

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 49, Nº 2 | APRIL • MAY • JUNE 2022



To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923

*100 Years
of an Undaunted Mission*

**COMMITTING
TO CHANGE**

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS - 2022

APRIL

For health care workers: We pray for the health care workers who serve the sick and the elderly, especially in the poorest countries; may they be adequately supported by governments and local communities.

MAY

For faith-filled young people: We pray for all young people called to live life to the fullest; may they see in Mary's life an example of listening, of depth of discernment, of the courage that faith generates and of dedication to service.

JUNE

For families: We pray for Christian families around the world; may they embody and experience unconditional love and advance in holiness in their daily lives.

Masses for readers' intentions offered in the following countries:

January: **Canada** • February: **Cuba**
March: **Philippines** • April: **Haiti**
May: **Canada** • June: **Bolivia**
July: **Malawi & Zambia**
August: **Hong Kong & Taiwan**
September: **Madagascar**
October: **Peru** • November: **Japan**
December: **Canada**

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Athletes of Life



Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Just a few weeks ago, I was glued to my television screen, watching the performance of athletes from all over the world at the Beijing 2022 Olympics. Always higher, always faster, always giving it their all to win medals. Then, there it was: Canada's first gold medal! Max Parrot, a cancer survivor from the province of Quebec, was now a gold medalist in slopestyle snowboarding. I was filled with admiration for his achievement and with emotion as I listened to Canada's national anthem played on Chinese land. My heart was filled with pride for the courage of this young athlete who lives the motto, *hope, dream, achieve*.

These young athletes have overcome many obstacles to gain their victories: daily effort without respite. Whether they are tired or not, they must go on. Sometimes suffering harassment from coaches, and even psychological abuse, their strength is conquering the promised victory. Nowadays, competition is fierce. Athletes cannot afford to make mistakes. Victory is calculated by the centimetre and the second. How demanding!

HOPE, DREAM, ACHIEVE

In our ever-changing world, performance always demands more and ambition wants more. Life has its demands, and many people dream of achieving their deepest desires at the cost of many renunciations. Are they not the athletes of Life? Women like Marie Rivier, Pauline Jaricot, Délia Tétrault

gave the best of themselves to help humanity, while making the benefits of God known. Their motto, of mutual aid, solidarity and compassion, was rooted in the words of Jesus: *I came so that they might have life, and have it in abundance.*¹

Today, the Church is tracing out a synodal path for us to open up to the other. Communion, participation, mission: these three words make demands on any disciple of Jesus. Like the athletes of Beijing, let us give our best to obtain a crown that will not perish. We have just gone through two demanding pandemic years, during which caring for others has required openness, commitment and the gift of self. The small part I can contribute is a blessing for the life of the other and for my own. In his letter, Saint James tells us, *Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.* Isn't this a great opportunity to realize our dreams of self-sacrifice, just as the flower knows how to blossom upon the arrival of spring.

May these texts inspire us to want *to commit ourselves to change* for the better. Let us be athletes of Life.

Happy reading! ☺

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

¹ John 10:10

DREAM & CHANGE



Sterlin Pantal

Who has never dreamed of change? Who has never longed for new vistas?

Dreaming of change is a legitimate, natural quest that's part of human existence. We all dream of changes, large and small, personal and collective; changes that we consider normal and useful, others that we think are desirable though not essential.

We clamor for change all day long, without necessarily thinking ahead and understanding the new realities these changes would bring with them, were they to occur. That's because our thirst for change isn't always accompanied by a clear willingness or an active desire for it to materialize. Hence, the intrinsic relationship between change and commitment. We're not talking here about *a commitment to committing*, but rather a real, active and immediate commitment. Without such a commitment, *change* is just a harmless word, a utopia.

THE DESIRE FOR CHANGE, WITHOUT A SINCERE AND GENUINE COMMITMENT, IS A DREAM THAT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME A NIGHTMARE.

We often hear people say, with good reason, that they want to change their country. It is this same desire, without the accompanying commitment, that more often than not pushes them to go to another country—sometimes voluntarily, often forcibly. What a paradox!

Indeed, the desire for change, without a sincere and genuine commitment, is a dream that has the potential to become a nightmare. It is a contradiction that often leads us to the abandonment of our most sincere wishes, and to avoidance, disillusionment and exile.

Our thirst for change is so great that it sometimes eclipses the obvious reality that change will never happen on its own. Even the simple desire for a change of scenery, to breathe fresh air, brings with it a mental and physical workload. For it involves an awareness that our current scenery and the air we breathe, which are, by the way, gifts from God (or from nature, if you prefer), are no longer suitable or pure, at least in the very short term.

CHANGE OF SCENERY REQUIRES ACTION

But that's not all! This awareness alone will not be enough to bring us a fresh view or fresher air. Action is required: We have to move ourselves physically to where the air is as we think it should be. We may have to walk many miles

to find a body of water, a park or a mountain. Suddenly our search for fresh air turns into a quest for nature, for something larger, higher, farther—the unknown.

If a simple change of scenery requires so much effort, commitment and overcoming, then imagine for a moment *changing the world!* Imagine changing the inhumane living conditions of several million human beings.

The true definition of change is commitment. Because no anthropic change can take place without **ACTION**: individual or collective actions, actions for oneself and for others, good and true actions, actions toward our ideas, actions guided by our best values.

Even some of the changes that, until recently, we considered natural are the result of our collective actions. Think of climate change. What this implies is that changes to repair our collective action, inaction and omissions, our wilful blindness, which triggered the main scourges of our time, will require strong, urgent and collaborative group action.

A MISSION FOR ALL

We must therefore commit ourselves to change. This commitment to change is at once a duty, a mission and a vocation: a duty for every citizen who is aware that we are all one, human family; a mission for every human being imbued with the sanctity of life; a vocation for all baptized people filled with faith and the message of the Gospel.

