Sr. Bonnie Chesser

Sr. Leah Gauthier

Sr. Barbara Ianni

Sr. Shirley McNamara

Sr. Marion MacDonell

Sr. Regina Rousseau

Sr. Mary Sammon

How shall we bring people together?

How shall we enter into relationships where the heart, mind and soul experience beauty as one unifying gift?

How can we help ourselves and others produce art, oneness and joy through discipline, talent, and hard work?

How shall we evangelize and form children into instruments of grace and goodness through the beauty of music?

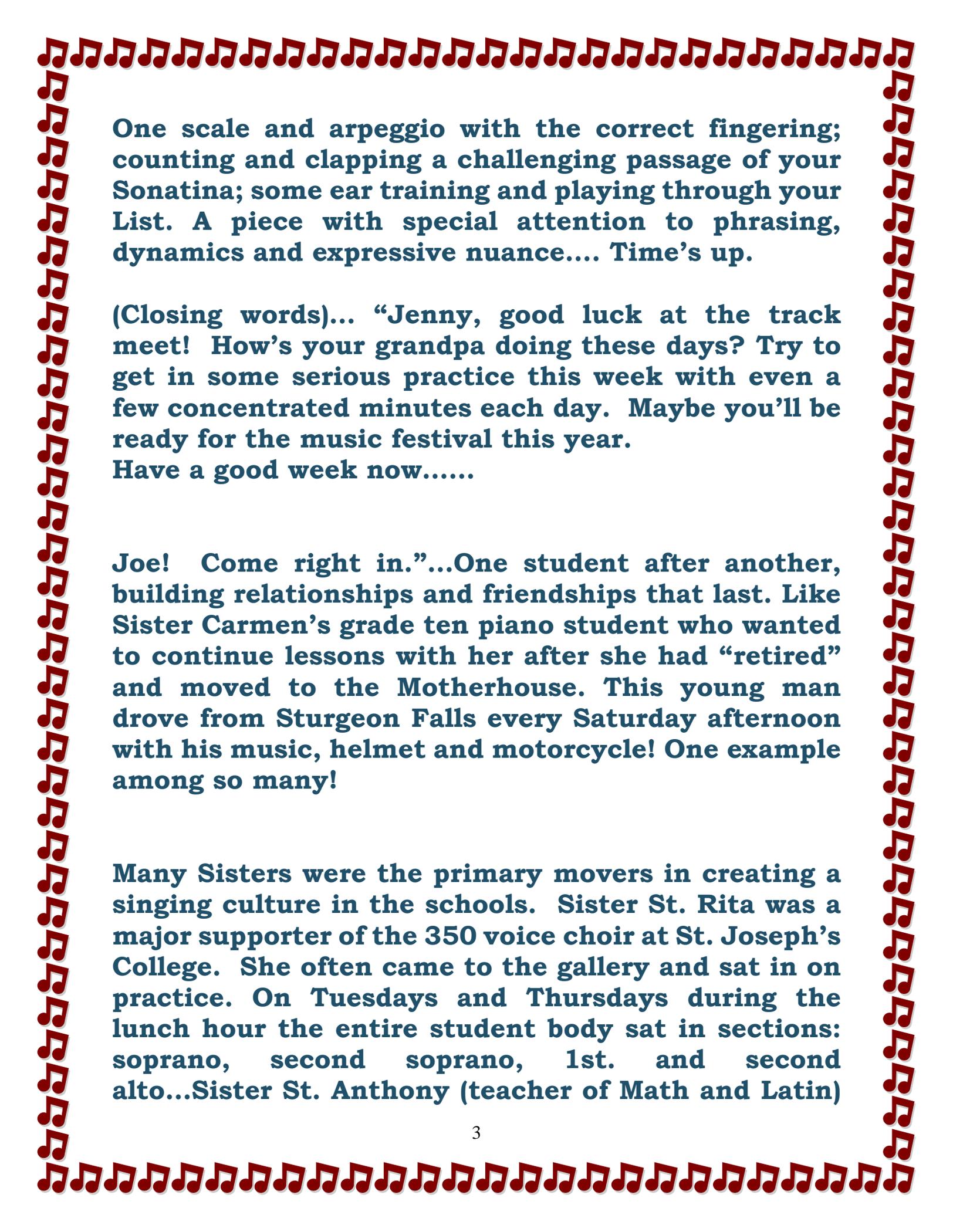
How will our work help to support our schools and hospitals which do not receive government funding?

