

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 47, N° 2 | APRIL • MAY • JUNE 2020 | \$5.00



To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923

*100 Years
of an Undaunted Mission*

Délia Tétreault and Her Work, *Le Précurseur*

*(The Precursor/
MIC Mission News)*

*100 ans
1920-2020*

mission

histoire

culture

faits

LE PRÉCURSEUR

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS - 2020

APRIL

FOR FAMILIES

We pray that today's families may be accompanied with love, respect and guidance.

MAY

FOR THE MARITIME WORLD

We pray for all those who work and live from the sea, among them sailors, fishermen and their families.

JUNE

RESPECT FOR THE PLANET'S RESOURCES

We pray that the planet's resources will not be plundered, but shared in a just and respectful manner.

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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The Precursor and the Precursors — A Mission to Share



By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

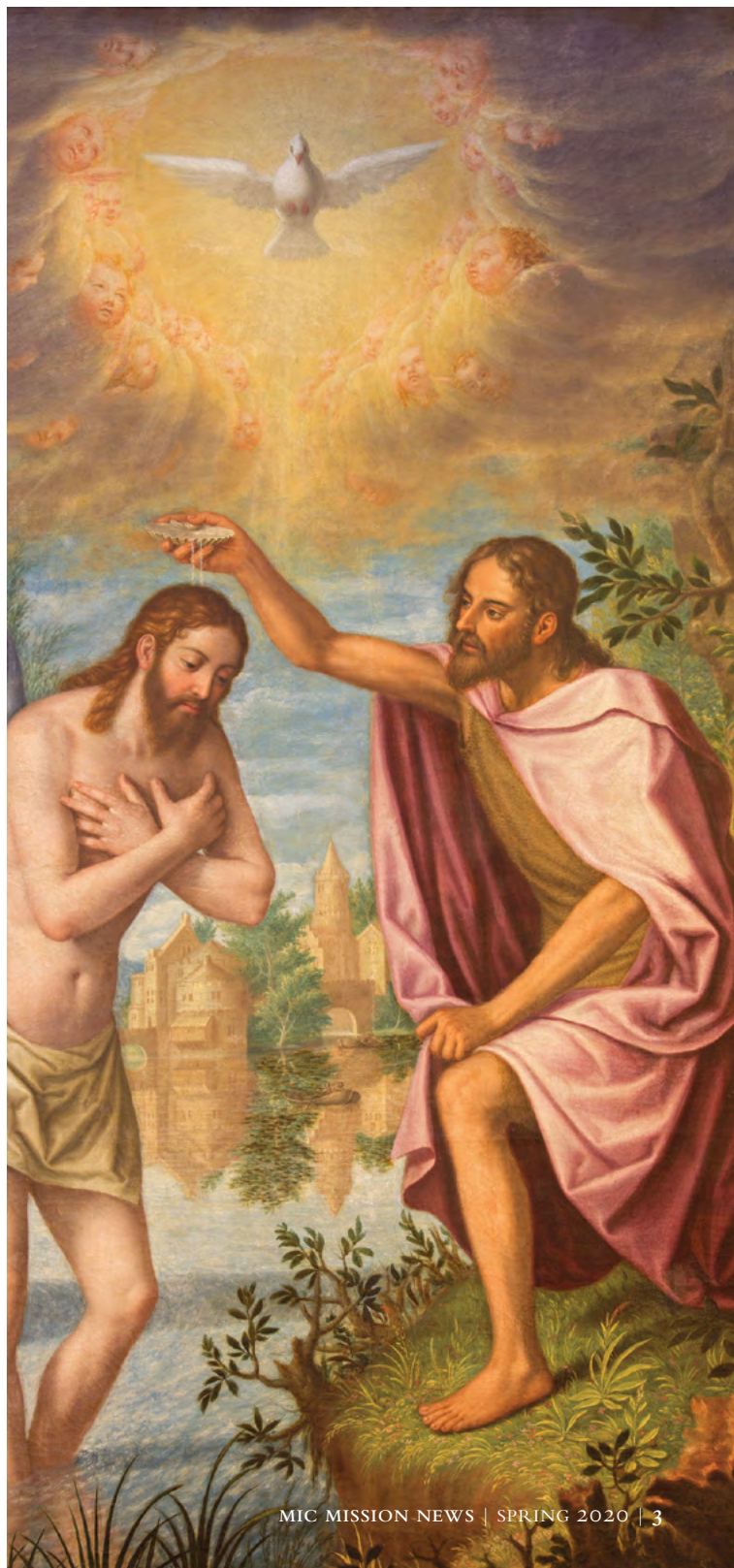
Choosing the name of a magazine is to give it a vocation. In 1920, the Venerable Délia Tétreault chose to call her little newsletter: *Le Précurseur/The*

*Precursor*¹. What was her intention? Before giving it such a name, I imagine she had meditated a great deal on the mission of John the Baptist.

Who was John the Baptist, the Forerunner?

In scripture, John the Baptist is portrayed as the forerunner. He was quite different from the prophets of the Old Testament who announced a Messiah to come and asked to prepare for his coming by doing penance; they denounced all abuses and foretold impending disasters which often made people say: *prophets of doom*. To the contrary, John the Baptist, the last of the prophets, was the only one who could say when he saw Jesus: *Here is the Lamb of God*. Contemporary and cousin of Jesus, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he recognized in Him the Envoy of God.

Our Foundress, Délia Tétreault, could not have given her magazine a more beautiful title while confirming its mission. In 1842, the Society of St. John the Baptist had recognized him as patron saint of all French Canadians and it was on May 10, 1908, at the request of the Society, that Pope Pius X confirmed St. John the Baptist as the special patron saint of the French Canadian faithful.² A missionary at heart, a woman of her time, Mother Délia wanted her magazine *Le Précurseur/The Precursor* to reach many people, and to proclaim Jesus Christ following the example of the great prophet John the Baptist. This is the primary mission of the magazine, which remains faithful even after one hundred years of publication.