Next time you feel a thirst for **CHANGE**, I encourage you to find a way to **ENGAGE**. Because hoping for change without committing is merely dreaming. And dreaming too much increases the likelihood of realities turning into nightmares, as time is running out. 🌊

THE CHURCH AS SANCTUARY



Maurice Demers

The story of the Rodriguez-Flores family, who sought refuge in the Plymouth-Trinity United Church in Sherbrooke, following a threat of deportation to Mexico by the Canadian government, reminds us of the long-standing Christian tradition of using places of worship as a sanctuary to protect fugitives from government orders considered unjust. It is interesting to look back at the use of this tradition of sanctuary, which we must acknowledge is unusual, because in order for people to find refuge in a place of worship, the faith community associated with the church in question must be willing to support the refugees and commit to changing what is perceived as an unjust situation.

LOOKING BACK

While there has been an upsurge in the use of sanctuary rights in Canada since the 1990s, this recourse has a much longer history. We must go back to antiquity to see the first examples of refugees being welcomed in places of worship. There are examples among the Hebrews and the Greeks. Cases can also be found in the Middle Ages. However, in modern times, the divisions within Christianity and the wars of religion that followed made the use of this last resort for people fleeing the dictates of state and law more complex. The creation of contemporary states following the French Revolution, where religious power was no longer a counterweight to civil power, clarified the secular nature of the rule of law. Nevertheless, given that society was highly religious in the

19th century and much of the 20th, modern states have respected this right to sanctuary, which is not codified in any legal system.

HOSTING IN CANADA

The first examples of this remedy in Canada go back to the 19th century. The first case was that of Solomon Moseby, a slave from Kentucky, who fled to Canada in 1837. The black Canadian community, free since the abolition of slavery in 1834, mobilized to support him and prevent his extradition. In 1863, a group of runaway slaves sought refuge in Canada with army deserters to escape the violence of the American Civil War. Most of these cases did not find refuge in a church. But in 1880, a group of the Friars Minor Capuchin Order, a branch of the Franciscans, who had been expelled from France, found refuge in Canada and settled at Deux-Montagnes Lake, Quebec.

LACK OF HOSPITALITY

Despite these few examples of refugees who were taken in during the 19th century, Canada was not really considered a welcoming place for people fleeing from oppression until after the Second World War. Consider just two examples: In 1923, the Canadian government passed an Order In Council that excluded immigrants *of any Asian race*, while in 1939, Canada turned away the SS St. Louis, a ship that had left Nazi Germany with hundreds of Jews on board. In the 1950s, racial criteria were eliminated from Canada's



immigration policies, facilitating the arrival of people from all over the world.

NEW OPENNESS

In the 1980s, churches began once again being used as sanctuaries for refugees fleeing deportation orders. This began to oppose a refusal in the U.S. to recognize Central American refugees' asylum claims. The ensuing controversies, involving clerics and the courts, made headlines south of the border. However, the number of cases of sanctuary claims multiplied and also appeared in Canada as of the early 1980s (including, later, in 1987, the case of Antonio Graca, an Argentinean fearing return to his country, who found refuge with Catholic nuns in Eriksdale, Manitoba).

LEGAL DECREE

The use of sanctuary was declared legal by the Supreme Court of Canada in 1985, with the Singh case, which ruled that every person on Canadian soil is entitled to the protection of the *Canadian*

Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This prompted the Christian churches to clarify their position. It was the United Church of Canada, at its 34th General Council in 1992 that first took a stand, publishing its report *Sanctuary for Refugees?* Requests were quickly made to the Catholic Church as well, as in the case of Guatemalan refugees Dalila and Gabriel Grey, at a church in Dieppe, New Brunswick, in 1997. An Interfaith Immigration Coalition was created in Montréal in 2003 to bring together and coordinate religious leaders involved in refugees' sanctuary claim issues.

Although legal ambiguities persist, there are still applications being made. However, in order for them to be accepted by the faith community, its members must be convinced that the deportation order is unjust and that the request for protection is well founded, that all legal avenues have been pursued and that community mobilisation in support of the refugees has a chance of changing the government decision. 🍵

From the One to the Universal

Gisèle Vachon, M.I.C.

I have been asked to share my experience on this subject, so here I am! The 11th child in a family of 13, my childhood was spent with my brothers and sisters, cousins and classmates in St-Ambroise, Saguenay Lac-Saint-Jean.



Gisèle

But at the age of nine, an illness (acute appendicitis) opened up new horizons for me. My roommate was a boy my age, whose father would visit every day and would arrive singing, *That's how we live happily*, and always greeted me. It was then that I realized that other people could love me and that I too could love people other than my family.

A FIRST OPENING UP

When I went to teacher's college, I was a boarder. I experienced communal life with girls from various parts of the Chicoutimi diocese.

ANOTHER OPENING UP

As a teacher, back in my parish of St-Ambroise, the young people counted on me to take responsibility in groups. I attended the Children of Mary, a group of young girls sharing the attitudes and values of Mary, mother of Jesus. Since my father was a potato farmer, agriculture was part of my life and so I became the president of the J.A.C. (Catholic Agricultural Youth).

At the age of 21, I decided (suddenly) to enter community life, to the despair of the friend I had been dating for three years and with whom I had shared plans for an engagement at Christmas with a view to marrying in the summer. It was also a surprise for my family and my cousins, who believed in that experience I had been trying to live.

AND ANOTHER

On August 8, 1955, I entered the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception at Pont Viau, Laval. I felt involved in a group of women of different nationalities, who lived internationally and were interested in the universal-something I had not really thought about before. During the training period, I got to know young women not only from across Quebec, but also from Ontario. I was waiting to know other countries and other cultures.