Let us begin with private piano and violin instruction... Students scheduled in half hour segments: 7.30 a.m. - 9a.m.; 12-1.30; 3.30-5.00; 6.30-9 p.m.

One-on-one instruction: Example: Sister Basilla with “Jenny “

Students coming often with little or no practice since their last lesson!

“Come right in and let’s see how much we can accomplish in this half hour...”

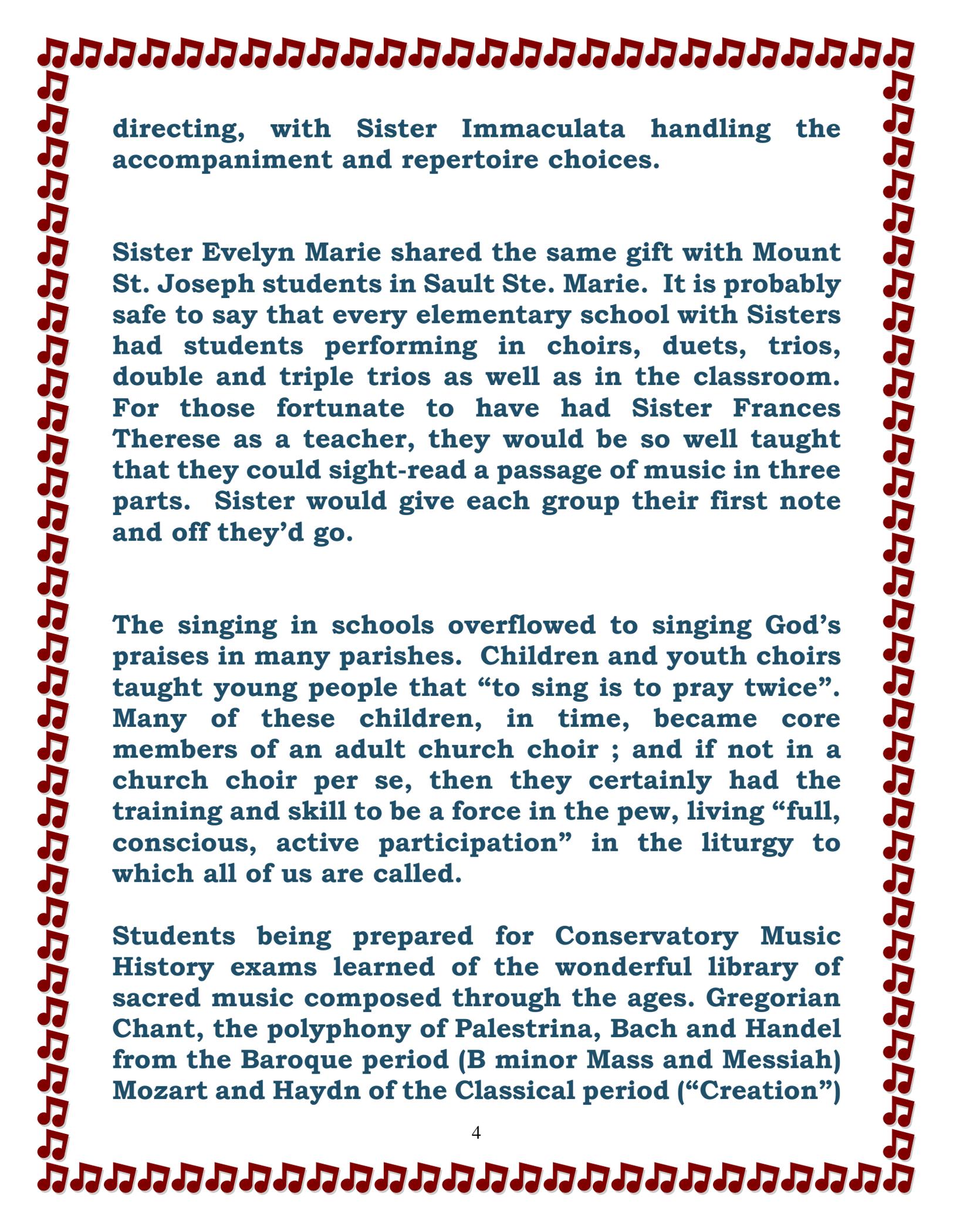


One scale and arpeggio with the correct fingering; counting and clapping a challenging passage of your Sonatina; some ear training and playing through your List. A piece with special attention to phrasing, dynamics and expressive nuance.... Time's up.

(Closing words)... “Jenny, good luck at the track meet! How’s your grandpa doing these days? Try to get in some serious practice this week with even a few concentrated minutes each day. Maybe you’ll be ready for the music festival this year. Have a good week now.....

Joe! Come right in.”...One student after another, building relationships and friendships that last. Like Sister Carmen’s grade ten piano student who wanted to continue lessons with her after she had “retired” and moved to the Motherhouse. This young man drove from Sturgeon Falls every Saturday afternoon with his music, helmet and motorcycle! One example among so many!

Many Sisters were the primary movers in creating a singing culture in the schools. Sister St. Rita was a major supporter of the 350 voice choir at St. Joseph’s College. She often came to the gallery and sat in on practice. On Tuesdays and Thursdays during the lunch hour the entire student body sat in sections: soprano, second soprano, 1st. and second alto...Sister St. Anthony (teacher of Math and Latin)

