

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 49, Nº 3 | JULY • AUGUST • SEPTEMBER 2022



To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923

*100 Years
of an Undaunted Mission*



DRAWING ON ONE'S ROOTS

PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS – 2022

JULY

For the elderly: We pray for the elderly, who represent the roots and memory of a people; may their experience and wisdom help young people to look toward the future with hope and responsibility.

AUGUST

For small businesses: We pray for small and medium businesses; in the midst of economic and social crisis, may they find ways to continue operating and serving their communities.

SEPTEMBER

For the abolition of the death penalty: We pray that the death penalty, which attacks the dignity of the human person, may be legally abolished in every country.

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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MIC Mission News

Mission magazine published
by the Missionary Sisters of the
Immaculate Conception

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Royalty-free photos

P. 1: Shutterstock
P. 3, 7 and 8: Adobe Stock
P. 13: Pixabay

Member of the
Catholic & Ecumenical
Media Association

Tax Receipt

Registration Number:
NE 89346 9585 RR0001
MIC Missionary Press

Legal Deposits

Bibliothèque nationale du Québec
National Library of Canada
ISSN 0315-9655

Canada

We acknowledge the financial
support of the Government of Canada.

EDITORIAL

THE STRENGTH OF THE ROOTS



Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

The editorial team, who gathered to reflect on the contents of the summer magazine, was thrilled when one member proposed a major topic: *drawing on one's roots*. Immediately, the ideas took shape, and everyone felt affected in different ways.

Bernadette spoke with conviction about family roots. Indeed, children who are close to their grandparents learn little by little the history of their family, which gradually becomes their own history. They put down roots, and discover the strengths and weaknesses that are part of their heritage. Pope Francis has seen the importance of this relationship between grandparents and children. *Young people need the wisdom and vision of the elderly*, who play a very important role in the family. They are the living roots of family history.

Eric and Maurice have seen the importance and strength of roots in the history of a nation. In Quebec, the awakening of the nation, with the *Terre des Hommes* world exhibition, the Quiet Revolution, the Vatican II Council—all these novelties gradually called into question the things learned in childhood; hence the need to deepen the value of ancestral roots that form the identity of a people. Moreover, Maurice, is concerned about Indigenous history, where human tragedies are making the headlines and prompting Pope Francis to meet with Indigenous peoples to apologize on behalf of the Church for the



mistakes made throughout history. A visit that will help turn the page.

Faced with these difficult times for ancestral values, some people feel shaken in their faith and question everything: why? Nadia analyzes the problem by telling us the story of Rachel, who is currently living in a retirement home and has noticed that many residents are rejecting the faith of their childhood. Why do they do this? Lack of conviction? They feel hurt, cheated. However, those who are deeply rooted in God live fruitful lives whatever the circumstances. Missionary life continues to proclaim the Word of God for the good of all, while respecting the peoples' cultures. The Holy Spirit, always at work, will reach out to hearts. As stated in Psalm 1:3, *That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither.*

Indeed, the summer season gives us the opportunity to admire the beauty of nature and to deepen the daily life that presents itself to us. In her writing, Nicole invites us to a deep reflection on our life: to go back to the roots of our life, to look at our own history, to oxygenate us with the breath of hope, to live a luminous spirituality. So, let us dare to respond to this disruptive voice that comes to seek us inside.

Enjoy your reading and thank you to the members of the editorial team. ∞

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

From the State of the Tree's Roots to New Growth



Éric Desautels

During my university career, I studied the life trajectory of several Quebecers who lived through the 1940s and 1950s, notably by analyzing their social and political commitment. Most had had a Catholic education and were active in the Church in all spheres of society. They experienced varied trajectories as Catholics, taking multiple paths of engagement: artistic, political, intellectual, social, religious, etc. They became, over the years, the most active members of the Church. They were missionaries, politicians,

nurses, union leaders, priests and sisters, university professors and senior civil servants.

THE DIAGNOSIS MUST FIRST FOCUS ON THE STATE OF THE ROOTS.

While some of them rejected the Church during the Quiet Revolution, notably by advocating for a secular society, others either retained an attachment to the institution, or retained their faith or an appreciation of Catholic culture and values throughout their lives. For most, the reasons for their actions and commitment to society are rooted in their families or schools, which permeated their entire lives. The flame of their commitment emerges in their youth and persists. For sociologist Guy Rocher, the encounter with a priest who introduced him to readings that were not widely taught at the time while he was doing his classical course at L'Assomption College, as well as his involvement in the Catholic Student Youth, were determining factors in his personal, intellectual and professional life. Even today, he still evokes the famous *See, judge and act*, which became his mantra thereafter.

THE IMPORTANCE OF ONE'S CULTURE, ONE'S IDENTITY, ONE'S ROOTS

I also think of other striking examples. For Canon Jacques Grand'Maison and sociologist Fernand Dumont, the fact that they came from working-class families strongly influenced their commitment, their thinking and their faith. Both men became recognized intellectuals, Dumont even becoming Deputy Minister of Culture. Despite this, their respective careers reflect a desire to connect with popular culture, to understand society at its core in order to better understand it as a whole. It is also not to deny one's culture, one's identity, one's roots. The vast majority of men and women who served as missionaries abroad during the 20th century expressed this same deep desire not to deny their own culture of origin, while opening themselves to the values and cultures they encountered elsewhere.

OLD SHOOTS ARE BEING REBORN EVERYWHERE AND NEW ONES ARE APPEARING.

For a man like Fernand Dumont, faith and catholicism have deep roots that still extend into today's society, even if the Church no longer plays its former role in social institutions. In an intimate work published at the end of his life, titled, *Une foi partagée* (A Shared Faith), Dumont offers a particularly interesting reflection during a time when religious practice is low and new priestly vocations are almost nonexistent:

One would forget that institutions—and this is not only true of the Church—are nourished by the existence of men. When they have distanced themselves too much, when they have taken too much care of their rules, their ideologies and their facades, they wither and lose their meaning. Like trees whose soil has been neglected in favour of their branches. This has happened to the Church in Quebec. This is why, without ceasing to

worry about the state of the trunk and the branches, the diagnosis must first focus on the state of the roots.