I spent the first 15 years teaching in Rimouski, Montreal, Granby and other places in Quebec. Finally, the long-awaited day arrived: the F.I.C. (Brothers of Christian Instruction) in Haiti asked for a catechism teacher for secondary school. I had just finished a bachelor's degree in religious studies, so I was offered this position. I joyfully accepted.

On 24 August, 1970, I arrived in Haiti. And after two years in Port-au-Prince, I learn that a companion is coming to the country and is offered my position and has accepted. I was

glad because I had had difficulty adapting to the urban youth of Port-au-Prince (I was still a country girl).

AND ANOTHER!

My new job was in Port-Salut, in the countryside by the sea in Haiti. It rekindled my enthusiasm. Making new acquaintances has always fulfilled me. It was at that time that I had the joy of welcoming my mother, two of my sisters and their husbands in Haiti. My mother could see how happy I was among the Haitian people.

OPENING OF THE CHILDREN

I had to share my happiness. How would I do that? I decided on missionary animation: training 18 to 25 year-old animators who would introduce youth aged 4 to 14 to their brothers and sisters around the world. Some 30 parishes were interested in this project and responded.

To help these young people, a committee founded the magazine, *Timoun misyonè* (The Missionary Child). In the March–April 2006 issue of the magazine, on the Missionary Communion page, I read a testimonial from a child from Lviv, Ukraine:

My name is Dimitri. I live in Lviv, a large city in the west of Ukraine, a country located in Russia. I am Orthodox. My father is a priest, my mother is a doctor and I have four brothers and sisters. From 1945 to 1991, the country was under communist influence. All people had to be atheists (not recognising God). Only the Orthodox Church was tolerated. Since the fall of communism in 1991, everyone is free to practice their religion. Every day we go to Lauds and Vespers. On Sundays, the mass lasts three hours. The Orthodox Mass is different from the Catholic Mass: the pope prepares the bread and wine and then there is a confession. Only

then does the mass begin. When I was younger, I was a scout. Here, scouting is a very religious movement, with a lot of catechism, preparation for youth camps but also activities such as visiting the elderly.

With *Timoun misyonè* still going strong, I left Haiti on October 6, 2021, after 51 years of happiness, mixed in of course with some more or less dark days. In my retirement, it is through prayer that I join my brothers and sisters everywhere. I remain interested in the stories of my fellow M.I.C. from Cuba, Madagascar, Peru, Malawi, Zambia, Japan, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Vietnam, the Philippines, and elsewhere.

What a joy to realize that so much good is coming to all these people through the presence of the M.I.C.

I thank the Lord for having called me to this missionary vocation, and I want to continue to work with all my heart to transmit my joy of announcing the Good News of Jesus, my Saviour. ☺

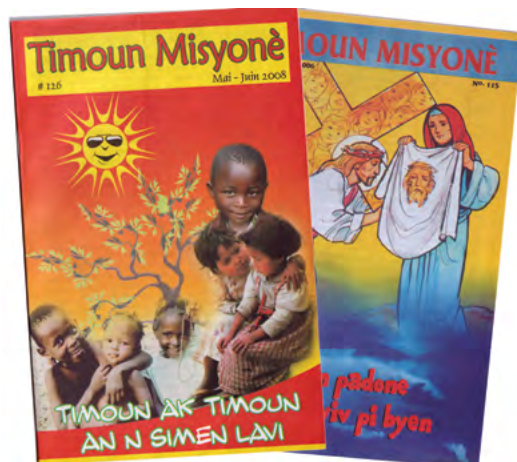


Photo M.I.C.

On the Road to Holiness

At the time of writing, the 2022 Winter Olympics are taking place in China. This high-level sporting event introduces us to some of the best athletes in the world. Fuelled by an immense desire in their heart, they travel quite a road to get to that ultimate goal of winning a medal and standing on the podium. It's the culmination of a dream! Every image having its limits, this reminds me of other people who have distinguished themselves, this time on the path to holiness.

Yes, you read that right, sanctity! Let me introduce you to three passionate women: **Marie Rivier, Pauline J richo and Delia T treault.**



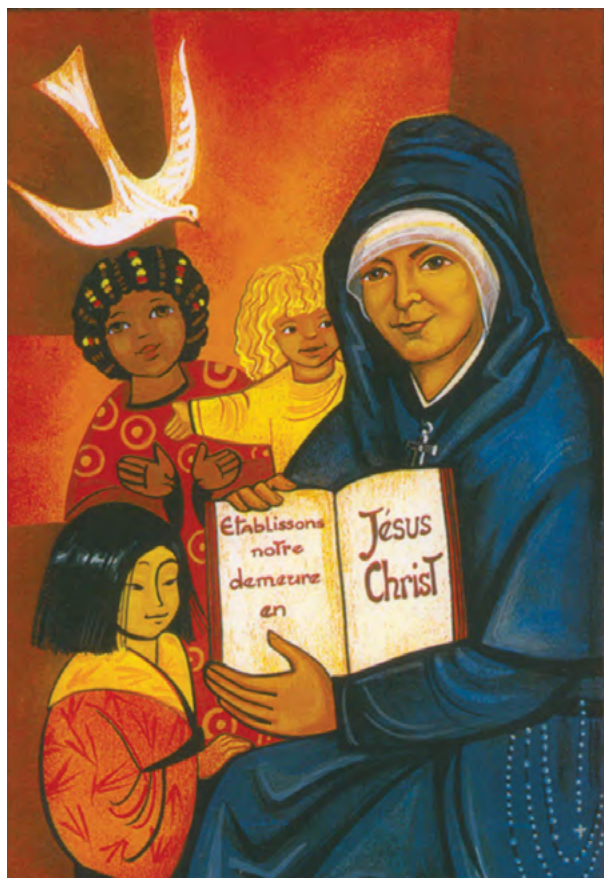
Micheline Marcoux, M.I.C.

