

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 47, N° 4 | OCTOBER • NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 2020 | \$5.00



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*100 Years
of an Undaunted Mission*



*The Tenacity
of DREAMS*

PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS - 2020

*Let us keep in our prayer all the victims
of the pandemic and deposit in the heart
of the Lord our concerns with confidence.*

OCTOBER

The Laity's Mission in the Church: We pray that by the virtue of baptism, the laity, especially women, may participate more in areas of responsibility in the Church.

NOVEMBER

Artificial Intelligence: We pray that the progress of robotics and artificial intelligence may always serve humankind.

DECEMBER

For a life of prayer: We pray that our personal relationship with Jesus Christ be nourished by the Word of God and a life of prayer.

**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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Subscription rates (4 issues):

Canada: 1 year - \$15
U.S.A: 1 year - US \$20
International: 1 year - C \$30
Digital subscription: \$10

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.



Marie-Nadia Noël, M.I.C.



Resurrecting Hope

Clearly, Covid-19 and the spring of 2020 do not get along well. In the middle of March, all we were waiting for was the arrival of spring. Spring with its flowers and butterflies. Spring, the precursor to summer. It reminds us that at the end of the tunnel is the light. Victor Hugo describes it in these words:

*Here are the long days, light, love, delirium!
Here is spring! March, April with a sweet smile.*

*The day is born crowned
by a cool and tender dawn.
The evening is full of love;
at night you think you hear,
through the immense shadow
and under the blessed sky,
something happy singing in infinity.¹*

However, it was a long spring, because of the confinement required by Covid-19, long and interspersed with sweet memories. Memories that invite joy, hope and gratitude. Can we hope while all frontiers close and each one, even peoples, isolate themselves? Yes, because life experiences give us hope that life will take its course again.

A hope that leads to gratitude for Life. Gratitude for so much generosity. Gratefulness for the love received and given. Doesn't Mother Delia write: *When I stop to think that the Good Lord loves me divinely, I feel the happiest creature in the world...* This awareness made her sing her Magnificat.

Yes, like Mary, in this time of pandemic, we are all invited to write or sing our Magnificat! Why? Because in the community one puts oneself at the service of the others. Because the Word of God continues to comfort, guide, nourish and liberate. Because researchers, scientists, caregivers will fight this scourge. Because the best can come out of the worst. Because the virus will not have the last word.

All the stories in this issue are a testament to the hope, tenacity and gratitude of individuals, missionaries and peoples during this time of pandemic. Faced with the essential, made naked by the test, are we not forced to put on a new skin while resurrecting hope? 🌸

¹ Published in 1888 and 1893, *Toute la Lyre*, Victor Hugo



THE BOLDNESS OF OUR DREAMS



André Gadbois

To dream is first to close one's eyes and give in to a vague and imprecise idea. Then gradually draw in the mind a motivating project, stemming from what has been grasped by the brain and let it grow in the imagination. Indulge in the progress of a project, develop steps, promote by chatting and advertising, discourage fear by getting angry with oneself, look for partnerships and motivate them... Audacity, very often included in the dream, requires daring actions that are sometimes worrying.

Jesus, child and man of his time, had to go through these different stages of growth: *He was not exempt from having to learn*¹. As the days went by on his home turf, he must have heard sadly the angry cries of men who were afraid... listening silently to the morning bird, wishing for harmony and crying in front of the widespread hunger, smelling the unhealthy smell of the high priests, turning his eyes away when he saw the lamentable state of his country subjected, scorned, crushed... So often the evangelists describe Jesus befriending such and such a person, clearly and bravely taking

the side of a handicapped person or of a rejected child or woman... In communion with his Father and a few somewhat sceptical companions, he decided to give life to this bold dream, to accept this project of humanity inspired and drawn by his Father and to follow it up.

DARE TO TAKE ACTION

He and his dozen companions set out to travel the roads, fields, neighborhoods and riverbanks to erase the social inequalities and widespread arrogance of the powerful of his time. He had to teach his team courage, fidelity, gentleness, faith in his Father, daily solidarity with those who suffer, the danger of indoctrination... The dream was slowly taking shape when the leader was arrested like a bandit and put to death, his twelve companions stunned but alive. The progression of social inequalities and the arrogance of the great businessmen quietly took their place again. But the boldness shown by the leader and the resistance to discouragement of his companions proved that the human being can be more than what we see of him. When you know how to give him a chance and support him, he can be amazing!

COMMITMENT AND BOLDNESS

Together, we must have the courage to denounce the social inequalities that run through the streets and the arrogance of the powers that undress the poorest... Together, we must have the courage to denounce this philosophy: Since I cannot change the world, it is better for me to enjoy it in comfort! Together we must have the courage to denounce these images that lie and dehumanize. Dreaming about it is not enough: our audacity must go to the root of the evil and commit ourselves to go beyond our dream and resist our discouragement. 🌸

¹ Doré, Joseph, *Jésus : l'encyclopédie*, page 157



Confined, the little bird
continues to sing...