Now, it seems to me that, at this humbler level, a singular phenomenon is occurring. Old shoots are being reborn everywhere and new ones are appearing. The search for a Christian identity is best pursued at ground level. It does not speak well in broad daylight, which is perhaps its best guarantee of authenticity.¹

THE IMPORTANCE OF AN INTERCULTURAL AND INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

It is not only a question of returning to the sources of catholicism to counter secularization or the disaffection of a part of the population. It is through the common culture and through the values shared by all citizens that the renewal of the Church must come. It is by noting the state and the strength of the Church's roots in Quebec that it is possible to bring out new reflections, and even solutions, in order to ensure its sustainability. It is then possible to act collectively and in solidarity, by taking an intercultural and inter-religious perspective. This is not unlike the *See, judge, act* I mentioned earlier.

In this sense, it seems to me that the missionary commitment has been in this groove for decades. It is by establishing a true dialogue between cultures and religions that new Catholic communities were built in Africa, Asia and Latin America. By sharing universal values of solidarity, mutual aid, compassion and love for one's neighbor, the missionaries have shown their desire to bring about the emergence of new growth.

Faced with major challenges such as war, extreme poverty, abuse and disaffection with institutions, it is necessary to go back to one's roots and make a diagnosis. The authenticity of one's convictions or faith, shared in one's community and in solidarity with other peoples and religions, depends on it. ☺

¹ Fernand Dumont, *Une foi partagée*, Montréal, Bellarmin, 1996, p. 293-294.



Drawing on Its Roots

WHY? HOW? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

Nicole Rochon

Sitting in front of the patio door of my office, I contemplate nature. Magnificently sunny, it is resplendent with light, splendid. Birds come and go, swirling here and there. Two squirrels are chasing each other on crossed branches. At cruising altitude, a plane carries passengers to an unknown destination. I look, I admire, I vibrate with life. Everything is life, nothing but life.

WHAT MAKES THE
BEAUTY OF LIFE IS ITS
TRUTH, IT EXISTS. AND
TO LIVE IS TO FOLLOW
LIFE WITH THE TRUTH
OF LOVE.

Maurice Drans

This reality leads me to a deep reflection that of a return to Genesis, from where the first roots of the creation of the Divine were born. From

the beginning, God created heaven and earth, daylight, night, waters, animals, fish, birds. All his creatures were subjected to the human race. God created the human being. Planet Earth, well equipped, came to life.

Each creature, through its seed buried in a soil conducive to its growth, became rooted, transformed according to its own nature. The great whole took root according to its own nature. Indeed, in his creation project, the Divine Creator, with wisdom, had already foreseen to match seeds as different from each other. In the course of life, they were enriched by each other and multiplied. Living, they have transmitted life. An intoxicating life that never ceases to invite us to live it until the end.

A DISTURBING QUESTIONING

Doesn't life itself invite us, on occasion, to go back to our roots, to look at our own history. To know where we come from, where we are today. Whatever the circumstances, the doubts, the difficulties in the course of our personal and spiritual life, have we really let ourselves be challenged?



GOING TO ONE'S ROOTS INVITES ONE TO DISCOVER WHAT ONE KNOWS LEAST ABOUT ONESELF.

A spiritual challenge, from the heart, inspired by the Holy Spirit. An opportunity to be seized if ever there was one! How can we respond to a spiritual, emotional, psychological condition of life that has become suffocating, unbearable, suffering, lacking in love and consideration, if not by drawing on the roots of our life? Do we wish to continue this personal journey by maintaining the status quo? Or, do we dare to respond to this questioning, disturbing voice that comes to us from within?

While respecting the heritage of our history, without uprooting ourselves from it, perhaps it would be a call to change for a better well-being, a better life. A call to live differently, with creativity. A call to challenge the unknown, to strengthen our faith, to breathe in the breath of hope. A call to live a luminous spirituality to the fullest, like Venus gliding slowly, softly over the starry sky, attracting the attention of anyone... See only beauty... Metamorphosis of an inspiring, contaminating spiritual life.

Going to one's roots invites one to discover what one knows least about oneself. This personal, spiritual process requires, of course, patience, courage and determination. It also requires a sincere love of oneself and, in opposition to the feeling of guilt, an extreme benevolence wrapped in the Love of the Other, the Love of the Divine. By following Him step by step, change will come... Surely. 🌿



LIVING YOUR FAITH

A Promise for the Future!



Marie Nadia Noël, M.I.C.

On Easter Monday 2022, in the pages of the *Journal de Montréal* section called *Actualité Société*, a headline read, *Les Québécois moins religieux que partout ailleurs*¹ (Quebecers are less religious than anywhere else). This decline in the practice of faith in Quebec leads many people to ask questions.

This is the case of Rachel who currently lives in a private residence for seniors. There are 450 of them living in apartments. A dining room and common areas are the scene of a stimulating social life. A warm space lets the light in. Everything is there to enjoy a beautiful retirement. Yet for Rachel there is something missing. As Father Benoit Lacroix, OP, would say, *It is my mother's faith, my father's religion*. In this large house, 5 to 10 people come together to celebrate their faith by saying the rosary or having a meditative gathering. Rachel wonders about this; she talks about it to her relatives. She wonders if religion has taken a tumble? Is it the faith, the practice of the faith, or the religion that has taken a tumble? This is a difficult question but it makes for stimulating reflection. I often hear people say, *Knowing where you come from helps you know where you are and where you are going*.