FOUNDRESSES WITH HEARTS AFLAME

In the Church, important events were taking shape in 2022 for these three women, founders with heart afire! Beyond time and space, a special bond united Delia to her two predecessors, Mary and Pauline. On the road to holiness, each one distinguished herself answering a personal call to respond to a real need in their time—a call that changed their lives and continues to influence ours today.

BLESSED MARIE RIVIER (1768–1838)

Last December, we learned the good news of the upcoming canonization of Blessed Marie Rivier, founder of the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary in the 18th century. We will soon be praying to Saint Marie Rivier!



Marie Rivier — Web Image

Celebrating 225 years of existence in 2021, her congregation is present in 18 countries, including Canada. Founded in 1796 in the midst of the French Revolution, it was established in Quebec in 1853, at Sainte-Marie de Monnoir, now Marieville. The Christian education of youth was the mission favored by the founder herself. The Tétreault family lived in Marieville and it was at the school of the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary that young Delia studied.

Born in 1768, in France, Marie Rivier died on February 3, 1838. St. John Paul II beatified her on May 23, 1982. Then, on December 13, 2021, Pope Francis authorised the promulgation of the Decree of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints for her canonisation; the miracle attributed to her intercession concerns the healing of a newborn girl in 2015, in the Philippines. This was the second miracle required, the first one having given rise to her beatification: it was the healing of a little girl, Paulette Dubois, of Bourg-Saint-Andéol, on the evening of February 3, 1938, the place and date of the centenary of Marie Rivier's death. As we can see, these successive steps give us an idea of the long process usually followed by the Church for canonisation.

VENERABLE PAULINE JARICOT (1799–1862)

Pauline Jaricot (Pauline Marie), a lay contemporary of Marie Rivier, was born in 1799 and died in 1862 in Lyon, France. She will be beatified there, on May 22. The healing in 2012 of a little Lyonnaise girl, Mayline Tran, aged three-and-a-half, is attributed to the intercession of the Venerable Pauline Jaricot. This healing, recognized as miraculous by the Church in 2020, opened the way for her beatification. The woman known as the *Mother of the Missions* initiated and inspired more than one work, in her own community, to improve the living conditions of workers, and to provide for the financial and spiritual needs of the universal mission.

Inspired by the Holy Spirit and sustained by prayer to Mary, this young woman with a creative imagination, founded, according to an ingenious plan, the Work of the Propagation of the Faith,



Pauline Jaricot — Web Image

which was officially recognized in 1822, and the Living Rosary, in 1826. She knew how to kindle the missionary fire in the hearts of her contemporaries and invited them to work together to support distant missions. This work, which became pontifical 100 years ago, is still alive, and is celebrating its 200th anniversary this year. A tiny seed planted in the earth gave birth to a great network of aid to the missionary Church throughout the world... the seed from which the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) were born.

VENERABLE DELIA TÉTREAULT (1865–1941)

The seed germinated silently, far away, in the inner garden of the young Delia. From childhood, she hid in the family attic, devouring missionary magazines published by the Propagation of the Faith and the Holy Childhood. She was touched by the missionary stories from China and elsewhere. Could she have guessed that the revival of these works in Canada would be entrusted to her one day? Without knowing it, her future was being prepared.

Like her two predecessors, Delia Tétreault stands out in her own way. Born in Sainte-Marie de Monnoir, Quebec, on February 4, 1865, she died in Montréal on October 1, 1941, the feast day of



Délia Tétreault — M.I.C. Archives

the patron saint of missions, Saint Therese of the Child Jesus.

There was no missionary institute in Canada to train young men or women for the missions. So, a project took shape in her heart. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, she had a dream of founding a community of women missionaries and of collaborating in the foundation of a seminary for priests for the foreign missions. After many obstacles and an incessant search for God's will, on June 3, 1902, she founded in Montreal what would become the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. *It was the first missionary institute of any kind to be founded in Canada and in all of America!* Trusting in her intuition, and acting with discretion and determination, she insisted that the French-speaking bishops of Quebec carry out the second project. On February 2, 1921, they founded the *Séminaire des Missions-Étrangères du Québec*.

December 18th will mark the 25th anniversary of the declaration of the venerability of our Foundress by Pope John Paul II. What a joy for the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and what a grace for the Canadian Church!

There are still two steps on the way to the official recognition of the sanctity of her life. Being venerable, she must obtain two miracles recognized by the Church, more specifically, a cure or a fact unexplainable by contemporary science: the first for her beatification and the second for her canonization. It is up to us to make her known and to pray for grace through her intercession with the Lord. In this jubilee year, let us unite our prayers for her to become *Blessed Delia Tétreault*.

« LET US SET OUT,
ONCE AND FOR ALL,
ON THE PATH OF
HOLINESS IN ACTION. »

Délia Tétreault

HOLINESS IN OUR LIVES

On the path to holiness, these three pioneers are united by their great desire to serve God and people, as religious or as lay people, in response to God's freely given love in their lives. Their docility to the Holy Spirit and their special love for Mary, our Mother, illuminate their lives. They are witnesses to the faith, friends of God, to whom we can pray. They play an intercession role: it is God who acts, who heals.

Is holiness a privilege for an elite? Not at all. It is God who is the source of all holiness. The call to holiness concerns every baptized person, even if official canonization remains the privilege of a small number. It is a grace, a gift of baptism to be made fruitful. Robert Lebel in his song, *Ils sont nombreux les bienheureux*, beautifully expresses the

reality of the sanctity of people in everyday life. It is worth listening to and meditating on.

There are many of them, these people of nothing,
These blessed people of everyday life,
Who will not go down in history...¹

Delia Tétreault wanted holiness for all her daughters. Among her many pieces of advice, here are a few that are also for you:

Let us set out, once and for all,
on the path of holiness in action (1912).