It gives happiness
to those who look at it...

Guardian of the messages
carried by the wind,

The bird, even in a cage,
cannot sing out of tune.

Nature has done so,
no doubt about it.

May you one day find peace,
the love you deserve.

Jérôme Martin

Photo: Huguette Pigeon, M.I.C.
Photo Credit: Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

God, at Least I Can Touch You

Do we hear the light breeze revealing God to us?
During this time of global pandemic, Fr. Midy, a Jesuit,
proposes that we allow ourselves to be touched
by God at the level of the heart...



Godefroy Midy, s.j.

Coronavirus, you forbid us to touch each other, to hug and kiss, all those beautiful things that humanize our relationships.

Luckily for us, you can't stop us from touching God. In creating us, he touches us. By touching him, we are created by him.

TOUCHED AT THE HEART LEVEL

We can touch God, even if he is invisible to our eyes. Invisible does not mean absent. St. Augustine had experienced that God was closer to him than what was closest in him. If we are attentive, we will have the same experience: God is not a foreign body in us, he is closer to us than anyone else. Closer to us than we are to ourselves. It is because there is too much noise in us that sometimes we do not feel his presence. It's through a gentle breeze that he reveals himself.

It is the heart that has the capacity to make us close to God, close to one another. The heart and love. The heart and friendship. The heart and beauty. The heart and forgiveness. The heart and true joy. The heart and contemplative silence. The heart and art. The heart and poetry. The heart and prayer. The heart and the generous gift of self. The heart and life. The heart and compassion. The heart and mercy. The heart and gratitude. It is the heart that brings us together.

Yes, the heart brings us closer. I am currently confined in Santo Domingo. And yet, I see and feel so close to my country Haiti that I forget that there is a border that separates our two nations. I have never felt closer to the West Indies and the Caribbean, closer to Asia and Oceania, to Africa and Europe, to North, Central and South America. After humiliating us all, won't coronavirus paradoxically make us closer? Yes. Not by geography, but by heart and love. By the



Photo: Adobe Stock

exchange of what makes the richness, beauty, particularity and originality of each people. To make true unity in diversity.

ALL IS BEAUTY AND GRACE IN GOD

Coronavirus, you'd like to divide us; you can't. On the contrary, you will unintentionally and unwittingly bring us together. Everything about

you is ugly and mean. All is beauty and grace in God. Coronavirus, because of you, this year we do not have great ceremonies in our liturgies; not even in the celebration of the funerals of our deceased, many of whom were mowed down by you. Again because of you, fiancés separated by the constraint of confinement do not see each other. Luckily, the telephone gets their message across and makes them close.

Coronavirus, the Risen Jesus Christ welcomes all those whom you have murdered, saying to them: *Come, blessed by my Father.* You may have killed their bodies, not their souls and minds. You kill. God gives life. He makes us pray more in times of crisis:

Lord our God, let us touch you... By touching you, we will know better who we are and who you are. You, never stop touching us, for we have not been, are not and never will be a virus for you. None of us... You never wash your hand when you touch us. To you, and you alone, we give permission to break orders. You're not afraid we'll infect you. Because we are precious to you. When we are ashamed of ourselves because of our weaknesses and sins, you forgive us. You forgive us, as if you'd erase yourself, so as not to humiliate us. Thank you for being the God you are. The God of Jesus. Our God. We don't want another one. You've made us too big and beautiful for idols to fit inside of us. ∞



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Let's Take Part in the Dance

It is in the spirit of life and the joy of the Gospel that the Sisters of the Institute of Rural Education (I.E.R.), Cochabamba, Bolivia, are facing the Coronavirus pandemic.

Murielle Dubé, M.I.C.

MARCH 13, 2020

Just a few moments ago, about 150 students from the *Center for Alternative Education* and their professors left... COVID-19 has shown up at a local college and the authorities in the area are demanding that everyone go home. It's madness! The professors also have to return to their families.

So we meet with the students who are in residence: 76 young women, from 16 and 26 years old, whose families live in the remote countryside of Bolivia. It's impossible for them to leave now. Worried, with tears in their eyes and a certainty in their hearts: *We are not alone; the Sisters are with us!* Thus began the confinement for us and in record time we became aware that we had to face the situation and learn to dance to the rhythm of the Spirit.

A COMMUNITY MEETING

In the spirit of the Gospel we roll up our sleeves and take part in the dance.

Petronila Chira, M.I.C. in charge of the IER, makes contact with the parents: Which young people can travel, when, how? She sets up virtual activities so that the nursing students can take advantage of this time to deepen or complete the subjects under study, at home or at the IER.

Nancy Campos, M.I.C., and students in sewing make use of their machines to prepare the masks that are currently in high demand.



Informations given for prevention
Photo: M. Dubé, M.I.C.