A BIT OF HISTORY

THE PLACE OF RELIGION IN QUEBEC

As a society rooted in the North American continent and benefiting from both a French heritage and a British influence, Quebec finds itself at the crossroads of very different traditions in terms of church-state relations. The dominant historical discourse in Quebec tends to present Quebec society before the Quiet Revolution as entirely dominated by an omnipotent clergy.

THE QUIET REVOLUTION AND SECULARIZATION IN QUEBEC

The Quiet Revolution, a period of rapid change experienced by Quebec in the 1960s, highlights a concept: secularization. It is the

historical process of the loss of the social and cultural influence of religious institutions on the institutions of the State. Religion is no longer the normative framework guiding the conduct and moral life of society as a whole, to use the words of Micheline Laguë, m.i.c.².

During this period, the Church stepped into the modern era with the Second Vatican Council of 1965. It experienced a profound upheaval, both internally and in its relationship to the world and to other religions. Vatican II consecrated the religious freedom of each person. It granted more space to the laity. It is now up to them to commit themselves in the daily life of the Church.

LIVING ONE'S FAITH IN A SECULAR AND NEUTRAL STATE?

If, prior to the Quiet Revolution and Vatican II, many Quebec Catholic families lived according to the laws established by priests, since Vatican II, lay people become true missionaries and are invited, like the apostles at the time of Jesus, to collaborate with the priests and to announce

their faith. We must also mention the arrival of television in the homes of Quebecers, which conveys new values and broadens their horizons.

People were willing to this new reality. Quebec was secularizing in the space of a few years. According to some, since 1970, a good number of Quebecers do not regularly attend religious services in their parish. This disaffection in the people and Church representatives brings dissatisfaction and nostalgia.

DISSATISFACTION AND NOSTALGIA

Dissatisfaction can make us sensitive to calls. It was dissatisfaction with his father which Abraham experienced in Haran and made him sensitive to God's call: *Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you*³. With Abraham, believing was no longer oriented toward the past but to the future, and was articulated around something not yet fully realized. Faith was lived, developed in a dialogue: the dialogue of expectation, the hope of promise.

As for Rachel, the resident who questions herself, dissatisfaction can become leaven for her, for her loved ones and for us readers. In order to create a dynamic Christian culture as a missionary disciple, she lives her faith with confidence, asks difficult questions, tests new ideas and makes assumptions without fear.



M.I.C. gathering – Photo: M.-P. Sanfaçon

GRANDPARENTS AS MISSIONARY DISCIPLES, LIKE RACHEL?

What can we do in our homes, families and communities to continue to grow as missionary disciples in these challenging times? Pope Francis always talks about grandparents as a treasure. He says: *The elderly are the ones who, like old wine, have that strength inside to give us a noble heritage*.⁴ Nowadays, many grandparents are involved in the lives of their grandchildren, whether or not they live near them. If all these grandparents who have a Christian background were to create a synergy to share with their offspring the art of living today according to the Gospel in all the components of a human life, then a dynamic Christian community would be born. For being Church today, like Rachel, begins with you and me.

To each of you, dear grandparents who have learned to become missionary disciples, I dedicate this poem by Corine Treméaud:

MY GRANDPARENTS

– translation

I dedicate this poem to you
On this nostalgic evening
To tell you "I love you"
And also "Thank you so much"

You are my reference point
When sometimes I get lost
On this strange earth
That often lacks air

Thank you for teaching me
The true values of life
That love exists
Never to be sad

The years have passed
Life has gone on
And the love you gave me
Has remained well anchored...⁵



¹ Journal de Montréal, Monday, April 18, 2022-online.

² Micheline Laguë, M.I.C., Canada *Secularism – A Tool for Social Peace? – A Chance for Evangelization?*, MIC Mission News Vol 39 #3 p. 13.

³ Gn 12, 1-2

⁴ Vatican Radio, November 19, 2013

⁵ [tps://www.bonjourpoesie.fr](https://www.bonjourpoesie.fr)

DRAWING ON THE ROOTS OF THE GOSPELS TO APOLOGIZE

POPE FRANCIS' CONTRITION TO CANADA'S ABORIGINAL PEOPLES



Maurice Demers

April 1, 2022, will go down in history. On this Friday, the second day of spring, after meetings that had been held since March 28 with Metis and Inuit representatives and delegates of the First Nations, Pope Francis offered his apology on behalf of the Catholic Church for the role that some of its members played, with the approval of the highest ecclesiastical authorities, in the running of the residential schools. These religious schools were created and subsidized by the Canadian federal government in order to assimilate Aboriginal children into Canadian culture (defined as European in origin) and to break their ties with their traditional cultures. Humbled by history and the Gospels, the Pope asked for forgiveness and expressed his shame.

FIRMLY ANCHORED TO HIS ROOTS

The road to acknowledging the wrongs done has been a long one for the Church, but also for Canadian society in general, as revealed in the documentary series, *First Contact*, which makes known persistent prejudices toward Indigenous peoples.¹ But since the death of Joyce Echaquan in Quebec and the discovery of the remains of several hundred children near former residential schools, the view of Aboriginal communities has changed. For many Canadians, the conclusion of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

of Canada that a cultural genocide had been committed against Canada's first peoples made sense and demanded recognition of the country's colonial past.

A reading of the speeches of previous popes addressed to the First Nations reveals the colonial attitude of the dominant Canadian society. For example, during his visit to Canada at Fort Simpson in the Northwest Territories in 1987, Pope John Paul II addressed the Indigenous people with these words:

I come to you, then, as so many missionaries have done before me. They proclaimed the name of Jesus to the peoples who inhabited Canada—the Indians, Inuit and Metis. They learned to love you and to appreciate the spiritual and cultural treasures of your way of life. As I remarked on my previous visit, the revival of your culture and traditions that you know today is largely due to the initiatives and continuing efforts of the missionaries. [Your ancestors] knew by instinct that the Gospel, far from destroying their authentic values and customs, had the power to purify and uplift the cultural heritage which they had received.²

Of course, the idea that religious men and women are the source of the *rebirth of your culture* is difficult to reconcile with the stated goals of the residential schools, even though the horrific experience of thousands of residents was not yet known.