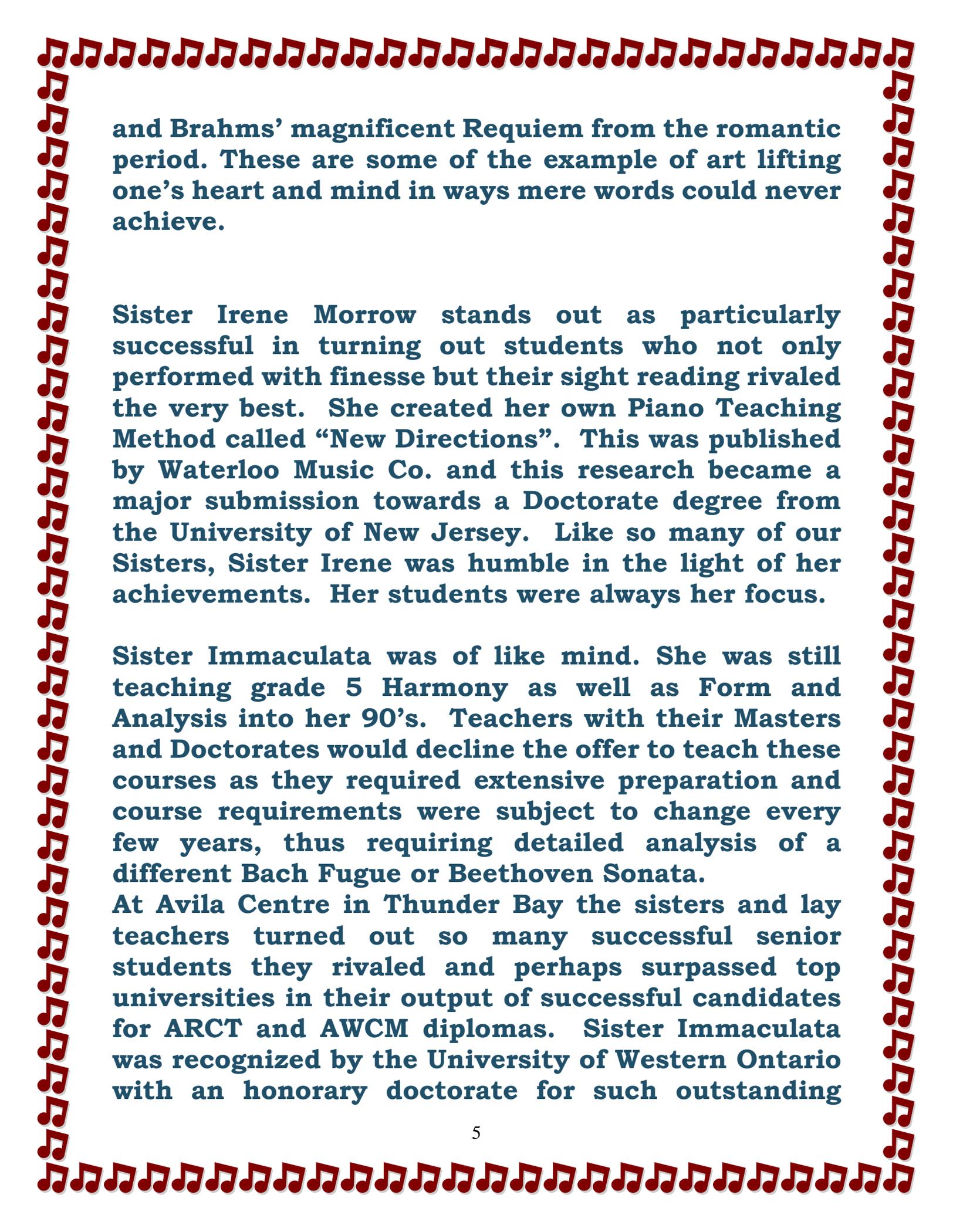


directing, with Sister Immaculata handling the accompaniment and repertoire choices.

Sister Evelyn Marie shared the same gift with Mount St. Joseph students in Sault Ste. Marie. It is probably safe to say that every elementary school with Sisters had students performing in choirs, duets, trios, double and triple trios as well as in the classroom. For those fortunate to have had Sister Frances Therese as a teacher, they would be so well taught that they could sight-read a passage of music in three parts. Sister would give each group their first note and off they'd go.

The singing in schools overflowed to singing God's praises in many parishes. Children and youth choirs taught young people that "to sing is to pray twice". Many of these children, in time, became core members of an adult church choir ; and if not in a church choir per se, then they certainly had the training and skill to be a force in the pew, living "full, conscious, active participation" in the liturgy to which all of us are called.

Students being prepared for Conservatory Music History exams learned of the wonderful library of sacred music composed through the ages. Gregorian Chant, the polyphony of Palestrina, Bach and Handel from the Baroque period (B minor Mass and Messiah) Mozart and Haydn of the Classical period ("Creation")