The good God does not ask for the same degree of holiness from everyone; there are very big stars in heaven, others of medium size, and even smaller ones, but all of them will see the good God for all eternity (1923).

May our Immaculate Mother guard you,
rejoice you and make you run on
the path to holiness (1917).

With Mary, Pauline and Delia, with all those on the way to holiness, let us give thanks to God! Happy jubilee year! 🌸

¹ *Printemps de Dieu*, Robert Lebel, 1996, Éditions Pontbriand.

Committed to Saving Lives

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Despite travel restrictions due to the pandemic situation, Huguette Ostiguy, M.I.C., a native of Granby, Quebec, who has been a missionary in Malawi for some 40 years, is with us for a few months. Sr. Huguette works in the field of psychosocial counselling, especially with young people, a field that meets a great need.

When we spoke together it came as a surprise to me to learn that many young Africans commit suicide every year. What is the cause? Why does it happen?

Indeed, Africa is not spared by the phenomenon and suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 30, and especially among males.

Sr Huguette explained that mental health is not considered a priority and that, often, it is difficult to access qualified people. Young people feel alone and helpless in the face of contemporary social transformations and the progressive loss of traditional customs. Often, the young person would like to go to school and prepare for the future, but the means are not there. They feel alone, depressed and even desperate.

I will now let Huguette tell us more about volunteers who commit to listening to and encouraging young people:

Reaching out to the young and not so young through telephone listening has become a path toward hope to continuing on the road of life. In conjunction with a





Sr Huguette Ostiguy, M.I.C.

mass media company working in Malawi, that wants to raise awareness about the importance of mental health, I participated in a month-long experience of offering free telephone counselling. Over 100 young people took advantage of this offer, sharing their pain and suffering, from abandonment, rejection, abuse and struggles with addiction.

For these people, having an attentive listener and a comforting presence touches their hearts and opens a new horizon. For me, these experiences of personal and intimate encounters through telephone counselling have been encounters with the Source of Life that springs from the heart of the human being with even a single drop of love.

Telephone counselling and virtual counselling are the services I offer those who need help. As a missionary nun, committing myself to save people is, and will remain, my motto. I am returning to Malawi to continue my service to people: to reach out, especially to young people, despairing in the face of difficult situations. To touch hearts and understand their suffering is to give life and sometimes it also saves lives. ∞

Developing Self-Confidence

Huguette Chapdelaine, M.I.C.

Welcoming a child into the family is a source of happiness and joy, but also responsibility. Children are sociable beings. From a psychological point of view, from a very young age, they need the love of their parents and family to develop their self-confidence and to feel secure enough to use their resources and face life's challenges. Later on, the child can, in turn, pass this confidence on to their own children. This was the case for William and his grandfather. William's grandfather's gesture of trust would mark the young boy for life.

*Sail, sail down the river
Sail, sail, my little boat... (Daniel Lavoie)*

★★★

*My name is William, I'm four-and-a-half years old.
- Where are you going, Little one?
- I'm going toward Life.*

I'm taking Grandfather for a ride. He lets me believe I'm the one steering... And I am, but... (Is it me? Are we both?)

I say, I'm going toward Life...

I am going where many things will happen, good and bad, as the wisdom of Indigenous people says. I will sail through adolescence, with its first battles, first emotions, first missteps, the doubts, the ups and downs, and then I will end up with the self-confidence my grandfather gives me.

Grandfather has such an overflowing heart that his hands can't hold it all. (And I think it's his hands that steer my boat). I will sail with a family, with children who will one day be my age, and I will be 50, 60, 80 years old, like Grandfather.



Photo: Louise Roy

Then, my grandfather will join the original great-grandfathers. And I will too, I think, after showing my grandchildren the way. But in the meantime, I'm going toward Life, with its heart, and great open hands.

I have confidence.

My name is Bill, and I will soon be five years old.

★★★

The Venerable Delia Tétreault was touched by a similar tale: that of little Annette:

She is brave, little Annette, yes, very brave. Sitting next to her father, her hands riveted to the heavy oar, she pulls and pulls as hard as she can. And, wonderfully, the fishing boat, set in motion by a vigorous push, glides through the still waters. Annette is happy: she basks in her father's affectionate gaze, and to pay him back, she rows and rows, little suspecting that the rough wrists of the old sea dog are doing all the work.

And Delia added: *The good Master does not ask for success, for brilliant works. A loving, trusting heart, animated by goodwill, is all he expects. Is she not still right, now?*

In these days of pandemic, young people find themselves in survival-mode social practices. Irregular classes, lack of contact with friends and social pressure are triggering psychological distress in some of them, and are not helping them to develop their self-esteem. Times of crisis and change require psychological resources that must be developed within the family.

This good grandfather, through simple and loving gestures, develops self-confidence in the heart of his grandson, Billy, along with pride that will never leave him throughout his life.

*Sail, sail down the river
Sail, sail my little boat... 🌊*



Postulant, novice, professed — M.I.C. Archives

If there is one theme that has recurred constantly since the start of *MIC Mission News*, it is commitment. It reveals not only the very foundations of apostolic life, but also a humanism and a spirit of solidarity and mutual aid that have been present for decades in Quebec. The missionaries here have greatly contributed to transmitting this spirit of commitment, notably through their actions and their willingness to adapt over the years. But what has best symbolized the missionary commitment in the first part of the 20th century?

An Evolving Commitment



Éric Desautels

THE RELIGIOUS HABIT AS A SYMBOL OF COMMITMENT

As shown in some of the pages of *MIC Mission News* before the 1960s, commitment to the Church and to a particular community was embodied in the ceremony of taking the habit, *an immaculate robe with an azure blue belt and white veil* worn by the novices.¹ It is a *symbol of purity, a constant commitment to work diligently to adorn one's soul with whiteness and beauty*, it was said at the time. Following the example of Delia Tétreault, the Sisters put on the religious habit and pronounced their perpetual vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, which crystallized their commitment.