The audience with Pope Francis was different from previous meetings, although Pope Benedict XVI in 2009 expressed regret for the suffering they had experienced. Pope Francis not only acknowledged the wrongs suffered by First Nations, but also praised their resilience. [...] *You have been buffeted by powerful winds. Yet you have remained solidly anchored to your roots, which you kept strong. In this way, you have continued to bear fruit, for the branches of a tree grow high only if its roots are deep*³.

THE DRAMA OF UPROOTING

He then acknowledged the tragic mistakes of the past: *[You have] experienced a tragedy that you described to me in these past days: the tragedy of being uprooted. The chain that passed on knowledge and ways of life in union with the land was broken by a colonization that lacked respect for you, tore many of you from your vital milieu and tried to conform you to another mentality. [...] Listening to your voices, I was able to enter into and be deeply grieved by the stories of the suffering, hardship, discrimination and various forms of abuse that some of you experienced, particularly in the residential schools. It is chilling to think of determined efforts to instil a sense of inferiority, to rob people of their cultural identity, to sever their roots...*⁴

After this recognition of the violence, the long-awaited moment of an apology from the Holy See has come. Humbled by this damaging history, but also by the message of the Gospels, the Pope said:

All this has made me feel two things very strongly: indignation and shame. Indignation, because it is not right to accept evil and, even worse, to grow accustomed to evil, as if it were an inevitable part of the historical process. [...] I also feel shame. I have said this to



Cassidy Caron, president of the Metis National Council – Photo: CNS/Paul Haring

*you and now I say it again. I feel shame – sorrow and shame – for the role that a number of Catholics, particularly those with educational responsibilities, have had in all these things that wounded you, in the abuses you suffered and in the lack of respect shown for your identity, your culture and even your spiritual values. All these things are contrary to the Gospel of Jesus Christ*⁵.

By asking for the forgiveness of the First Nations and expressing that he is truly sorry, Pope Francis has helped to turn the page in a painful history, allowing true reconciliation to begin. Giving full meaning to *Nostra Aetate*, the October 28, 1965 declaration on the Church's relations with non-Christian religions (from which the evangelized Indigenous communities came), he stated with great wisdom and empathy, *Clearly, the content of the faith cannot be transmitted in a way contrary to the faith itself.* 🍷

¹ <https://ctvm.info/a-canal-d-premier-contact-six-quebecois-vivent-une-immersion-complete-dans-la-realite-des-communautes-autochtones/>

² https://www.cccb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/vatican_texts-discours_fort_simpson_1987-fr.pdf

³ <https://www.vatican.va/content/francesco/it/speeches/2022/april/documents/20220401-popoli-indigeni-canada.html>

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

Because You Are Precious in My Sight, You Are Honored and I Love You – Isaiah 43:4

Dear young people, you need the wisdom and vision of the elderly. (...) They will tell you things that will excite your mind and touch your heart.¹



Bernadette St-Paul

Pope Francis established the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly in 2021, on the fourth Sunday of July. This year, the day will be celebrated on Sunday, July 24, under the theme *In old age they will still bear fruit* (Ps. 92:15). We are thus invited to discover with new eyes that, even if the elderly no longer have the vigor of their younger years, they are a treasure for our societies and for each of their members.

This treasure is not to be found in efficiency and performance, but rather in fragility, wisdom and a life of faith capable of edifying the younger generations, making them more aware of and stronger in their roots, and more capable of looking to the future with confidence, hope and benevolence. Let us cherish the heritage that the elderly carry because it is for us. Without this work of transmission, of passing on, we risk finding ourselves like trees without roots, unaware of where we come from, and doomed to wither.

As Pope Francis says, *without dialogue between young people and grandparents, history does not move forward, life does not move forward*². What is this new covenant that we are all invited to experience between the younger and older generations? Pope Francis describes it in these terms:

*Today we need a new alliance between young and old, we need to share the common treasure of life, to dream together, to overcome the conflicts between generations in order to prepare the future for all. Without this alliance of life, of dreams, of the future, we risk starving, because the number of broken links, loneliness, egoisms and disruptive forces increases. Often, in our societies, we have surrendered life to the idea that everyone thinks for himself. But this kills*³.

The pandemic has been a time of great hardship and loneliness for everyone, especially the elderly and more vulnerable. Many families have mourned their lost loved ones and regretted not having spent enough time with them while they were alive. We realize, especially after these long months, that no one can claim to be self-sufficient, neither young nor old! We need to walk together, and that is why it is urgent that we create more links between the generations and consider the elderly with a new outlook, like [...] *precious pieces of bread left on the table of our life, which can still nourish us with a fragrance that we have lost, the fragrance of memory*⁴.

Our grandparents and elders have cared for us in so many ways. Now let us turn to them with gratitude, care and love! Let us offer them a listening ear, a serving hand and a generous heart!



As we enter into a synodal process of *walking together*⁵, perhaps it is time to stop and re-examine how we, as a family, as a community, as a society, walk with our elders.

Perhaps we can ask ourselves:

How can I be more present for my elderly parents, my grandparents and the elderly in my family or neighborhood?

How can I offer them an attentive ear that truly listens?

How can I make time for them and take care of them, thus preventing the wealth they represent from being lost and ensuring that the legacy of their lives and dreams lives on?

Grandparents and seniors can also be valuable intercessors for their loved ones and the world through their prayers. Why not join our voices with theirs in this beautiful prayer composed for the first World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly?