Nancy Paz, M.I.C. administrator, takes care of 8,406 hens which, even in pandemic time, lay 6,907 eggs a day. Coordination with the employees, who will come only if needed, is a challenge. The eggs cannot be lost and must meet the people's needs.

Gisèle Lachapelle, M.I.C., the eldest, (87 years old!) is present at all this and her prayer is intense.

Wilma Jaldín, M.I.C., the youngest, is going to her family to accompany her younger sister Zulma who is expecting her first baby and whose husband, currently in Spain, cannot be present in this time of uncertainty. Will there be taxis available? Will the newborn be protected at the hospital? Wilma will experience the reality of the pandemic at the heart of her family.

As for me, *Murielle Dubé*, I am rediscovering my vocation as a teacher and catechist with the students who, for one reason or another, cannot return to their families! We are living this unexpected time of uncertainty as a moment of grace.

JUNE 23, 2020

The one hundred third day of quarantine with its yo-yo dynamic: from rigid to flexible – from flexible to rigid... and this should continue for a few more months as the Covid-19 is still wreaking havoc.

In Bolivia, many families live in limited areas. What are the consequences? The FELC (*Special Force against Violence*) reveals that cases of violence against children and women have increased considerably in recent times. People can no longer stand confinement.

This situation raises profound questions for us. The pandemic reminds us the value of small tokens of solidarity: warm attention to students, to IER workers, to each other's families; special help to family providers who need to earn money; participation in the food baskets for the mothers of the parish; "yes" to the solidarity fund proposed by the Bolivian Conference of Religious. Very small gestures in the face of so many needs, but a call to remain attentive and to become creative.

HOW DO WE RE-READ THE EXPERIENCE SO FAR?

"Who could have imagined so much suffering? And how I would have liked to go and help so many people in need. Impossible at my age."

Sr. Gisèle

"The pandemic invites us to look beyond the obvious; to rediscover the gift of life and the deepest values of human beings, to respect and love our planet." *Sr. Nancy Paz*

"Faith, prayer, times of reflection and sharing invite us to be more human, more authentic."

Sr. Nancy Campos



Joy of receiving diplomas despite the pandemic.
Photo Credit: M.I.C.

"Fear and concern are present, but what is strongest is trust: our lives are in God's hands." *Sr. Wilma*

"Virtual classes are a challenge for both students and professors, but I am amazed to discover how all of them take it up creatively." *Sr. Petronila*

"The students, a human and Christian community, a small domestic Church listening to the melody of the Spirit, discover the immense love of God the Father: What a grace to accompany these young women in this time of pandemic."

Sr. Murielle

THE FUTURE?

Where are we going? What future awaits us? In this time of desert, where the shoots of life are not lacking, we find the God of promise, the God of a life project in abundance in the simple gestures we make every day. 🌿

What if Saying “THANK YOU” Brings HAPPINESS?

May gratitude fill your life. May it overflow! – Delia Tétreault
Gratitude can turn your life into a FESTIVAL day!

Here are a few photos to express our appreciation and gratitude to our staff for all the care given generously in multiple services. Our gratitude for their careful planning in terms of health care, meal preparations, maintenance. Congratulations to each and everyone for their perseverance despite the constraints demanded by the pandemic.

The result of this dedication is magnificent, we have no Covid-19 cases, thanks to their contribution given with a smile, a climate of trust that we hope will continue into the future. Heartfelt thanks on behalf of all the M.I.C. because you are worth it.



**Gracefulness in caring
for those in need**

**Vigilance in keeping a clean
and welcoming home**





Promptitude to repair



**Gentleness
in serving meals**



**Gratuity through a word of attention
or friendliness**

**Care in giving instructions
adjusted to the needs**



*These thanks want to be passed on to all the people
who have given caring services to the victims of Covid-19.*

Photos Credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Living the Pandemic 2020 in Montreal includes me in an unusual experience, in deep solidarity with humanity, which is gripped by a dreadful evil.



The joy of living in spite of the pandemic — Photo Credit: Gérardlyn Saldua, M.I.C.

The Rainbow of Daily Life in 2020

Agathe Durand, M.I.C.

The austere fact of an almost total seclusion was, for me, nuanced by a rainbow of elements that I like to point out to advance day after day in a vision of hope in the very colours of thanksgiving, without denying the facts of which we are aware.

CREATIVITY FOR A TRANSFORMED DAILY LIFE

In spite of the confinement, the winter-spring season, a gift of nature so faithful, makes it easier for me to walk daily in the quiet spaces of our usually so lively neighborhood. And it also puts us to work removing porch roofs and veranda

carpets, cleaning the surroundings, happy health exercises that make us forget for a few hours the pangs of a pandemic with its desolate outbreaks.