This ceremony is equally important for Sisters trained abroad. In 1934, Sisters working in Manchuria, China, stated that *the newly professed Sisters, after having pronounced their holy vows, received the veil and the silver cross.*² The description of these ceremonies reveals how important they are symbolically for the missionaries themselves and for their families.

They are also fundamental to the cohesiveness of religious communities. It is not only an individual commitment that emanates from them, but also a covenant with the religious community and with the community as a whole. Sister Marie Beata described it perfectly in 1954:

At the end of Mass, the choir intoned the Veni Creator. The four of us, moved, walked to the altar. The officiant asked us the ritual questions, after which we pronounced with inexpressible happiness the formula of our holy commitments. The Bishop then blessed our veils and handed them to us, while the Missionary Sisters sang Take, Lord, all my freedom. We then received the crucifix and the rosary as jewels more precious than all the treasures of the world. A postulant put on the white livery of the novices; two other young girls consecrated themselves to the Blessed Virgin, and the Bishop gave them the aspirants' medal. The liturgical celebration ended with the Blessed Sacrament and the Magnificat hymn. On leaving the church, our dear Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception surrounded us, as well as the White Sisters of the Nkhamanya Mission.³

A SHIFT TOWARD NEW FORMS OF COMMITMENT?

In the Second Vatican Council, the obligation of wearing the religious habit was called into question. If this decision, which is the responsibility of each community, can be seen as a desire to *modernize* religious life, it also bears witness to a change in the forms of missionary commitment. Change sometimes means reticence. In this sense, several testimonials reveal tensions: some see it as a natural evolution, or a will to adapt to the tides of the times, while others fear the negative consequences of this withdrawal. Considering the strong symbolism of the habit, it is easy to understand the apprehensions of some Sisters about this change.

This decision was also triggered by the transformation of the missions in the 1950s. New avenues of commitment were emerging for those who wanted to dedicate themselves to humanitarian aid and international assistance. Lay and governmental organisations were created, opening up new avenues for people who wanted to help the Catholic missions or commit themselves outside the religious missions. The traditional forms of missionary commitment were thus changing. The emergence of social services in the 1950s and 1960s likely created a new form of commitment, here and elsewhere, especially among women. This profession has enabled many



Sr. Pauline Yuan, today — Photo M.I.C.

women (religious or lay) to find a way to engage in the world.

REDEFINING COMMITMENT?

Since the 1980s, many have spoken of a *crisis* of commitment. Questions have multiplied as missionary numbers declined. If this crisis of vocation or of commitment is perceptible, the commitment of the Missionary Sisters remains unshakeable. They dare to evolve, to change. This certainty and daring have important repercussions according to a Cuban Sister: *Their life of faith shared simply, their daring to seek new paths, their hope against all hope, all this has spurred our faith in difficult times and has challenged our Christian commitment.*⁴ This transmission of faith and this willingness to adapt has led parishioners to take on more responsibility and to commit to their community. This testimony highlights a central dimension of missionary commitment over time. Although missions have been secularized for several decades, a significant Catholic heritage has been built up. Universal values remain the foundation of missionary action: mutual aid, solidarity and compassion continue to define the commitment to contemporary international aid. 🌿

¹ The Editor "A Pen Picture," *MIC Mission News*, vol. 15, n° 07, January 1946, p. 407.

² [s.a.] «Szepingkai, Manchuria," *MIC Mission News*, vol. 09, n° 12, November 1934, p. 696.

³ Sister Marie Beata, "Unforgettable Day," *MIC Mission News*, vol. 21, n° 03, May 1956, p. 131.

⁴ *MIC Mission News*, Vol. 29 n° 02, April 2002, p. 18.



A Family Scene in Madagascar — Photo M.I.C.

THE TREASURE OF THE EVERYDAY: A COMMITMENT THAT BEARS FRUIT

Émilienne Raherimalala

Desmond Tutu, winner of the 1984 Nobel Peace Prize, wrote, *Do your little bit of good where you are; it's those little bits of good put together that overwhelm the world.* Yes, in the midst of our daily lives, we weave our lives together and participate in the creation of our world. Indeed, our actions, big or small, carry messages for a world that is just or unjust, peaceful or turbulent, harmonious or violent. In their song, *Si l'espérance t'a fait marcher* (If hope has made you walk), Mannick and Jo Akepsimas share some of the reasons for and attitudes behind a fruitful commitment:

*If hope has made you walk
Further than your fear
Your eyes will be raised
Then, you will be able to wait
Until the sun of God*

LOVE AND HOPE: PILLARS OF OUR COMMITMENT

We need hope to move forward. As we travel the path of change, there are many transitional periods and many obstacles that arise in the course of the day. Often these obstacles prove complicated. That is to say, any change requires time, courage

and humility. Change often comes with its share of difficulties, doubts and hesitations. We have to agree to the ups and downs and to taking it slow. But at the same time, we must cherish the dream that the light is at the end of the tunnel. Let's move forward, let's go forward repeating the words of Victor Hugo:

*Those who live are those who fight; they are
Those whose soul and forehead
are filled with firm purpose.
Those who climb to the top of a high destiny.
Those who walk pensively,
in love with a sublime goal.*

Thus, commitment requires our whole being, not just a contribution. It requires us to be fully ourselves in order to love and serve our neighbor, family, group, country, world. Through the love that gives meaning to our inspirations and actions, our daily involvement shines forth. Is this not the key to a full life?