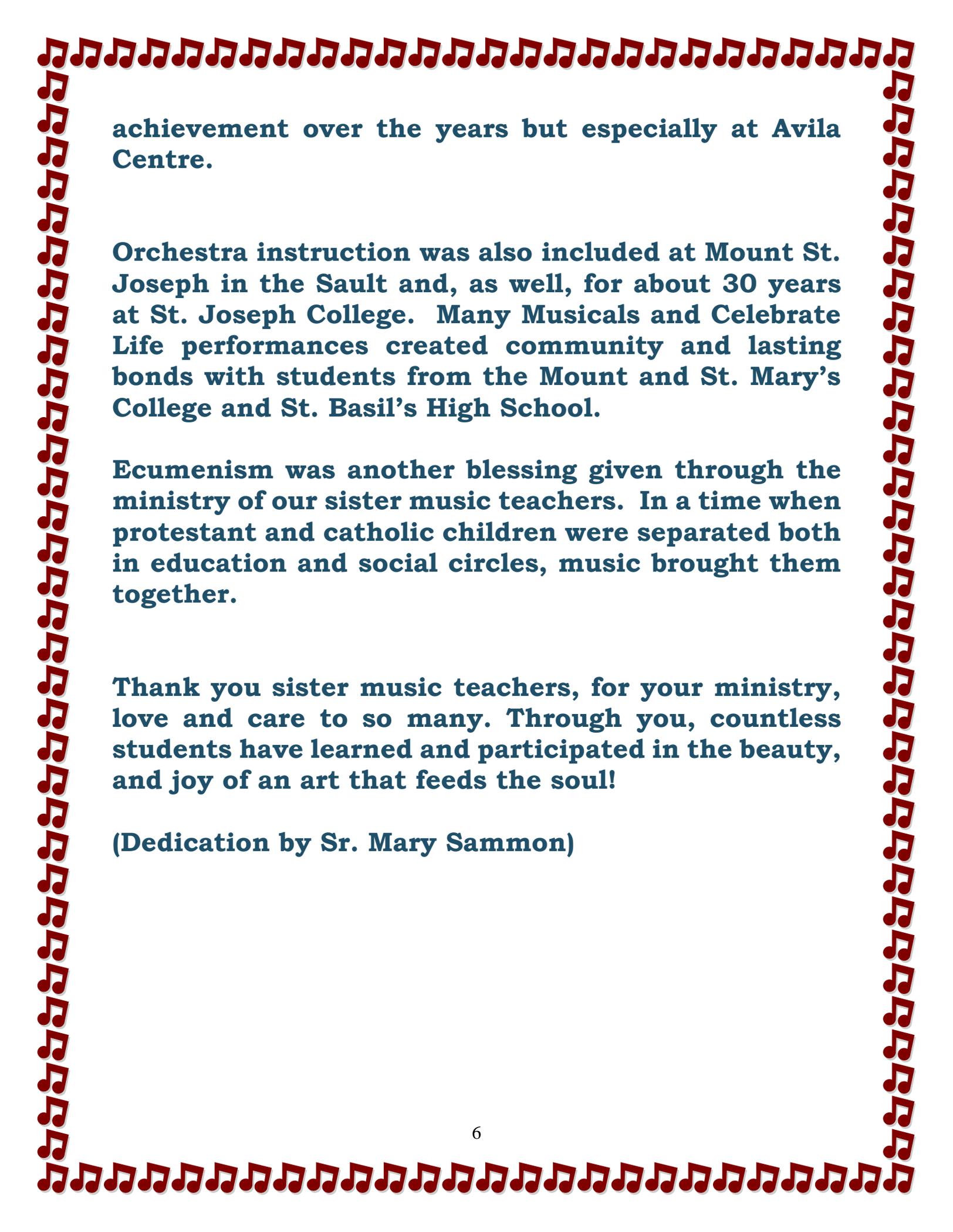
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and Brahms' magnificent Requiem from the romantic period. These are some of the example of art lifting one's heart and mind in ways mere words could never achieve.

Sister Irene Morrow stands out as particularly successful in turning out students who not only performed with finesse but their sight reading rivaled the very best. She created her own Piano Teaching Method called "New Directions". This was published by Waterloo Music Co. and this research became a major submission towards a Doctorate degree from the University of New Jersey. Like so many of our Sisters, Sister Irene was humble in the light of her achievements. Her students were always her focus.

Sister Immaculata was of like mind. She was still teaching grade 5 Harmony as well as Form and Analysis into her 90's. Teachers with their Masters and Doctorates would decline the offer to teach these courses as they required extensive preparation and course requirements were subject to change every few years, thus requiring detailed analysis of a different Bach Fugue or Beethoven Sonata.

At Avila Centre in Thunder Bay the sisters and lay teachers turned out so many successful senior students they rivaled and perhaps surpassed top universities in their output of successful candidates for ARCT and AWCN diplomas. Sister Immaculata was recognized by the University of Western Ontario with an honorary doctorate for such outstanding



achievement over the years but especially at Avila Centre.

Orchestra instruction was also included at Mount St. Joseph in the Sault and, as well, for about 30 years at St. Joseph College. Many Musicals and Celebrate Life performances created community and lasting bonds with students from the Mount and St. Mary's College and St. Basil's High School.

Ecumenism was another blessing given through the ministry of our sister music teachers. In a time when protestant and catholic children were separated both in education and social circles, music brought them together.

Thank you sister music teachers, for your ministry, love and care to so many. Through you, countless students have learned and participated in the beauty, and joy of an art that feeds the soul!

(Dedication by Sr. Mary Sammon)