For this season, our community, reduced to four Sisters, has entered into a new kind of creativity for a transformed daily life. Usually scattered, here we are, on the spot, organizing our office work, inventing the form of intensive French learning without teacher. Keeping myself informed about the identity and behaviors of Covid-19 is important, as well as placing all of us within the recommended social norms. Life also demands the preparation of meals, that we all enjoy together.

ASTONISHED, I MARVEL...

Purchasing supplies presents its challenges. Even before we worry about it, calls and offers from neighbors and friends come from next door, from across the street, from the parish, from relatives! Astonished, I marvel. What I knew about *solidarity* is manifested this time towards us in the concrete of our life, in a new, so benevolent, joyful and gratuitous way! From one week to the next, I have to prepare the list of our food errands, and soon afterwards I see the bags left at our door, accompanied by a smile of joyful satisfaction from a friendly couple, Dominique and Rick.

Easter in this context 2020 has not failed to be luminous and bearer of its message of Life, in particular by virtual current within reach of humans all over the planet. Our prayer was universal and devoid of pomp and ceremony. More than ever, the victory of life over death, in Jesus who died and rose again for all, has placed my faith in concrete action, to radiate living hope in the daily statistics illustrating the ravages of the pandemic on my generation of elderly people.

On May 4, I learned from family and friends that Yves Boisvert, a journalist from the daily newspaper *Le Devoir*, had written an excellent article about the M.I.C. Sisters. I was pleased to read it and delighted with the testimony concerning our missionary commitment and the news about the Pont-Viau's atmosphere, with its 180 elderly Sisters, ingenious and disciplined to remain sheltered from Covid-19. I hear echoes of solidarity from all sides, such as this word from a former student: *This morning I read the article by Yves Boisvert on your community. These are very touching testimonies and they must be only a small sample of all the richness of life for you and your Sisters. I also saw that big house in Laval that you often speak to me about. This is to tell you that I thought of you but also of those years when you worked in Granby. Thank you for what you have done for the girls of my generation... Louise*

BENEFICIAL EXCHANGES

A fact that still amazes and comforts me, the unusual e-mails or phone calls to inquire about our health, news of our house. Often, we also exchange thoughts with ecological colours, such as the current benefits that our *common home*, Mother Earth, is deriving from the relief of surrounding pollution. Another topic of our conversations is the generosity of the caregivers and helpers on the front line of a gigantic universal battle, particularly in Montreal, as well as the combined intelligence and determination of scientists from around the world.

Every day, every evening, I feel being sent back to the mystery of human frailty, and to the limits of today's artificial intelligence. Certain psalms cross my path as my heart and lips pray them:

*Our days are like a shadow...
like the grass that blossoms in the morning,
and withers in the evening and is dry. Ps 90*

Yet, despite the situation, despite the presence of a mysterious enemy, I remain supported, visited by the feeling no less real, that makes me pray with Psalm 16:

*Lord, my fate depends on you
You can't leave me die
You're teaching me the path of life.*

To put it in a nutshell, these months can be summed up in a daily life that brought me closer to the living God. This was the newness... the continuity of my personal relationship with the God of Jesus Christ: to be able to read the signs of his Presence in the uncertainty and the flood of countersigns, to continue to give thanks and to hope with so many others! ☁



The Tenacity of Hope

The year 2020 is a very special one for all of us, people of God all over the world. It is well described as “the best of times” and “the worst of times”, “the spring of hope” and “the winter of despair” as Charles Dickens would put it.

Pauline Yuen, M.I.C.

WEATHER THE STORM

The visit of COVID-19 to Hong Kong has caused us much panic and anxiety. Though we had the past experience of dealing with SARS in 2003, it was still a challenge to us because this was a more contagious virus. To stop its spread, the education department had declared suspension for kindergartens, primary and secondary schools. Due to the ferocity of the outbreak, the suspension was prolonged again and again. Eventually the children were kept home from January to May.

To help our students make good use of their time and to ensure that they continue to learn, our teachers worked hard to prepare online teaching materials, using online programs like Zoom and Google Chat. Then I thought it would be nice to apply technology to spread the Good News of Christ especially in times of distress. We need to keep our heads up with hope to brave the storm of COVID-19.

On the Feast of the Annunciation, the official foundation day of Good Hope School, I initiated an online chat with 30 pre-selected students.

During the chat we also prayed for the people affected by the coronavirus and the health care staff. The chat was heartily welcomed by parents and children and they asked for another one. Then shortly before Easter, I organized a mini praise and worship session and invited some teachers to join me. I was also very privileged to have Sr. Monique Razafindrafia join us to teach the girls pray with dance.

After the online prayer encounter, I got many positive feedbacks from parents. They sent us pictures of their girls praying fervently and one parent shared with us how she was touched: ... *We prayed together with teachers and girls for those who are working hard to protect our health. I wept when singing hymns and songs with my daughter. Hymns gave me strength to be faithful even during hard times. Thank you Sister for reminding us that we should not be afraid. We trust that God will lead us and guide us through this difficult time. Amen.*

To invite our students to honour our Heavenly Mother in the month of May, we also prepared a video of the virtual choir with some Catholic students. Again children were very happy to see their friends online.