*I thank you, Lord,
For the comfort of your presence:
In my loneliness,
You are my hope and my trust;
Since my youth, you have been my rock
and my fortress!*

*Thank you for the family you have given me
And for the blessing of a long life.
Thank you for the moments of joy
and for the moments of difficulty.
Thank you for the dreams realized
and for those still to come.
Thank you for this time of renewed
fruitfulness to which you call me... ∞*

¹ Pope Francis, XXXII World Youth Day, Panama, 2019

² Pope Francis, Homily, Mass for the 1st World Day for Grandparents and the Elderly, Rome, July 25 2021

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ <http://Secretariat.Synod.Va/Content/Synod/fr.html>



On the Road to Autonomy, THANKS TO SOLIDARITY

Families live in extreme poverty. – Photo MIC

I went to visit our fraternity of three Sisters who live on the outskirts of Pucallpa, a city in the Peruvian jungle. It was raining and the moto-taxi had to leave us two blocks from our destination. We had to walk barefoot in the mud for a few meters. On the way to our M.I.C. residence, I could see some well-built houses with yellow facades. A companion told me that these houses were part of the Carrefour de l'Espérance, work run by our Sisters in collaboration with a Canadian foundation called Pure ART. I was about to discover a love story between kindhearted Quebecers and Manantay residents who want to take control of their future.



Monique Fortier, M.I.C.

Hundreds of families have left the high mountains of the Andes or the rainforest of the Amazon to come to live illegally on unoccupied land in Manantay. They dream of having access to health and education services that do not exist in their native villages. On often marshy ground, they build houses with whatever materials they can find, cardboard, wood, metal, etc. They live in extreme poverty, working precarious jobs. One day, the McKinnon family, from the Vaudreuil region, went to visit a missionary priest friend and they were touched by the social situation of these marginalized and depreciated people who had given them a warm welcome. They dreamed of helping them out of their misery and regain

the dignity to which they were entitled. From this, the Pure Art Foundation was born, receiving donations from hundreds of Quebecers to contribute to this sustainable development project.

It all started with the construction of a few houses. Then, after consulting the population on their needs, the *Carrefour de l'Espérance* was founded. Its aim is to enable the local community to take charge in solidarity with each other. The focus is on three fields of development: health, education and the autonomy of women, who are often abandoned with their children.

With the help of residents and volunteers from Quebec, they first built a *comedor*, where some

30 primary school children can share a nutritious, high-protein meal three times a week, receive academic reinforcement from volunteer teachers from the community and participate in several cultural and religious activities that provide them with a complete education. In addition, hundreds of scholarships have been awarded since the beginning of the project. The beneficiaries are accompanied by coordinators who motivate them and help them to continue until they finish their university studies.

A dispensary has also been built to provide health care and medicines at reduced prices. Health campaigns (vaccinations, anti-parasites, etc.) and activities where specialist doctors offer their services free of charge are organized.

I SEE IN THEIR EYES THE FUTURE OF THIS COMMUNITY WHICH IS TAKING OFF.

In view of the precarious condition of the women, a cutting and sewing school has been set up. At the end of their courses, the seamstresses can join a mini-business, run in the manner of a cooperative, which allows them to earn a supplementary salary to support their families. At the beginning of 2020, together with other women, they started a hand-made soap factory which they hope to distribute to hotels in the region after the pandemic.

projects. For example, poverty often leads to delinquency and Manantay is no exception. With the acquisition of a sports and games field, it is hoped to provide young people with challenges that will turn them away from idleness and onto paths that will benefit them and the community.

The work still needs external funding, but the aim is to make people increasingly self-sufficient economically and



A family and benefactors in front of their new house – Photo MIC

Young people, who were able to complete their university studies thanks to their work, are now providing services to the community: psychologists, nurses, etc. The *Carrefour* is a place of meeting and teamwork. Under the direction of Sr. Marie Colette Raeliarisoa, M.I.C., the staff organizes activities and carries out development

to support community spirit by putting the assets and skills acquired through the development initiatives already undertaken to work for all.

I am touched by everything I see and hear. I dine with the children. They are not embarrassed; they are used to having guests. They ask me about my life, my country and answer my questions with ease and often with a lot of humour. I go to the dispensary; the nurse lovingly welcomes those who need her. I talk to the women in the sewing workshop; they are proud to show me their creations. I go see the children of these ladies, in the daycare center playing while the mothers work. I see in their eyes the future of this community which is taking off and which will progress thanks to their newfound dignity. Then this phrase from the Gospel of St. Luke comes to mind: *For my eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared for all people*¹. They have taken charge of their own lives and are on the way to sustainable development. ☺

¹ Lk 2:30-31

Changes in Priorities and Apostolic Shifts



Doris Twyman, M.I.C.

As missionaries, we were sent to Central Africa, Malawi and Zambia, in 1948. Over the years we have had to adjust our priorities according to the changing population and the different services offered by the government and other agencies.

In the beginning, our priorities were education, especially at the primary level, and health centers. We also had a center in each parish for mothers, where we taught nutrition, cooking and child care. After a number of years, with countries proclaiming their political independence, and considering the evolution of living conditions, the Sisters became involved in training elementary and secondary school teachers.

The services offered by the Sisters were adapted to the new living conditions. In addition, we had to take into account the aging of our staff and the presence of young Sisters from the countries where we are present. All this to say that our missionary life is in constant evolution, adjusting to the needs of the population. In the 1990s, early childhood education became a social priority.

NEW DIRECTION

As a result of the AIDS epidemic, the structure of families has been greatly affected. Grandparents become responsible for grandchildren and their education. Consequently, we started a daycare center in Mzimba, Malawi, for young AIDS orphans, to give grandparents respite. We receive the children for age-appropriate educational

activities and provide them with a snack and lunch. With financial help from outside, we have developed these activities according to the growing needs. Contact with the adults has increased and given rise to a trusting and supportive social cooperation, a real comfort for people of all ages.

THESE NEW
KINDERGARTENS MEET A
GROWING NEED AND GIVE
US THE OPPORTUNITY TO
HAVE PERSONAL CONTACT
WITH THE FAMILIES.