Throughout the history of the magazine – who were the forerunners?

For a magazine to reach its 100th anniversary, doesn't just happen by itself. How many generous people have contributed and it is with much gratitude that I underline all the contribution they have given us over the years. How many bishops, parish priests, religious communities have warmly welcomed us to offer the magazine in their dioceses, or parishes. How many people offered us meals while on the road going from village to village. We came across warm, welcoming people, young people who accompanied us to solicit subscriptions from door to door. And how many collaborators offered to collect the subscriptions and do a follow-up after our departure. What beautiful memories when we think of all those people who helped us all the way. They did so with happy hearts and encouraged our mission work. They themselves were truly precursors of the Good News. Upon our return home, how many Magnificat were said for all the people we had met on our way. Their joys, their sorrows, their intentions, we held in our prayers, and when the magazine entered their homes it became a source of missionary vocations. After reading some of the missionaries' stories, many young men and women felt called to follow their example.

And what about today?

Recently, I attended the annual AMéCO's Congress³. The theme was: *In the Midst of a Storm*. This was a proper title at a time when the written media is currently experiencing so many challenges. True, we've gone through many changes during the one hundred years of our existence, but today with the law on secularism, the abuses in the Church, the indifference towards religions, the decline in religious practices, all these affect us deeply. But as stated during the Congress, this is not the time to give up. No, on the contrary, we must roll up our sleeves and go to the deepest depths of the Christian mystery, putting our trust in the Risen Jesus; He is the center of our faith, the one who gives life and nourishes our hope. To announce the God of Life is our mission and the specific vocation of our mission magazine. Another challenge is the production of a paper format periodical. Newspapers, as we have known them in the past, are struggling to survive, they

are on the verge of bankruptcy. We too want to take care of the planet, of our common home as Pope Francis likes to call it, but most of our subscribers do not use internet, therefore, we are keeping both the paper and digital format for another two years. Competent manpower is becoming increasingly scarce and we have specific requirements, particularly for the French and English languages which are the vehicle of our message. In respect to our readers and the message we deliver, we want to offer a quality magazine while remaining within our budget.

"I was depressed,
but when I read the magazine
I felt invigorated."

Loyalty to the mission of a magazine

Despite the difficulties, we believe in our mission. The writings and testimonies of our missionaries in the field arouse much interest. The articles lead to reflection and to a deepening of our own personal motivation in life. A magazine requires that it be in tune with its target readers, never discouraging, but always energizing the subscribers. The comments we receive tell us the importance of the written word. One lady said: *The testimony of your faith increases mine*. Another wrote: *I was depressed, but when I read the magazine I felt invigorated*. With all my heart, I hope that the magazine will bring a message of peace and love; that it will inspire its readers to continue their ecclesial and social commitment. It is a mission to share. It is up to our readership to be missionaries at heart and the forerunners of today. 🌊

¹ The Precursor became MIC Mission News in January 1974

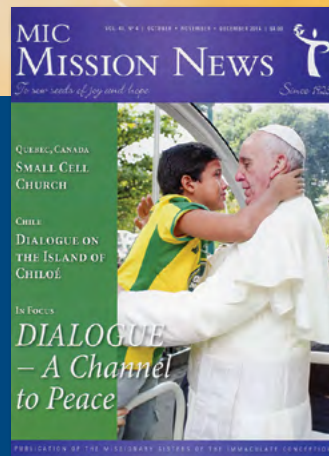
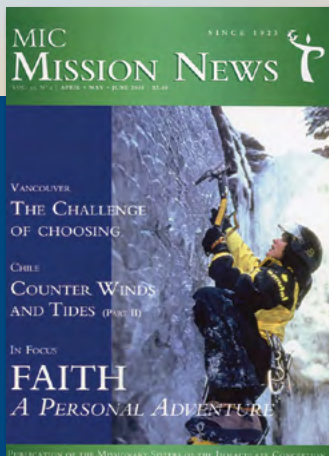
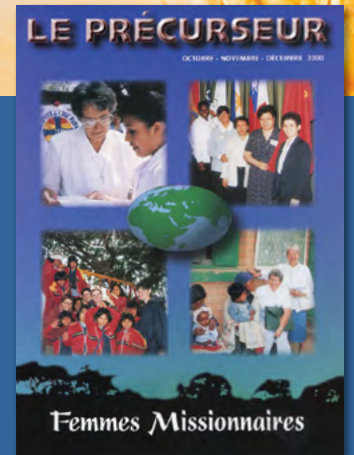
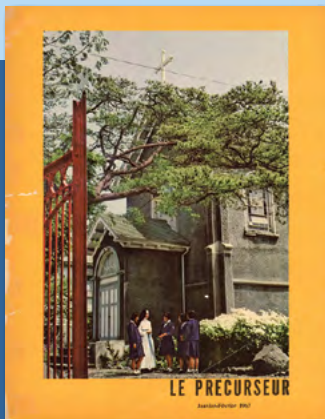
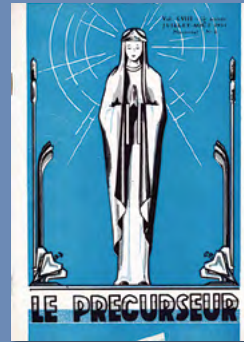
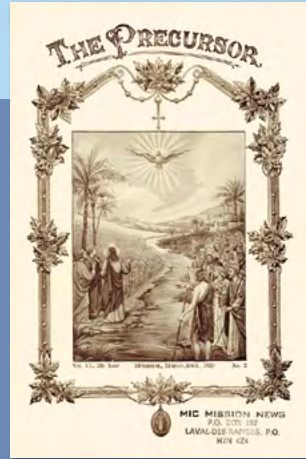
² DROUIN, François – *Pourquoi la St-Jean-Baptiste?*