*If anger has made you cry
Justice for all
You will have a wounded heart*

*Then you can fight
With the oppressed.*

INNER DISPOSITION AS A GUARANTEE OF COMMITMENT

Every form of commitment requires a certain inner freedom. This allows us to live and commit ourselves according to our convictions and values. Our personal experiences show us that the person who is part of a group commits progressively to the gift of self. Hence the importance of inner motivation. Wanting a world of solidarity, in which it feels good to live, starts by wanting to change oneself and to act as a humble person, awake to everyday life. Just as a single candle illuminates a large room. Let us be light for one other. And let us sing with Mannick and Jo Akepsimas:

*If weakness has made you fall
At the edge of the road
You will know how to open your arms
Then you can dance
To the rhythm of forgiveness.*



Sr Noëlla Bernard enseigne le français à Berthine — Photo M.I.C.

What Is the Desire That Sets Us in Motion?



Bernadette St-Paul

The past two years have brought to all many changes and demands. For many, the challenges to be faced were many, and some, painful. These difficult, uncomfortable moments also pushed us to change our outlook, to discover resources within ourselves that we perhaps did not suspect we had.

For me, the closing of the churches helped me to really embrace the fact that my family is a domestic church, a small community in which God is present and active. A small community that is called *to nourish itself, together* of God's word more often, to praise Him together more and to support each other in following Christ.

Entering the synodal process¹ to which Pope Francis invited us on October 17 gave us the opportunity to stop and reflect on our path together as a domestic church. Over a meal, we experienced a moment of grace under the Lord's gaze, living a small, simplified synodal process developed by colleagues and friends.

After praying and asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten and guide us, we took turns responding to these four points:

1. Recognizing the gift of my family

- What do you love about your family?
- What makes you proud of your family?
- What are your best memories of your family?
- What are the unique gifts of each family member?

2. Recognizing my family's limitations

- What are the weaknesses of my family?
- What needs to be improved?
- How can we grow together?
- What concrete action can I take to grow in the short term, in the long term?

3. Reflection on the discussion and experience

- What surprised me in this sharing?
- Choose a small step, a small practice, that the family could adopt to grow together.
- We need help with x...
- The parish/diocese/Christian community could help us with x...

4. What is my dream for the Church?

What a rich opportunity this was for our family! What a blessed time of sharing, thanksgiving and renewal of individual and family commitments! The pearls gathered were numerous.

We rediscovered how priceless are the moments spent together freely, laughing, listening to one other, playing, helping one other. All our memories, our pride and joy are concentrated in these moments of love, fraternity and giving ourselves to one other!

We also rediscovered the richness of our differences. We are each unique and wonderful! The diversity of gifts and talents that God has placed in us nourishes our family life.

We shared that what made us suffer was most often the result of misunderstandings, of shutting ourselves of, withdrawal and isolation. Re-reading the moments of suffering in our family, far from locking us into bitterness, anger or resentment, helped us realize how important everyone's happiness is and gave us an even greater desire to contribute to it.

We were given a taste of how strong what binds us together is. And we were able to express that, despite the hurts and misunderstandings, we love each other. This helps us to realize more fully how the path of forgiveness and reconciliation is a path of healing and growth. We have committed ourselves to talking to each other when we feel misunderstandings arise, to praying more together when we feel the urge to withdraw and to spending more time together to experience the riches that each person offers.

NURTURING A TASTE FOR LIVING TOGETHER

This synodal experience as a family was edifying for each of us and gave us a taste for taking care of our life together even more and for giving thanks to the Lord for the gift that each one of us represents for the community we make up.

When the time came to talk about our dream for the Church, we realized that it was similar to the one we had for our family, our domestic church.



Bernadette with her family

We dream of more unity, of moments of fraternal communion, of laughter between brothers and sisters, of moments of shared prayer, and of freely giving what we are, the talents that God has placed in us. We dream of encounters, of living together, of bridges built between generations, of mutual love, of reconciliation.

Above all, we understood that, for our dream to become a reality, we must each do our bit. We must invest ourselves and take the initiative when necessary. What a joy to hear our children, when asked *Do you want to get involved in your church?* say *Yes, I do!*

We therefore pray that this desire that God has placed in each of us may grow and transform us into authentic witnesses of His presence and grace, knowing that ***desire is what sets humans in motion.***²

May we always be people of desire, filled with this unquenchable thirst to let ourselves be shaped and led by the Spirit of God who will make us ready to say, *Here I am. Send me forth, that your kingdom may come!* ☺

¹ Voir <https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/DOCUMENTO-PREPARATORIO-FRANCESE.pdf>

² Sœur Véronique Thiébaud, *Le Christ et le désir de l'homme : Un chemin de vie fraternelle à travers la « Pédagogie du désir »*, Craponne, December 2, 2010.

With You, O Lord



COLOMBE GAGNON, M.I.C.

Sister Marie-Édouard

1923-2021

St-Roch-de-l'Achigan, Quebec

A dove has started a journey, and it's a messenger of peace, love and friendship. Céline Dion sang these lyrics in French for Pope John Paul II at the Olympic Stadium, in 1984. The dove is a fitting symbol for Sister Colombe, given her personal journey. She entered the novitiate on February 1, 1942, ready to take flight. Her many, varied talents travelled with her to Mount St. Joseph Hospital in Vancouver, and to our missions in Africa. She had a loving heart, gentle charity and boundless devotion that underlaid all her commitments. In 2001, in Joliette, she began a very active pre-retirement. In 2011, she returned to Pont-Viau with the same vigor. But, little by little, her strength declined and, on 28 April, 2021, in a burst of love, she took her desired flight to the Father's House.



HEDWIDGE LAPIERRE, M.I.C.