When the Education Department announced the resumption of classes in May, we made our school welcoming with the help of our MIC Production Team.

TAKE ON THE CHALLENGE

Sadly, in less than two months, Hong Kong is hit by the third wave of community outbreak, affecting schools. Several of our students were diagnosed COVID positive, and the Sisters and the school staff have responded to the challenge with courage and trust.

All these months, we have experienced fear, anxiety and frustrations... Sometimes we did ask why, why should we be the victims of a ferocious pandemic... While we cannot understand completely the plan of God, we can always experience His loving presence and care. As every cloud has a silver lining, there are always blessings and solace in disguise in moments of pain and sorrow. For example, during the time when supplies were scarce and people began to have panic buying, many of our parents and past students kept sharing with us what they had—masks, sanitizers and other disinfectants. People had learnt to be more caring and many Catholics began to reach out to the poor and shared daily necessities with them. Many are getting more grateful to those who render services to the community—medical staff and other workers. Students have learnt to be more proactive in their home studies and they are more appreciative of their days in school. Teachers have become more creative in preparing their online materials. Lately, a Primary One parent has been officially confirmed to be a COVID patient and the classmates of her daughter prepared a video to cheer the family up... A friend who heard about the infection cases in the school immediately sent the Sisters health kits. Times and again we have received greetings and best wishes. Suddenly we feel that we are so close to one another even though we are practicing social and physical distancing. All these beautiful elements are like bright stars against a deep dark sky.



C.S. Lewis, the famous writer, said, *God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains*. As people of faith, we believe that God has a message for all of us in this pandemic. It will take time to decipher His message but one thing for certain is that He will not leave us alone. Perhaps it is the time for us to re-prioritize our essentials.

We do not know when the third wave of outbreak will stop. However, as daughters of Delia, we always have to put into practice her advice: *Look at the bright side of things*, and help others to do so. ☁

Tele-animation by Pauline Yuen, M.I.C. — Photos Credit: M.I.C.



Inspired by the Tenacity of Delia

The current pandemic context has redefined, for many people, a multitude of personal projects, community commitments and dreams. In this particular context, discouragement and the abandonment of certain projects sometimes appear to be an easy solution. However, the journey of Delia Tétreault (1865-1941) serves as an example of the importance of persevering in order to achieve our dreams.¹



Éric Desautels

A LIFE TRAJECTORY STREWN WITH PITFALLS

From the moment she was born, Delia Tétreault faced many obstacles. Two years after the death of her twin brother, her mother died. Her father left for the United States with some of the family's children and entrusted Delia to his wife's sister. She grew up in a farming community in Marieville on the South Shore of Montreal. Her reading of the Annals of the Propagation of the Faith and of the Holy Childhood enthused her to the point of wanting to enter a religious community. Refused by the Carmelite Sisters of Montreal, she entered the Grey Nuns of Saint-Hyacinthe. Her stay quickly came to an end... following an epidemic in the convent!

She met the French Jesuit Almire Pichon in 1889. For almost 10 years, he helped her discover how to respond to the Lord's call upon her. He invited her to join him in helping the poor, the

immigrants, in a work he founded in Montreal in 1891. Delia became involved in the year of its foundation, at the age of 26. In 1893, she met a pioneer of French-Canadian missionary work in Africa, the Jesuit Alphonse Daignault. This meeting was decisive, as he strongly encouraged Delia's project to begin a missionary work foundation. He even invited her to go to Africa and learn about the conditions of apostolic work in the field. The day before her departure, however, she fell seriously ill.

Already, many people would have let go of the setbacks. This was not the case for Delia Tétreault who faced them with perseverance, guided by her faith. Her project was far from falling through.

THE CHALLENGES OF FOUNDING A COMMUNITY

Delia confided to Father Gustave Bourassa her questions, her desire to found a work for the service of the missions. Noting her apostolic flame, Father Bourassa insisted that she present her project for an apostolic school to Bishop Paul Bruchési. In 1901, he approved its foundation. The following year, Delia rented a house at 900 Maplewood Avenue in order to settle there with her first companions. Delia's dream had other pitfalls: in addition to being ill, she lost one of her two friends, Ida Lafricain, who agreed in 1904 to be one of the foundresses of the Missionary Oblates of the Sacred Heart and Mary Immaculate in Manitoba. Moreover, that same year, Father Bourassa was seriously injured in an accident and succumbed to his injuries. Then in Rome, Bishop Bruchési met with Pius X who approved the foundation of the first missionary community in Quebec.

Delia Tétreault could very well have been put off by all the obstacles standing in her way. This is without taking into account other steps to be taken. In 1905, she went, with Sister Joséphine Montmarquet and Sister Blanche Clément, to the Quebec Parliament to have her community incorporated, which she obtained on February 28, 1907. The previous year, Delia and her companions had acquired a larger building at 28 Ste-Catherine Road, which became 314 later.