Cap-aux-Diamants, no.26, été 1991, p.18-19

³ Catholic and Ecumenical Media Association

Photo on page 3: Shutterstock

The Splendid Unfolding of a Magazine



The Precursor's Centennial: A Brief Overview



By **Éric Desautels**

Tracing the history of Catholic missionary magazines in Quebec since the beginning of the 20th century means discovering the links established by the Quebec population with distant societies. This story took off in the 1920s with Pope Benedict XV's encyclical *Maximum Illud*. At that time, the Catholic press underwent considerable expansion, increasing from 18.8% to 25.0% of all periodicals published in Quebec between 1915 and 1940¹.

The foundation of *The Precursor* is in this lineage. Initially, the journal was published quarterly. The very first issue sets the tone with a variety of articles: apostolic letters as well as news about the Propagation of the Faith, missions in China and various works in Canada. Only between 1920 and 1923, the magazine's circulation rose from 220 to 28,000 copies, before climbing to 70,000 copies in 1926. These figures do not hide the tremendous interest in the magazine.

In those times of clerical nationalism, the magazine was placed under the patronage of St. John the Baptist who preached in the desert to announce the coming of Christ. French Canadians had then to be convinced to follow in the footsteps of this prophet to become "forerunners" themselves. Sister St. Anaclet created the drawing that adorns the only cover page of *The Precursor* from 1920 to 1948. We admire John the Baptist pointing Jesus as the Messiah to his disciples. Framed by a rosary and maple leaves, the wheat field in the background symbolizes the harvest promised to Christ's servants accepting exile.

More than a news journal to inform benefactors, *The Precursor* represented a place where vocations could be awakened. There was hope that the apostolic flame would be aroused in the readers. Travelling the roads, the Sisters of *The Precursor* presented the magazine on Sundays at all Masses and devoted a considerable part of their energy to ensure its sale and distribution. Their efforts were rewarded by numerous donations from the public and by the increase in the number of subscribers between the inter-war years.

These successes conceal deep-seated problems that worsened in the post war period. In 1952, the editor of the magazine warned the readers of the reasons that led to a change of format, evoking the *ever-increasing struggle against rising prices*.²



Competing with American-style magazines and high circulation press, the magazine needed to modernize the cover page, increase the number of pages, and introduce color ink. In 1952, the average print run of *The Precursor* reached a very impressive peak of 172,000 copies.

From the 1950s to today: decline or renewal?

Against a backdrop of a certain disaffection among Quebecers for religious reading, the 1950s and 1960s saw a marked decline in the general circulation of religious magazines. In 1969, a convention of the *Canadian Catholic Periodical Association* discussed the problems of declining circulation, production costs, and increasing competition from other media. Holding on, *The Precursor* still saw its circulation melt from 172,000 to 50,000 between 1952 and 1980.

... this demonstrated the will
to renew the presentation and
to attract a new readership.

In this context, the Catholic media became more professional and were setting up permanent secretariats as well as mailing and correspondence systems. The editors took care of the graphic presentation, embedded color images, added humorous pages and punchy testimonials. Ideas multiplied to attract readership. As early as 1967, *The Precursor* launched a contest to increase its subscriptions. Instead of the traditional crucifixes and rosaries, a llama-wool carpet from Bolivia and a man's Chinese silk dress gown were drawn. To illustrate the contest, rather than presenting a photo of a nun dressed in a habit, appeared a young woman in a miniskirt holding the latest issue of the magazine in one hand and a bottle of Coca-Cola in the other, this demonstrated the will to renew the presentation and to attract a new readership.³

From the 1960s and 1970s onwards, the content of the magazine reflected more of a humanitarian



conscience and opted for a discourse of openness, tolerance and intercultural dialogue. Strictly religious interpretations gave way to more substantive articles highlighting the complexity of political, social, cultural, environmental and even economic issues. The subjects of reflection on Christianity were diversifying.

Despite this, the decline continued into the 1990s as the workforce aged. The management of the magazine continued to adapt and recruit new members. Notwithstanding the ups and downs, *The Precursor* has been able to persist by offering reflections on current events, informing readers about the missions, and offering an original perspective. The magazine has also gone digital; the digitization of this journal and the creation of a portal represent a crucial step in its history, ensuring its preservation and accessibility.

Rereading *The Precursor* means reading an encyclopedia of ideas and facts that illustrate the doubts and hopes of those who dreamed of serving the cause of Christ in the world. Abundantly illustrated, the magazine allows us to remember and delve into the history of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception since 1920. What an adventure! ☺

¹ Marquis, Dominique - *Un quotidien pour l'Église, l'Action catholique, 1910-1940*, Montreal, Leméac, 2004 - P. 48

² *The Precursor*, Volume XVII, No. 1 January-February 1952, P. 1

³ *The Precursor*, Volume XXVII, No. 7 January-February 1967, P. 265

A WINDOW ON THE WORLD

When I was asked to write an article for our magazine *MIC Mission News*¹ in light of its centennial, I immediately wanted to share my personal experience. The idea gradually developed and I thought of expressing my gratitude for that which this mission magazine has enriched me, humanly speaking and also spiritually.

By **Gloria Pérez Pupo, M.I.C.**

Cuba, a restricted country

In 1979, when I entered religious life with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, my country, Cuba, was rather isolated. Our openness on the world was oriented towards the countries and events that were in harmony with the ideology and recommended policies of our government. Little news would come to us from outside of our island.