Sister St. Bonaventure

1922-2021

Ste-Hénédine, Quebec

A Marian spiritual experience marked Sister Hedwidge's life. During a concert, the singing of *Salve Regina* overwhelmed her. *I was moved to the depths of my soul; I clearly felt the call of the Master.* Sensitive and generous by nature, Sister Hedwidge was all about listening and service. Her studies in nursing guided her toward the suffering of humanity. She entered the novitiate on February 1, 1947. In 1952, her first mission was in Karonga, Malawi, where she worked in a dispensary transformed into a maternity ward and where she gained the friendship and trust of the local midwives. In 1977, she went to Haiti to help her sister Henriette, a nurse in Limbe. For Hedwidge, 1982 marked the beginning of an active mission in Quebec, a mission that was slowly adjusting to her strengths and became an eternal mission on May 2, 2021.



GAÉTANE GUILLEMETTE, M.I.C.

Sister St. Camille

1927-2021

St-Hyacinthe, Québec

*Gaétane is not the type of person to be a Sister, people said when, at age 10, she announced she would be a missionary. Already her personality revealed a woman with a boundless commitment. The novitiate welcomed her on 8 August, 1947, and Bolivia in 1960. With ardour, will, audacity and vision, she led a joint action in three diocesan works: rural catechism, the I.E.R. Formation Centre and Radio *San Rafael*. She took up several challenges in the area: training community leaders, construction, drilling wells, soup kitchen, etc. In 1993, she returned to Quebec and became involved in the community with this ideal: *I am preparing to go and contemplate the face of my Creator. It is to Him that I will hand over the keys of the house of all my being.* The keys were handed over on 28 May, 2021.*



EULALIA LORETO, M.I.C.

1949-2021

Tugbok, Davao City, Philippines

Her faith, her courage and her commitment as a zealous catechist were the hallmarks of Sister Eulalia's life. The death of her father when she was two marked the beginning of a family life that had to constantly be adjusted. Her mother was a beacon of faith in the reality of everyday life. Eulalia dreamed of a religious life despite her faltering health. She wrote: *At a certain point, I felt a strong desire to dedicate my life fully to God, as though I could not be content to be a catechist.* She entered the novitiate on June 3, 1974, and lived her dream of being a catechist in Taiwan and with the indigenous people of her country. On August 14, 2021, she received a surprise call and left us for the Father's House.

With You, O Lord



**MARIE-CLAIRE
LACOMBE, M.I.C.**

Sister Françoise-de-Lisieux
1921-2021

Montreal, Quebec

The centenarian Sister Marie-Claire was the eldest of a family from Montreal. She entered the novitiate on August 8, 1940. Who would have predicted she would reach 100 when, at the age of 50, she received a prognosis of three months to live? Imbued from a young age with *joie de vivre* and gifted with an *energizing* energy, she courageously took up every challenges. In 1968, she returned to Malawi, Africa, where she had been on mission from 1949 to 1963. Her many talents were appreciated, including being an educator attentive to the most fragile. Math held no secrets for her...or her students! In 1996, she said goodbye to her beloved Africa. Her last 25 years in Quebec found her joyfully dressed for service. This is how our Father welcomed her on October 6, 2021.



GISÈLE VILLEMURE, M.I.C.

Sister Marie-Sylvia
1926-2021

Yamachiche, Quebec

Gisèle was the first child born to the Villemure family and her birth was welcomed with great joy on June 17, 1926. Her health was poor but she began and succeeded her studies with the CND Sisters. The missionary religious life of the M.I.C. Sisters called to her strongly, and she was accepted into the novitiate on February 1, 1947. She began her apostolic life teaching piano and doing missionary animation. In 1961, she became the director of the *Precursor*. In 1973, she studied journalism in Paris. Her language skills were appreciated at the General Secretariat, General Archives and Cause Délia Tétreault. Her book, *À l'écoute de Délia*, remains a precious legacy from Sister Gisèle. Slowly, she entered her sunset years and awoke in the eternal Light, on September 27, 2021.



HERTA DUBUISSON, M.I.C.

Sister Joseph-Rémy
1933-2021

Mirebalais, Haiti

After a long vocational journey, Sister Herta realized her ideal and entered the novitiate on 8 August, 1959. *Magnificat to the God of Love and Mercy for the blessing of my sublime vocation.* Her interpersonal qualities of joy, tolerance, respect and love favored her success in her different commitments as an educator, school principal, bursar, head of the parish choir and minister of communion to the sick. Very independent, she managed the slow decline of her health with lucidity, working irregular hours. It was with the same lucidity that she accepted health care from her Sisters and, finally, from St-Luc Hospital in Tabarre. It was from there, on October 18, 2021, that she went to live her eternal Magnificat.



**FERNANDE
CHARBONNEAU, M.I.C.**

Sister St-Michel-des-Saints
1926-2022

St-Hyacinthe, Quebec

Impressed at a young age by the MICs' visit to her school and then shaped as an adolescent by her involvement in the Catholic Worker Youth (YCW), which opened her up to a previously unknown reality: material, moral and spiritual poverty, where she sowed hope, Sister Fernande entered the novitiate on August 8, 1949. In 1957, Japan welcomed her: she was in charge of the students' hostel in Tokyo. In 1962, Quebec once again became her missionary land. A course in health ministry in 1981 enabled her to work in this area as a happy, devoted and competent volunteer. In 2009, the *Institut universitaire de gériatrie de Montréal* (IUGM) expressed its gratitude for her 20 years of service. She then had to follow the dictates of her health. And, on January 3, 2022, our dear Sister Fernande felt the joy of being welcomed by our loving Father.

Our Lady of the First Community

teach us liturgies of
celebrations and
communities of sharing,

teach us about the
universal heart, attentive
to the calls of all,

and teach us that patient
effort that knows the
other is different but
complementary,

that knows one cannot
celebrate alone.

Our Lady of the First Community

Our Lady of today
eternal Mother of Christ

joy of the Church,
prize of the Church,

teach us that patient effort
in trust, in faith, in love
teach us to love...

André Tostain, M.S.C.