Now, in most of our missions, we have early childhood education in kindergartens. One of our Sisters, Charity Zimba, went to Japan to specialize in the Montessori method of education. *This is an educational method based on the concept that the child is free to choose his or her own activities. Learning is done through experimentation and autonomy.* These classes facilitate primary education by helping to develop observation skills, hand agility and an openness to the abstract. The manipulation of colors and clay develops manual dexterity. Letters of the alphabet and simple everyday words are taught. All of this builds self-confidence and facilitates the child's growth.

NEW PERSONAL CONTACTS

These new kindergartens meet a growing need and give us the opportunity to have personal contact with the families. Every morning, parents arrive with their children, and at the end of the afternoon, they come back to pick them up, by bicycle or car.

MY DAUGHTER TELLS ME YOU GAVE HER CHOCOLATE COOKIES...

One day, a little girl was left alone at school. After waiting for a while, a teacher brought her to our residence. I tried to talk to her, but she was in tears. *My friends are gone and I am alone...* After contacting the parents, who were held up at work, we offered her dinner, but she ate very little. When the meal was over, I went back to the living room with her. Her tears were still flowing. Looking at her, I thought of a box of chocolate cookies I had put in the pantry. I brought her two. She ate them and fell asleep in the armchair. It was already dark.

After a while, car headlights illuminated the front of our house. The father came in to claim the child. I told him what had happened. I asked him to come in and see his daughter. One morning, two weeks later, as I was walking to school, a car stopped near me. A man looked at me and said, *My daughter tells me you gave her chocolate cookies.* I looked and saw the little girl smiling at me. I could see joy and gratitude in that beautiful face. My day was made.

We often have other meaningful contacts. One day, the parents had responded to our invitation for the *graduation* of their children. I noticed that many had brought gifts. What caught my attention



Photos MIC

was the number of plastic guns. I called one of my companions to point out the guns. We talked about it with the parent in charge of the event, and in his final speech, he called his compatriots to a culture of peace and solidarity, and asked the parents not to give any more guns as gifts for children. It is in the joy of small acts of learning that we can create a taste for better values. Education begins at a very young age, and we are happy to contribute to this.

This is how peace, joy and gratitude gradually penetrate the lives of young and old. 🌊

A MATTER OF CHOICE

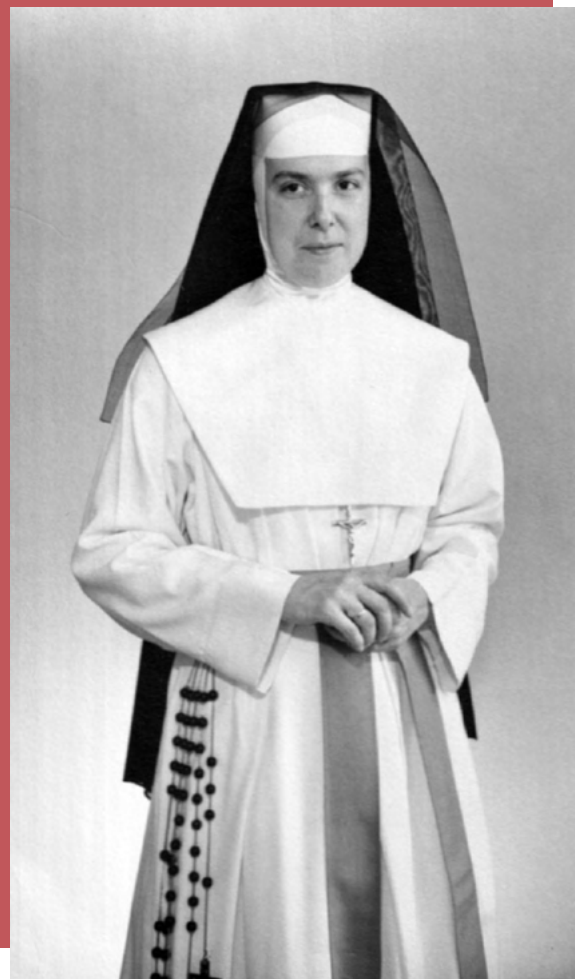
A few years ago, during a family gathering, a nephew asked me this question: *If you had to do your life over, would you make the same choice?* This was a good question for a Sister who was a missionary in Japan for half her life and who just celebrated her 50th year of religious life. Another nephew, seeing my hesitation to answer, said, *It is a matter of choice.* I replied, yes, without adding anything. But to tell you the truth, it raised a question in my mind.



Suzanne Morneau, M.I.C.

CHANGE OF MENTALITY

Around 1954-55, before my decision to enter the convent, I remember attending a talk at the coliseum in Quebec City given by Father Marcel-Marie Desmarais, a very famous speaker, who attracted crowds, both young and old. His lecture was titled *Love in the Atomic Age*. Attracted by the novelty of the title, thousands of young people like me attended. In 1956, my entry into a convent was not unusual. The religious vocation was highly valued at that time. That year, there were 22 postulants in the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. In August of the same year, there were twice as many. These were the flourishing years of the religious congregations.



But already with the advent of television and the launching of the first satellites into space, young people were finding new and numerous models to orient their lives. Moreover, the Quiet Revolution in Quebec raised questions about life, and especially about religious values. Hence, the decrease in the number of new priests and nuns in Quebec. Still today, few young people opt for a religious life in North America.

FROM THE A-BOMB TO THE CONSUMER C-BOMB

With Expo 1967, the 1980 Olympics and the Parent Report's effects on education, Quebec changed. There was also the phenomenon of

globalization, advances in science, computers and the instantaneous nature of information that made Marshall McLuhan say, *The world is a global village* a famous phrase describing the modernization of the world. And there was Astronaut Gagarin who said he did not meet God on his route to the moon.

