

Chant à Sainte Jeanne d'Arc

Hugh drew our attention, earlier, to the singing of the La Marseillaise in the Assemblée Nationale.

That is the France we all know, modern France, the France of revolution and laicite.

But there is another France, equally real, still present if less obviously visible, a France that was invoked in the profoundly moving "Open Letter to the President of France from General Antoine Martinez" to which Hugh has also drawn our attention. I quote from that letter – "La France est un vieux pays qui a une histoire de deux mille ans et qui est depuis quinze siècles un pays catholique même si la sécularisation est passée par là. Elle possède donc un héritage historique, spirituel et culturel qui a fait ce qu'elle est et que nous avons à défendre, à faire fructifier, et à transmettre".

"France is an old country which has a history of two thousand years and that has been for fifteen centuries a Catholic country...She possesses an inheritance historic, spiritual and cultural that has made her what she is and which it is ours to defend, to make fruitful, and to pass on". (Apologies for the infelicities of my schoolgirl French). That is the France who was traditionally known as "the eldest daughter of the (Catholic) church", the France that counts its history as a Christian country from the time of the baptism of Clovis King of the Franks by St Remi (Remigius).

And that is why I have posted, here, a beautiful rendition of the hymn, or prayer, of St Therese of Lisieux – herself now one of the Catholic patron saints of France – that fervently seeks the intercession of another patron saint of France, the little peasant girl who became a leader of armies, Joan of Arc.

'Sainte Jeanne de France, priez, priez pour nous.' – "Holy

Jeanne of France, pray, pray for us".