Travelling via *The Precursor* (MIC Mission News)

For this reason, the magazine *The Precursor* was for me a window on the world. Thanks to this publication, I was able to travel beyond my island and go to places where the M.I.C. Sisters were present. I learned about other cultures, other ways of living and of evangelizing. Often, the Sister in charge of our formation would translate the texts in Spanish, and with the help of photos, she had us travel. That activity, though limited and discreet, opened my heart to the whole universe, a characteristic

most needed for members of our international institute. I still remember my surprise upon discovering some cultural aspects of Madagascar, a country so far away from mine. I became aware of the dreams and projects children from Haiti, Hong Kong and Japan had for their future. I learned about the indigenous peoples who live in the Philippines, Peru and Bolivia, countries where the M.I.C. Sisters were working. I discovered the story of China, the country closely linked to our Institute's history. What a wealth of information those printed pages offered to the readers. What an impact a simple magazine can have: expand the horizons of knowledge, broaden the mind, and develop a basis of universal communion.



A familiar reality and a feeling of belonging

In 1991, I came to Canada for the first time. I was to be one year at our International Scholasticate to prepare for my final commitment as a religious in the M.I.C. Institute. It was a choice opportunity for me to know more about this missionary foundation and to learn the French language. I was stunned when I came upon sites and persons I had seen before via *The Precursor*. The house in Pont-Viau, formerly known as the novitiate; the little brook and the wooden footbridge where our Foundress, Délia, would sit and converse with her daughters, as she called them. I even recognized some Sisters who had written articles in the magazine. I admired the autumn foliage, and all of nature's colors. The reality was before my eyes, a reality I could appreciate even more, having had a previous glimpse through the mission magazine; my heart had already been prepared. Without knowing, *The Precursor*, had been good nourishment for me; it helped me to grow in the knowledge of the M.I.C. Institute and in developing a sense of belonging; it could be compared to a tree with Canadian roots and branches extending to world-wide countries.

Friction creates affection

When we enter a religious community, it takes a while before feeling completely full-fledged members of this new family to which the Lord has called us. A Spanish proverb says: *Friction creates affection*. That is to say that affection comes from the experience of living together. *The Precursor* had somewhat allowed me to connect with places and people I had read about; it opened my heart to others beyond my own area and I felt united to the M.I.C. family. When I was able to read by myself the articles written in French, then my reward was tenfold. We must not doubt the power of love. With emotion, I think of all the love offered by the Sisters who worked diligently in producing a mission oriented magazine, those who promoted it and felt they were the guardians of a community heritage. Mysteriously and without doubt, the quality of their love reached me and awakened within my heart a love for my community.



A universal fraternity

Since a few years, lay personnel collaborate in the publication of the magazine. The lack of qualified M.I.C. Sisters to do the work, new technologies, and other changes have obliged us to look beyond our walls in order to maintain updated means of communication. This step forward allows us to share a treasure which otherwise would have been kept hidden in a treasure chest. Last year, I was impressed when I heard a young Canadian woman speak about the future of *The Precursor*. Imbued of the M.I.C. mission work abroad, she spoke with enthusiasm and passion as she pointed towards a technology adapted to our times. Without doubt, Mother Délia must be endorsing the welcoming attitude of her daughters, and their willingness to share the heritage she left us: *The Precursor*. **To each and every one who collaborated in sustaining these 100 years of long life, WE THANK YOU.** ∞

¹ MIC Mission News formerly known as *The Precursor* is the counterpart of the French edition *Le Précurseur*.

P. 8 (left to right) Srs. Gloria Pérez Pupo, Miriana Rodriguez, Bernardeta Collazo, Amelia Mejides

Above: Stained glass window: Dance of the Cosmos
Artist: Fr. Gilles Caron, P.M.É.

When you enter the **Délia-Tétreault Museum**, you find yourself surrounded by a hundred objects and images that have crossed time and oceans. In this issue we introduce you to another item, its history and its key role in the missionary adventure in Quebec.



The Secret Life of Objects



By Alexandre Payer

Exhibitions Commissioner
Délia-Tétreault Museum

From the plucking of the strings with the nails comes a soft and strangely melancholic music that leaves something tender in the heart. You must see the instrumentalist pressing his valiha strongly against him, because the human body, it is said, reinforces the sound when the instrument is pressed against it.¹

The valiha (pronounced vali) is a plucked stringed instrument whose soundboard is made of a hollowed out segment of bamboo 60 to 120 cm long with a long vertical ear. Traditionally, the “strings” of the instrument were made of thin strips of bark incised into the trunk and gently lifted from the table by small rectangular pieces of dry pumpkin that serve as movable trestles. Note that these bands, held in place at both ends by a knotted liana, are now replaced by metal guitar strings (or sometimes even bicycle brake cables!). Pyro-engraved pastoral motifs, leather bands and chiseled elements embellish most of these instruments, emphasizing their predominantly domestic manufacture.

After ten months of teaching music in Tsaramasay school in Madagascar, Sr. Suzette Jean, M.I.C., reflects with wonder the power of music to bring minds and hearts closer together. For her, it is a privileged means of contact with the young and not so young. The community of the Missionary

Sisters of the Immaculate Conception has always promoted musical folklore among musicians and singers of all ages and levels through competitions and student exchanges in several countries such as Japan, Philippines, and Hong Kong.

In our collective imagination, few things link art, craft, tradition, everyday life, and spirituality as closely as the universal language of music. Like the valiha player who emphasizes in harmony the events that make up his life, for missionaries the power of music becomes a source of resilience and communion. Even today, the singing of the Magnificat, inspired by Mary’s Thanksgiving from the Gospel, still marks the evening prayer and the opening of important gatherings of this “singing” community.