With the evolution of the world, Quebec included, the consumer C-bomb has appeared, with an avalanche of information. We now have to use filters to banish false news. In this context, the question of the existence of God and the practice of religion remain the preoccupation of only a small part of the population, from which the young are often absent. How can they respond to God's call?

Today, would I make the same choice?

One thing has become certain. We are advancing in space in search of a life elsewhere, while we confusedly feel that ours is threatened, on its way to extinction. Life with a capital L remains the

realm of theology and faith. Which brings us to the question: *Would you make the same choice?* It would have been appropriate for me to answer, *I don't know what would have become of me.*

All in all, I sometimes think that, in the present world context, my experience of God would have been different and existential questions might not even have occurred to me. Would I have chosen a different life? No doubt I would have been influenced, like all young girls today, but I wonder if my quest for meaning and my desire to make the world a better place would have left me.

The future looks more modest as far as faith and religious practice are concerned, but the Holy Spirit, who works in our hearts, will make our stone churches give way to living stones. For 20 centuries, the Church has been clearing paths for the future—of immense significance for humanity. Today, young people from all countries are generously responding to the Lord's call and daring to proclaim the good news of Christ among the nations. 🌹

Suzanne Morneau, 2nd from the left – MIC Archives





A FAMILY WITH STRONG CONNECTIONS



Natalie Wong – One of the winners of the essay contest organized by Missionary Press in M.I.C. high schools

For as long as I can remember, my family has had a large round table, around which we gathered for dinner every day. At that time, my parents weren't very busy with work, and neither was I. We didn't have separate study rooms, so we shared the same round table to work. My mom told me that she and dad bought

that table the year they got married. It looked old and was a little rickety, but I still loved it so much because of all the wonderful memories I had around that beautiful table.

The summer before my freshman year of college, our family moved into a new house, and things

changed. We bought a new table, rectangular in shape, all white. It was nice, of course, but I no longer felt the same warmth and familiarity while working or dining at that table.

As time passes, it seems to me that changes have taken place not only on that table, but in the whole atmosphere of the family. After or even during dinner, everyone is busy on his phone. Meals have become silent, and everyone simply goes back to his own study room to work, with no more conversations for the rest of the evening. Honestly, this is not the family life I am looking for. I don't want this to continue. I want to make a change.

Not wanting this atmosphere to continue, I began to initiate regular family activities. During the lockdown, I suggested having our *family workout* from 8:00 to 8:30 p.m., where we would gather in front of the TV to exercise along with the famous Korean family fitness star Jung DaYeon. We laughed a lot and even filmed each other because we couldn't follow his moves. The event was short but it was really worth it.

We also went out sightseeing on weekends, sometimes to Sai Kung, Cheung Chau, or even Pak Nai to watch the beautiful sunset. We sat on the beach and waited impatiently for the sun to set and took pictures together to remember those happy moments.

Seeing real smiles on my parents' faces despite their busy schedules was just what I wanted in our busy lives. In addition to sparking precious family moments, I wanted to bring more warmth to our dining table, so I started cooking meals for my family.

I learned how to cook traditional Chinese food, such as radish cake, stir-fried pork with bell pepper, steamed minced pork, and more. It was really a fun experience, because I felt responsible, learning how to cook from online videos and starting a personal cooking notebook filled with a list of recipes I couldn't wait to try. Every time I see my parents proud of me cooking for them, we talk excitedly about how we can cook another dish next time. It is the best feeling in the world for me.

SEEING REAL SMILES ON MY PARENTS' FACES DESPITE THEIR BUSY SCHEDULES WAS JUST WHAT I WANTED IN OUR BUSY LIVES.

I've always believed that small acts of kindness and caring are the key to strengthening bonds with others. Since I don't want every evening to be filled with silence and people going to bed without saying, *see you tomorrow*, I've taken to offering snacks to my parents on occasion. If I don't have much time, I make them

instant noodles, but if I have time, I make bread or even dumplings, which my parents really like.

I hope this will give the three of us another opportunity, maybe 10–15 minutes, to relax, take a little break from our almost unbearable workloads and enjoy some warm treats during the cold winter evenings. I hope that these warm snacks will encourage them in stressful times and remind them that there is always someone to support them.

A family with close ties has always been what I wanted, and what I will want in my future life. I wouldn't want our family relationships to be less close, to be on electronic devices, deprived of conversation, even before bedtime. If no one is available to commit to a change, I guess I'm more than willing to do it. 🌊

With You, O Lord



ANGELITA VILLARIN, M.I.C.

Sister Paula-Angelita

1937-2021

Ozamis City, Philippines

Angelita received an education that gave her a strong Marian faith. She bravely faced her trials, including the war with the Japanese. Despite the obstacles, she continued her studies in high school and then in university. Acknowledging the call to religious life, she chose our community and entered the novitiate in Baguio on May 1, 1963. She was soon discovered to be a woman apostle who was concerned about reaching the marginalized through an appropriate catechesis. From one local community to another, she assumed various responsibilities: teaching, pastoral ministry, promotion of vocation. She invariably cultivated a closer relationship with her Lord and a constant, sincere love for her people. Her missionary heart went to eternal joy on November 13, 2021, as she was swiftly called home by our heavenly Father.



GABRIELLE OUIMET, M.I.C.

Sister Florence of the Sacred Heart

1920-2022

Montreal, Quebec

I choose the Lord forever, answered Sister Gabrielle at an important moment in her life. The tenth of a family of eleven children, and fatherless at 18 months, she was taken in by a neighbor. It was for her a life of ease and an opportunity to pursue higher education. At 18, she was shocked to find out about her natural family, which had been a well-kept secret. On August 8, 1940, at the age of 20, she began her novitiate as an M.I.C. From then, the intensity of her love for her God animated her various community services: the Missionary Press, the education of young aspirants, computer science. This same love fuelled the last years of her life as a centenarian. On January 21, 2022, she celebrated *the eternal covenant with her Lord, who had always chosen her*.