THE INFLUENCE OF DELIA TÉTREAULT

Beyond the administrative, religious and economic difficulties, being a woman in the 1900s should not be overlooked. To be a woman who felt called to found a community of missionary sisters at the beginning of the 20th century was in itself an achievement. We must not lose sight of the fact that Delia was born into a society where conservatism was predominant. Few female role models were present and social ascension was difficult. Women did not have the right to vote and were just beginning to gain access to higher education: Octavia Ritchie was the first woman to graduate in medicine from Bishop's University in 1891, Marie Sirois was the first woman to graduate from Laval University in 1904 in literary studies, and Irma Levasseur was the first woman to obtain the right to practice medicine in 1903 and she founded Sainte-Justine Hospital in 1907.

The realization of Delia Tétreault's dream supported a new form of commitment for women of the time. It became easier for them to travel to distant countries to improve the social and economic conditions of populations in need. Delia's life paved the way for thousands of women. When she died in October 1941, popular newspapers of the time marked her death, illustrating the fame she had acquired in Quebec.

Through her dreams, actions and almost unwavering convictions, Delia Tétreault represented an important figure in French Canada. Her life testifies to the importance of the tenacity of our dreams and the value of carrying them through despite adversity. 🌸

¹ This article is inspired by my doctoral thesis *La sécularisation des missions catholiques canadiennes-françaises en Afrique aux XX^e et XXI^e siècles : entre prosélytisme et adaptation* as well as by Madeleine Loranger M.I.C. (1971), « Historique de la Congrégation des Missionnaires de l'Immaculée-Conception et des origines de la Société des Missions-Étrangères », *Session d'études – SCHEC*, vol. 38, p. 71-84. I would also like to thank Micheline Laguë, M.I.C., for her commentaries on the first version of this text. – Photo Credit: M.I.C. Archives

Appreciated Help

In Quebec's nursing homes, the Prime Minister called on the army and the Red Cross to meet the urgent needs of seniors facing the pandemic which has caused many victims.

At home, at the Delia-Tétreault Pavilion (PDT), we asked our younger Sisters staying here because of the Coronavirus travel bans, to give a hand in the health services. We are collecting their testimonies here for you.

After this time of renewal in view of my definitive commitment, I was to return to my country of origin, Madagascar, but the reality of the Coronavirus does not allow me to travel. My services are called upon to help our older Sisters in the MIC Health Services. It is a great joy for me to accompany my elderly and sick M.I.C Sisters and P.M.E. Fathers. A training course has helped me adapt to the measures taken against the Coronavirus: white coat, goggles, mask and hand disinfection.

WHAT CAN I OFFER PATIENTS?

I started my service on May 26, from 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m., Monday to Friday. I try to meet the needs of the patients: listening to them, making them eat, helping them to walk inside or outside in the bocage, according to each person's wishes. I classify their clothes, water the plants and open the TV channel of their choice. I adapted easily thanks to the openness and trust of the Sisters.



I even organized a meeting to celebrate the feast of Pentecost. The songs and prayers were very much appreciated. The joy radiated.

As for me, I am proud to have lived this new experience. Mother Delia's words rise in my heart: *To give joyfully is to give twice*. I am enriched by the testimonies of these sick persons who are still missionaries. From now on, they are part of my prayers as well as all the nursing personnel. I appreciate the nurses and attendants who are so attentive to the needs expressed. Warm thanks to each and every one.

Berthine Razanamiarisoa, M.I.C.

Photos Credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

My contact with the Sisters of the Delia-Tétreault Pavilion was a grace from God that invited me to take a closer look at a completely new reality. I went there with the desire to meet and share with my elder Sisters, and I found in them witnesses of the Kingdom living a particular stage of their lives.

Much more than women diminished in their social, physical or psychological capacity, I met Sisters who, like sacred books, knew how to write the story of their lives of Thanksgiving wherever they went. What a richness to listen to those who have the capacity to express themselves! Others are unable to communicate, I see their photos in their rooms, some symbols or memories of their mission country and when I question them, they have an attentive gaze, as if they were looking for an answer. Only a sweet *I don't know* comes out and a smile appears on their faces. And it is then that the Gospel resounds in my heart: *When you do good, do not publish it. Let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing* (Mt 6:2-3). Can there be a greater degree of humility than this *I do not know*. As if at the heart of this answer is the total abandonment that affirms that it is the Lord who knows and that is what counts.



In a time of confinement, in a reality like PDT, one might think that all days are similar, the same people, the same routine... but for me, every day has been different, I have experienced many different emotions. When I see my older Sisters, I thank the Lord for all the good they have done and I recognise in them the promise of God: *In old age they will continue to bear fruit* (Ps 92) and during these weeks with them I have reaped beautiful fruits for my MIC life.