As a national instrument, the valiha reflects the symbolic cultural heritage of Madagascar, a country that shines through the dynamism of local artists and its diaspora. Visitors to the Musée Délia-Tétreault who see the valiha for the first time are intrigued by the artisanal aspect of its making. Its rough and delicate workmanship seems to herald: I am a timeless instrument, but also an everyday one; an instrument that travels, bringing the Big Island with it. ∞

Photos:

Above:
Valiha –traditional
fabrication made
from local bamboo
and bark strips

Below:
Valiha –modern
instrument made
with metal strings

Photo Credit:
Alexandre Payer

¹ LEMAIRE,
Angèle, M.I.C.
– *The Precursor*,
Malagasy Musical
Heritage: Sept-Oct.
1966, Volume XXVII,
No. 5, P. 212

Délia-Tétreault Museum

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A PROPOSED PROJECT
TO RETURN AND EMPOWER
THE MANGYAN-ALANGAN
TRIBE IN OCCIDENTAL
MINDORO

(Part II)

A Return to the Village



In close solidarity with these groups, Sr. Lilia and Sr. Beverly wish to draw the attention of government agencies, particularly the offices in charge of cultural communities; they need to work directly and in a unified way for the development of these peoples. It is essential to continue their education and economic development, not at our own pace, but at their own pace, in order to safeguard their social structures, traditions and way of life. Otherwise, the Filipino heritage would suffer a fatal blow for which future generations would blame us.

**By Sr Beverly Romualdo, M.I.C.
& Dr Rica de los Reyes-Ancheta**

Sister Berverly's biography

Sister Beverly is a religious Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception. She was born on December 10, 1966, in Bombon, a small town with many cultural traditions and religious beliefs, in the heart of *Camarines Sur*. She is the eldest daughter of Mr. Roberto Romualdo whose death on September 15, 2013 created a deep wound in her soul. Shortly after he passed away, she enrolled at the Asian Social Institute for her Master's degree.

Before entering the convent, Sister Beverly had worked as an accountant in one of the firms in Manila. She had a very supportive family, a financially rewarding job, good employers, a loving and trusting boyfriend, and a reliable circle of friends. But all these seemed meaningless and she felt a profound longing for something more fulfilling.

She finally felt she found her place when she entered the convent and became a religious. She was immediately sent as a missionary to the Mangyans and became an adamant protector of the tribe's claim for their ancestral domain, their land which is associated closely and deeply as their way of life.



Sister began working with the Mangyans even before she became a full-pledged religious. They called her *Kaagapay*, a title given by the leaders which removes the notion of being an outsider and considers the person as someone who has earned the trust of the elders, she is part of their circle, she is one of their own. When Sr. Beverly was given this title, a gush of new energy to serve the tribe became an impetus for her great work among the Mangyans. After all, she wasn't an outsider. She was born with the mission of being a co-journeyer with the Mangyan-Alangans.

A struggle to return to their ancestral domain

Sister Beverly's newly-acquired status as *Kaagapay* propelled her to do everything in her power to be the voice of the tribe to the lowlanders and influential political leaders. She mustered her courage to talk with political leaders, non-government agencies, and church leaders, hoping to convince them of their vital role in realizing the dream of the Mangyan-Alangan tribe. In Section 4, Chapter III of the Republic Act 8371 whereby the rights of indigenous cultural communities are recognized, protected,

and promoted. The Alangans found their claims justified as it included such concepts of territories which cover not only the physical environment but the spiritual and cultural bonds. The bond that exists between their people and their land is sacred; it is their life, it is the land that ties them to their roots, their heritage and their people.

MIC Sisters assigned in Mindoro – 1989-2012

Sister Beverly's work among the Mangyan-Alangans stems from the mission of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Roughly, thirty-three Sisters were assigned to the Mindoro Mission from 1989 to 2012.



True to their vision of being the Christian Community of Occidental Mindoro, they faithfully witnessed unity, love, and harmony among the people. While present among the Mangyans, they offered them ways to provide for their livelihood, they offered them health care services and literacy programs.

The end of a long struggle

The long struggle for the Mangyan-Alangans' return of their ancestral domains ended with an awarding of the Certificate of the Land Titles and the Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title. Sister Beverly with other M.I.C. Sisters helped the tribe to obtain these documents from the government. These precious certificates have been entrusted to the Congregation for safekeeping.

In 2012, the M.I.C. Sisters halted their work for and with the Mangyan-Alangans. They decided that time had come to pass the flaming torch to their tribal chief.

A call to return

In 2019, Sr. Beverly and Dr. Rica Ancheta went to Bangalore, India; they participated at a conference entitled: *The Harmony Conference*. They presented a report and were given the opportunity to hear questions raised by the conference audience. What happened to the Mangyan-Alangans? How are they now? Who continued your mission? These questions triggered serious reflections among the Mangyan-Alangans' protectors. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, the word **return** was imposed. In light of this, we realized that our work was not done; to complete God's plan, we needed to go back and carry on our mission work among the people of Occidental Mindoro.

Conscious of the fact that empowering a community is a long process, the M.I.C. Sisters were urged to be present, to become enablers and mobilizers. The M.I.C. Sisters can make a collective stand to rebuild what has been lost or forgotten. *A Return to the Village* is a philosophy enabling and mobilizing a community to work toward rebuilding itself where God's heart is. 🌊

Photos Credit: Sr. Beverly Romualdo, M.I.C.