ANNETTE HÉTU, M.I.C.

Sister St-Jean-Berchmans

1921-2022

Montreal, Quebec

The third child of a large and deeply Christian family, Sister Annette learned how to help others at a young age since her mother was often ill. She sacrificed her studies to help her. As a member of a sewing circle, she discovered at the age of 17 the book, *Donne-moi tes 20 ans* (Give Me Your Twenties). It was her first calling, which was confirmed at age 20, during a retreat. It led her to the novitiate on August 8, 1941. While visiting her sister, Jeannette, at the Mother House, she had the privilege of going to the bedside of our Venerable Foundress to receive her blessing. Her dedication, gentleness and serene joy colored her community services, including her work as a receptionist. And it is as a centenarian, on January 30, 2022, that she answered the final call in her confident surrender to the Father.



ESTELLE FORTIN, M.I.C.

1929-2022

Montreal, Quebec

Sister Estelle wrote, *I received my life from God who wrote it with curved lines and unpredictable events*. Life proved her right: her sister died of tuberculosis at age 4 and her mother, at age 34. She was only ten. Saddened, she turned to Mary, whom she called *her little Mother*. There followed a joy that would never leave her. Faithful to the missionary awakening, she entered our novitiate in August 1950, but her health was not good. She returned to us on April 17, 1979, after a stay of 27 years with the Misericordia Sisters. Then, Haiti welcomed her for 5 years. Back in Quebec, she began her eternal Mission on January 19, 2022.

With You, O Lord



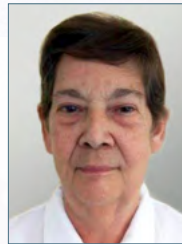
DOLORÈS ST-CYR, M.I.C.

Sister Marie-Dolorès

1928-2022

Coleraine, Quebec

Sister Dolorès acknowledged that Mary the Immaculate Conception played a considerable role in her life. Born on December 7, she was baptized on December 8. As a boarder, she dedicated her life to the Blessed Virgin on December 8. And she performed the Blessed Virgin in a play. But to become a nun? *To leave my family, my freedom, it was terrible!* However, the call of God prevailed and she entered the novitiate on August 8, 1951. She would say one day, *I am happy beyond all I had hoped.* Skill, gentleness and joy were the foundation of her community service. It was evident in the roles of influence and education entrusted to Sister Dolorès in Quebec as well as in Peru and Bolivia. In her loving YES, until the setting sun of her life, she woke up in Eternal Beauty on February 21, 2022.



MIRIAM RODRIGUEZ, M.I.C.

1943-2022

Colon, Matanzas, Cuba

Miriam's motto, *Here I am, Lord*, inspired her entire life, as well as her constant concern for evangelization. As a teenager and student in our schools, she accompanied the Sisters on mission in the countryside and catechized the children. In 1961, the Revolution demanded an adjustment. At the opening of our novitiate in Colon in 1963, she began her formation and became an M.I.C. Sister. Her catechesis, without discrimination, showed *the fire of the Mission* that inhabited her. In 1988, she participated in a project of missionary animation and evangelization in Honduras-Mexico. The confinement due to the COVID-19 pandemic affected her to the point that a general weakness won out, and God welcomed Miriam to her new home on February 28, 2022.



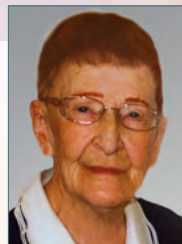
ANNE-MARIE PARENT, M.I.C.

Sister Sainte-Mathilde

1929-2022

Montreal, Quebec

The emergence and growth of life in all its aspects colored the trajectory of Sister Anne-Marie's mission. From a young age, this was the motivation for her commitments: Eucharistic Crusade, Catholic Students Youth and even her choosing the life of a religious missionary. The novitiate welcomed her on August 8, 1947. After completing her training and appropriate studies in education, she left for Haiti where, for thirty years as a teacher and school principal she answered the calls of these good people whom she found so fascinating at all levels. This very ideal, although refined, sealed the last years of her life. She wrote, *I have the feeling of having fulfilled my greatest childhood dream and my mission with joy, dynamism and fidelity to the Holy Spirit.*



BERNADETTE DEGUIRE, M.I.C.

Sister Saint-Gabriel-Archange

1927-2022

Laval-des-Rapides, Quebec

Gifted with a great sense of beauty and creativity, Sister Bernadette gave concrete expression to her gifts both in the kitchen with exceptional pieces of work and in the dazzling variety of decorations illustrating the great liturgical or community feasts of the year. In fidelity to her first childhood call, she entered the novitiate on February 1, 1951 and left for Hong Kong in 1962 where she experienced a varied field of apostolate: presence in a very poor parish, private French classes and English classes for the blind in a specialized institute. 1985 marked her return to Quebec. Her many talents kept her active until her health slowly led her to surrender to the Father by accepting his call on April 20, 2022.

Have a Great Vacation!

*Come on, make your vacations the bliss of peace!
Be walkers of infinity.
Stroll in the great summer sun
And let your body sing through all its pores!
Stroll on the mountain tops
And exult in the joy of life!*

*Feast your eyes on the blue and the sea,
Linger in the blessed evening hours,
When the great twilight of the solstice days
Never ceases to stretch before the starry night.*

*Let yourself be lulled by the light
That cuddles on the meadows of tender grass,
Low-angled light to be fixed like the wave
Which comes and goes to lurk on the sand of the beach.*

*Come on, make of your meetings with the cities
An engagement of joy whose aftermath will be
A marriage of memories.*

*Set out into other gardens
Make your travels a celebration of the whole earth
Embrace the sky to better understand the earth
Smell the perfumes of the horizon
Live the friendship with everything and everyone,
the world and you.*

Cf: Pierre Talec