Monica Ruiz, M.I.C.



GratITUDE to Our Lord from whom all gifts come. – Delia Tetreault. This thought of our foundress allows me to express my gratitude and thanksgiving for this experience lived with our older Sisters.

It is a service, and more than a service; it is to give back love to our Sisters who gave their lives out of love and who believed that the sharing of the Gospel was possible. Today, I am a witness to this total gift,

a love given completely. These lives that I attend to, each morning, allow me to live the present moment even more fully. Sharing with these Sisters is a joy, and with our P.M.E. brothers also present in our infirmary. They have been part of our lives, since the beginning of the community, and today, in the twilight of their life, we accompany them.

This time of sharing, in moments of lucidity or absence, is subject to wonder, to the joy of living. I am happy for these moments that allow me to live my being as a consecrated woman even more. The total gift of myself to God takes on its true meaning.

Thank you, Sisters and Brothers, for making my missionary life more dynamic. You give me the greatest testimony of a total gift to God: serene faces that speak to me of God present and active in this stage of life.

It is now more than ever that we must sing with our Immaculate Mother: *My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit is overjoyed in God, my Saviour.* – Delia Tetreault.

Isabel Ayala, M.I.C.

Missionary Echo on Paradise Island



A missionary magazine... what does it awaken in our hearts? The Sisters of Madagascar reflected on the impact of the magazine *Le Précurseur* on the paradisiacal island in this year of the magazine's centennial...



Meeting — Photo Credit: M.I.C.

Robine, Isabelle and Charline, M.I.C.

HISTORICAL NOTE

The first MIC missionaries arrived in 1952. The magazine *Le Précurseur* remained in their hands because few Malagasy knew how to read French. Little by little, the magazine expanded in our schools, in the libraries: priests and teachers used it for homilies and catechetical courses. Children and adults took advantage of it without forgetting the novices in formation. A game was launched to promote knowledge of mission countries throughout the world. The calendar with its beautiful photos was eagerly awaited. The missionary spirit was developing.

Mission Sunday grew in importance and was celebrated with enthusiasm. The MIC were committed with ardor to the service of the Pontifical Mission Societies. The influence and use of the magazine favored missionary commitments in the country and vocations sprang up.

TESTIMONIES OF THE SISTERS AND ASSOCIATES (AsMIC)

—The magazine brings together the members of the Institute. —It creates union, understanding and wonder. —The testimonies of missionary life, the brief obituaries edify me. —I deepen my French through this reading. —It serves me and encourages my joy in sharing the faith. —In reading the challenges taken up by the missionaries, I become aware that trial is inherent to mission. —Knowing that the mission is also carried out elsewhere, stimulates me in my objectives and my activities here. —It is a document of deepening as a Christian: I live my faith in Thanksgiving and I try to communicate it to others. —The magazine opens up to what we cannot see, like what is happening in the Philippines. —The experience of others challenges me. How can I commit myself in my mission to go further? How can I improve my way of seeing and living my mission?

These testimonies confirm the prophetism of Venerable Delia Tétrault. A Malagasy proverb says: *A queen bee dies leaving honey*. Today the work of the MIC Missionary Press makes known the values and experiences lived by the missionaries. How can we not give thanks for the life of this audacious woman who has left us such a rich heritage! 🍯

A Vitalizing Contagion

Since its birth, the Church has always been about teaching and making disciples. *Go therefore, make disciples of all nations* (Mt.28:19). This mission continues to resonate in the hearts of believers. *The Church exists to evangelize the world¹, to proclaim, like Jesus, that God the Father is love and encounter.*

Marie Nadia Noël, M.I.C.

MEETING OF THE NATIONS

Two weeks after my arrival in Canada, I visited a few parishes. I took a course: Embarking in the Church of Quebec. All this to facilitate my adaptation. I arrived from the South. Over there, the churches are full to bursting on Sundays. The music usually resounds with powerful voices, the prayers recited by everyone present and are sustained by Caribbean rhythms. Here I find Christian communities where the liturgy is well prepared, but celebrated in small groups. I have experienced a time of weariness. It took my meeting with Sophie Tremblay at the Dominican Pastoral Institute and my presence at the children's Christmas concert at St. Dorothée parish in Laval to change my outlook and my vision of the Church here.

We are encountering an increasingly multicultural society. Several nationalities today are among and around us. What is most beautiful in all this is that mission makes its home among people. In the same family, several nationalities with diverse cultures cohabit. Mission is dialogue with people and between religions.

CONTAGION OF LOVE

The Church of Montreal is rich in cultural communities with their experience of exodus,



Nadia, M.I.C., joy of sharing – Photo Credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

exile, and the Passover of Christ. At the heart of this Church grow shoots of life.