A Child's Prophetic Dream

By Colette Soucy

Excerpts from: *A Wee Bit
of a Dream Set Free*
Published by: The Missionary Sisters
of the Immaculate Conception

*At the very dawn of Délia's life
Her marvelous adventure
Grows out of a Dream.
A whirling, winding Dream
Flowing like a crystal April brook.
Before her very eyes
Délia sees a vast field of wheat
Golden and oh, so beautiful...*

*The millions of golden wheat stalks
Become children's heads;
Children of every race and color
They are all around her,
Far beyond what the eye can see.
What a vision!*

*From now on, the dream dwells in this child.
At home, Délia reads about the missions
And their awesome mysteries.
Where does she find these marvelous tales?
In an old forgotten chest,
filled with faded annals
In a hidden corner of the attic...*

*In her teen years, Délia never loses sight
Of her wonderful childhood Dream!
For a long time, nearly ten years,
The Dream journeys, searches a way.
Finally, through the powerful
breath of the Spirit
The wee bit of a Dream beholds its path
And is set free.*

*Hand in hand with her Dream,
Délia lets it guide her.
As a child holding her Father's hand
She walks on without knowing
Where it will lead her.*

*There are footsteps in her soul
Footsteps which speak of joy.
Without losing any time,
Délia sows into the soil
A portion of the little Dream.*

*Hardly is the seed buried
Than a fresh little shoot appears
On the noonday horizon.
It is an apostolic school
With a missionary aim.*

*Then, a second shoot appears
Stemming from the same Life source...
What has just been born on Quebec soil
Is a Women's Congregation
Destined for the Missions.*

*The little Dream, eager to see the world
Wants to wander on all the roads.
It yearns to spread the Good News
Making the simple-hearted sing with joy.*

*From the vantage point of time gone by
We can now see more clearly
That the little Dream of wheat stalks
Changed into children's heads
Sparked a great and joyful fire
A fire which still burns on
And will keep on burning
till the end of time.
Indeed, who can stop a wee bit of a Dream
When it has been set free?*

*The story of Délia's Dream has grown,
It remains an open-ended story.
According to the Divine Archivist
It is still being written.*



CENTENNIAL PAINTING

Délia Tétreault and her Great Achievement

ARTIST: JULIE CAOQUETTE

Inspiration is evoked spontaneously in a moment of clarity. Julie has a special gift that takes her into her imaginary world and translates it into works that go beyond reality.

In a few words she says: *I paint with passion, the imaginary world I create inhabits me. What inspires me the most is to transmit my emotions on a canvas to express myself and to share my perception. I thank you for encouraging me by buying one of my paintings and I hope that my work can allow you to accompany me in this world that transports us into a new universe.*

In accomplishing this piece of art: *100 Years of an Undaunted Mission*, she insightfully understood Mother Délia's aim when she launched the mission magazine *The Precursor* in 1920. Her expressive gaze sees far, the world map reveals the missionary orientation of the magazine which the Sisters spoke about while promoting it.

The staircase, a pure inspiration of the artist, is of utmost importance. It represents the many challenges that had to be dealt with, since the foundation of *The Precursor* up to its centennial. At the same time, it is also an homage to all the Sisters who climbed countless stairs to visit families and to promote the magazine.

Bravo to you, Julie! May this fantastic inspiration which inhabits you, continue to radiate beauty and harmony in our world. Thank you!

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.
Directress of the MIC Missionary Press



Julie Caouette and her work of art

A New Approach In Mission Territories



By Maurice Demers

Quebec Catholic missionaries have long been ambassadors around the world. The missions were originally created with the aim of converting pagan populations to Catholicism. The contribution of Quebecers really took off at the turn of the 20th century. It was the French-Canadian aid or way to the ascent and defense of Western civilization. Obviously, this approach created a limited openness to the other since the appreciation of foreign cultures was dependent on their acquiescence of Christianity.

Moreover, integrating newly baptized Christians into the religious communities was achieved very gradually. Catherine Foisy wrote: *While PMEs¹ did not accept subjects from these countries, the M.I.C. Sisters timidly began receiving subjects from mission countries in the early 1940s. For their part, the MNDA² were born with the idea that Chinese women or possibly young women from other mission countries could join the congregation, their co-founder Chan Tsi Kwan (Mother Marie Gabriel) being a Chinese.*³ The Second World War, the decolonization era, and a new understanding of the concept of poverty, among other things, changed the situation.

Though conversion remained a priority, missionaries began social works in the name of Christian charity. In mission countries, the M.I.C. Sisters like many other religious communities were generally involved in setting up schools, orphanages, and dispensaries. The missionary communities of men took care of boys' schools, and parish work; in light of Pope Pius XII

encyclical *Fidei Donum* written in 1957, bishops from developed countries were invited to send priests on mission.

After the Second World War, the Catholic Church and countries of the Western world discussed the problem of poverty in Third World countries and created development aid programs. Quebec missionaries gradually adopted this approach, often ahead of the institutional Church, to help the people of the missions take their destiny into their own hands. Catherine LeGrand wrote: *Missionary reports suggest that in Latin America, from the 1940s to the 1960s, Canadian missionaries introduced this aspect of the Canadian experience in Latin American communities; they created credit unions and cooperatives to improve the living conditions of the poor.*⁴

... but it is not God's will
that some have everything
and others nothing ...

The situation of the Oblate missions in north-eastern Brazil was also in line with what other communities in most Latin American countries were experiencing. In the French magazine *L'Apostolat*, it is written: *To contain or stop the upsurge of communism, the Oblates have to provide not only priests, but also many brothers as well as a social, medical program including a hospital, professional and agricultural schools, social centers,*



MIC Sisters with a group of nursing graduates in Haiti – Photo Credit: MIC

*cooperatives, credit and assistance organizations, etc. If Christians do not take the initiative, they will be outpaced by the revolutionary forces.*⁵ In the context of the continental fallout from the Cuban revolution, Catholic missions redoubled their efforts to create social initiatives to improve the lives of their flocks.

In the 1960s, 70s, and 80s, missionaries appropriated the preferential option for the poor decreed by the Latin American Catholic Church in Medellin in 1968. Gustavo Gutiérrez explained that this expression had three terms: *poor, option, and preference. The “poverty” referred to here is material poverty, “preference” meaning the spiritual poverty, and “option” the commitment against poverty.*⁶ The missionary work was greatly influenced by this development, and it can be said that many began to dream of helping the world to take charge of its own destiny. The words of Óscar Romero, who said in his homily

on September 10, 1978: *Some would like the poor to always say that it is God’s will that they live like this; but it is not his will that some have everything and others nothing*⁷, inspired the actions of the missionaries for the creation of a more just world. 🌿

¹ Priests of the Foreign Missions

² Missionaries of Our Lady of the Angels

³ FOISY, Catherine – *Au risque de la conversion. L’expérience québécoise de la mission au XX^e siècle (1945-1980)*, Montreal, MQUP, 2017, P. 36.

⁴ LE GRAND, CATHERINE – *The Catholic missionary axis between Quebec and Latin America. A preliminary exploration*. Globe. Revue internationale d’études québécoises, vol. 12, no. 1, 2009, P. 52.

⁵ *Vie missionnaire: Des problèmes presque insolubles* – L’Apostolat, November 1964, P. 18-19.

⁶ GUTIERREZ, GUSTAVO – *Option for the Poor: Assessment and Issues*, Volume 1, No. 2, October 1993, P. 126.

⁷ BISHOP ROMERO, OSCAR – *Homily: The Church, a prophetic, sacramental and loving community* – September 10, 1978. <https://www.cmoblac.ca/romero/homelie/php.id=57>

The Breath of a Dream



By Marie-Nadia Noël, M.I.C.

The 1920s was a decade of change. A young girl from Quebec, Délia Têtreault, Foundress of our Institute, was at the forefront of innovation and change. She had the idea of publishing a magazine which she called *Le Précurseur/The Precursor*. For many readers this publication became a breath of newness. Why was that?

The Collins dictionary defines “breath” as *the air you let out through your mouth when you breathe*. The literary sense, *it is the inspiration of the writer or the artist*. In Scripture, Genesis 2:7 it is written: *The Lord God formed the man...and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being*. Some researchers say that the breath is the source of all, and at the same time the creation of all. As such, from the very beginning, *The Precursor*, brought about a breath of newness to all its subscribers. It was a breath that allowed the emergence and the enhancement of new common values while making known our collective dreams and hopes.

The Sisters of the Institute and many lay people have been bearers of this “breath”. They have been involved in such a way that the dream of solidarity and being opened to the world evolved and became successful. That breath of newness has shown the possibility of being missionaries at home and abroad. *The Precursor* has helped us follow the intuitive breath where life is a priority. The dream that brought a breath of newness into existence has inspired us to come together, to share, and to give.

A reader who became bearer of the breath

As a neighbor of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Les Cayes, Haiti,

I would receive from them *The Precursor* to read. In my life that was like a new breath. The articles allowed me to know the M.I.C. Community and its involvement abroad. They opened my eyes and heart to the world. The articles were rich in content and inspired me to read more about God, Délia, the Church, and the world. This breath of newness had a missionary flavor which inspired me to live my Baptismal commitment by reaching out to the poorest and deprived in my neighborhood.

The September-October 1987 issue triggered my orientation in life as well as the choice I made in selecting a religious community. The articles in that issue were mainly about Haiti: Sr. Céline Bourbeau, M.I.C. from Canada, was inviting all Christians, from around the world, to show solidarity with the Haitian people. Further, Sr. Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C., in Cap-Haitien, north of Haiti, was journeying with the youth, awakening them to their responsibility as young adults and inviting them to be involved in their respective milieu. Sr. Laurence Tourigny, M.I.C., depicted the importance of a wholesome human development as sons and daughters of God. Father Midy Godefoy, Jesuit, presented the young people as God’s sentinels: *God is not found only in prayer, in the sacraments and in the liturgy. God is present where men and women struggle for their liberation*. And so much more could be said about the dedication of the Sisters who were involved in *Misyon Alfa*, that is in the Literacy Program. A breeze awakened my conscience and settled in my heart. A seed gradually germinated. The breath of a dream illuminated my habits and aptitudes. Consequently, in October 1993, I chose to join the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, wishing to work on self-improvement and helping others to do the same. I simply want to say, dear readers, that we are all the beloved children of the Father. Whatever our race, our culture, our history, our life journey, God wants us standing tall.

Messengers of the breath

I am not the only reader who became a messenger of the breath. Many have been bearers and have been witnesses:

Sr. Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C. conveyed the following: *The missionary breath of life which took me to South America urged me to share the work that motivated my everyday life. It was by way of photos and articles which were printed in The Precursor, that I sought to unite myself to this breath animating all believers who wished to see the great gift of faith spread everywhere.*

Sr. Nicole Joly, M.I.C. spoke about what it was like going from door to door, begging for something to eat, and climbing countless stairs to present a mission magazine filled with photos and articles from countries where the Sisters worked. She exclaimed: *That was part of our training as religious missionaries.*

Sr. Thérèse Lortie, M.I.C. said that before her entrance in the community, her parents were already subscribed to *The Precursor*. Later, as an M.I.C. nun, it was a pleasure for her to promote the magazine. She added: *For many years, I was a member of the Board of Directors and being in the audio visual field I was able to provide quality photos which enhanced and enlivened the publication.*

Sr. Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C. who was a missionary in Cameroon expressed her interest in reading the magazine while abroad: *It gave me an opportunity to put my life into perspective by comparing it to others. For me, it was a great means of communication and information.*

May the breath that has carried us for a hundred years continue helping us for a long time in building daily lives that will reflect our dreams. 💕

Photo: Shutterstock



Evangelizing by Way of MIC Mission News

By **Ravaka A. Razafindahy, M.I.C.**

After having received the mandate to go and preach the Gospel in Africa, mainly in Zambia and Malawi, I was transformed from the fearful missionary that I was to now being a courageous disciple of Christ. The Holy Spirit helped me to become a powerful instrument of God. I have been in Africa for almost four years and I realize that being simple of heart and available at all times are the most important elements in Evangelization. First of all, I realize that it is not my work; it is not what I want to do or my cultural way of doing things that is important, but of utmost importance is being open to learn new languages, new cultures, new ways of doing...