If faith is an encounter with Jesus, it also leads us to meet others. I have had the chance to visit Christian communities where faith is lived and celebrated. I told you about my presence at a Christmas concert. I was impressed by the ardor and fervor of these teenagers who interpreted beautiful Christmas tunes. The involvement of the parents was of great quality.

Last February, we welcomed young confirmands from Sainte Dorothée parish, they came to meet missionary nuns and witnesses. Women who, in the name of their faith in Jesus Christ, have given the best of themselves, have committed themselves to more just societies. Women who sowed life and joy in the hearts of those they met. I can still see Gabriela's smile, happy to speak with Sister Marcelle, a missionary in Haiti; Estelle who, when she introduced herself, said: *My name is Sister Estelle* because the contagion was so great. We are not talking about the contagion of Covid-19, which calls for physical distancing, but the contagion of love, of happiness. That day I saw a Church full of hope, children who thirst to know, to understand, to love and to be loved. And above all, mothers concerned about the education of their children in the faith. Are these not our reasons for thanksgiving?

A proclamation of the Gospel challenges us today when it becomes a meeting, a visitation. Our God is the one who surprises, seduces and transforms the person.² 🌹

¹ Paul VI, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* 1975, no 14

² Notes from "Embarquer dans l'Église du Québec", autumn 2019, Dominican Pastoral Institute

With You, O Lord!



AGRIPINA FERNANDEZ, M.I.C.
Sister Mary-Léo
1927-2020
Anao, Tarlac, Philippines

"Thou hast seduced me, O Lord, thou hast been the strongest." (Jer 20:7) These words sum up well the religious vocation of Sr. Agripina who for a long time resisted the silent, loving and tenacious call of Jesus. She struggled to pursue studies and suffered from the opposition of her parents to her choice of life. Slowly she discovered and deepened the beauty of the Christian faith and the grace of consecrated life. At the age of 32, her YES to Jesus opened the door of the novitiate for her in Marlborough, MA, USA, and in Quebec. Returning to the Philippines in 1962, she worked in our schools as catechist, sociologist, guidance counsellor, coordinator and director. On October 31, 2019, our courageous Sister Agripina finally joined the One who loved her so much.



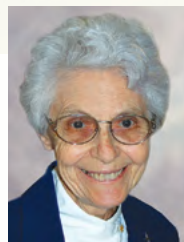
LISE LAMARCHE, M.I.C.
1946-2020
St-Esprit, Quebec

As a teenager, Lise heard her father say: "You must give everything to the Lord". This statement marked her whole life. As an only daughter with only one brother, she was impressed by her mother's reading of the Precursor and the testimonies of the MICs that visited the schools. It was an openness to sharing and a first missionary call. *Wanting to give everything to the Lord*, she entered the novitiate on September 17, 1966. Even if the adaptation was difficult, she knew that with the Lord she would succeed. She left for Africa in 1977. Available and enthusiastic, domestic science remained her speciality which she taught in Zambia and Malawi until 1998. In 2018, a medical verdict is unequivocal and puts an end to her service as provincial bursar. On March 9, 2020, Lise will peacefully live the supreme gift of her life to the Lord.



**MARIE-THÉRÈSE
DESHARNAIS, M.I.C.**
Sister François-Solano
1929-2020
Mont-Laurier, Quebec

Struck by poliomyelitis at the age of 8, Marie-Thérèse learns at a young age how to meet life's challenges, including continuing her studies to obtain her educator's diploma. The beautiful nature of Mont-Laurier among her eleven brothers and sisters invites her to contemplation and prepares her for community life. The passage of nuns in the schools opens her to total self-giving which is concretized by her entry into the novitiate on August 8, 1952. From 1962 the mission in Madagascar benefits from her talents as a born educator and from a caring presence to her pupils to whom she teaches commitment by organizing the Legion of Mary. On her return to Quebec, she favors immigrants with kindness and competence. Then, on April 3, 2020, it will be Life in fullness that will finally fill her.



**ANTOINETTE
CASTONGUAY, M.I.C.**
Sister St-Marcel
1926-2020
Glen Robertson, Ontario

A family experience of tenderness, compassion and mutual aid forged the soul of our sister Antoinette and soon underpinned her commitments. *I launched myself into the apostolate (YCW: Young Catholic Workers) with all the energy of my 16 years. I discovered so much physical and moral misery!* A decisive retreat at the age of 22 led her to the Novitiate on August 8, 1949. On mission in the Philippines since 1955, as an educator, she also assured a presence to the forgotten. It was good to live and work with this competent, ardent and loving companion. After her definitive return to Canada in 1995, the MIC Mission News benefitted from her exceptional missionary dynamism for almost 20 years. When a nephew learns of her death on 24 April 2020, he will say: *The good Lord must be happy to have her with him.*

MIC Mission News

YOUR TOPICAL MISSION NEWS MAGAZINE SINCE 1920 (French edition/Le Précurseur)

PUBLISHED BY THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION



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