I had read in the *MIC Mission News* many articles about the M.I.C. Sisters' experiences in mission territories, I had read about the people and cultures where they worked. Now, I am enjoying my own experiences. In 2017, when I attended the first parish council meeting in the Valley of Kanyanga, a remote area in Zambia, I felt one with the people as I ate their food, drank their water, danced their tribal dance. The simplicity of heart helped me to enter into their culture.

I am convinced that to give our best, we need to expose ourselves to the realities of the culture where we are sent. Through the work we do, the pastoral service we offer, we witness the love of Jesus Christ.

***MIC Mission News* gives hope and happiness**

Wherever I go, I bring some *MIC Mission News* magazines. There is always some content that can be shared with the local people. Two years ago, the children and the women from Kanyanga Parish in Zambia were so happy to see their photos on



Sr. Ravaka with children from Kanyanga – Photo Credit: MIC

one of the pages and to know that their pictures were seen throughout the world. The news was spread rapidly in the village and every Sunday at the children's Mass, a greater number of them multiplied in the hope that one day their pictures would be taken. The *MIC Mission News* has found a very special place in the hearts of the children where I am stationed.

***MIC Mission News* is a source of inspiration**

As I read the magazine, I become inspired and I am kept informed about the various activities that take place in our Institute. It is a way of communicating the Good News which is very

much needed today. Not only is the content presented artistically, but we read about the touching realities of the missionaries where they serve and the people who welcome them in their midst. Recently, while I was in Nkhata Bay, Malawi, I gathered some children around the *MIC Mission News*. One of them was fascinated in seeing the picture of a Madagascan child writing on a mini chalkboard;¹ that small slate became a topic of interest and not only did it give the children ideas but encouraged them as well.

One day, as I was reading the *MIC Mission News*, I was inspired by a photo. I decided to put my artistic talent to work and apply what I saw on that picture. The Mnjale village, in Lilongwe, has a kindergarten for orphans; it is also a place where eighty grandmothers (grannies) meet to receive lessons on how to raise the orphans and to receive gifts from the Theresa Foundation in Canada. The kindergarten needed a name; I resolutely painted the foundation's name on the building. The orphans, the grandmothers, and the people of the village who walk by every day thank the Lord with happy hearts knowing how much they receive from the foundation: Our Foundress, Délia Tétreault once said: *God has given us everything, even His only Son; what better way of making return, in as much an earthly creature is capable of doing so, than to give Him children, chosen ones, who also will sing His goodness throughout the centuries.*

Every year, when we prepare the activities to be held on World Mission Sunday, the *MIC Mission News* serves as a source of inspiration. From the Provincial house, Srs. Cecilia Mzumara, Judith Pumani, and Mary Shyness visit different parishes in the Archdiocese of Lilongwe to animate and stir in the hearts of people the need to bear witness to Jesus. Last year, Sr. Ravaka Andrea was invited to talk about the *Missionary Vocation* on Radio Alinafe in Lilongwe, Malawi.

Sisters Emelda Katongo, Susan Chalira, and Rachael Chewes who live in Chipata, Zambia, presented some mission awareness talks to the employees who work at our formation house, to those who work at the Human and Spiritual Development Centre, to people from St. Pius X Community, to teachers, care-givers and workers at the Mary Immaculate Kindergarten.

Continue sharing the love of Jesus by way of *MIC Mission News*

My heart is always glad to receive the magazine. Every three months, I pick it up at the post office and I immediately begin reading it. My appeal is that the *MIC Mission News* will continue flourishing for the people. It calls upon each reader who comes across the content to let one text or another reveal itself. *Thank you very much and congratulations to the MIC Mission News team! May God bless you all!* 🌸

¹ *MIC Mission News* - January, February, March 2019 - P. 22



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With You, O Lord!



MARIE-HÉLÈNE ROY, M.I.C.
Sr. Marie-de-Massabielle
1943-2019
Saint-Évariste, Quebec

Coming from a free spirited and faith filled family, Marie-Hélène visited seven religious communities before entering our novitiate in 1961. Her experience as a Legionnaire of Mary and her Marian activities led her to choose our Community. Her apostolic life began in 1963. After having been involved in community services, she began her studies in nursing and later in psychotherapy at the *Institut de Formation Humaine Intégrale de Montréal*. These qualifications enriched her apostolate in the field of youth formation, as local and provincial superior, and as director of the M.I.C. medical program (SSMIC). Living in harmony was a characteristic which she implemented in her leadership role. After three years of illness she was called Home where she now enjoys eternal rest.



YOLANDE SIN, M.I.C.
1935-2019
Kowloon, Kwang Tung, Hong Kong

Separated from her family at an early age, Yolande found a new home at the orphanage run by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Canton, her native city. While there, she learned about the love of God and asked to be baptized. At sixteen, she left Canton and traveled to Hong Kong where she found the M.I.C. Sisters of her childhood years. In 1965, she decided to enter religious life in Hong Kong; she then pursued her studies in nursing. Whether in Hong Kong, in Taiwan, or in Quebec, she was always the devoted missionary whose trust in God was obvious. It is in Hong Kong, at the age of eighty-four, that she received the Lord's invitation to his eternal banquet.



ANDRÉE MÉNARD, M.I.C.
Sr. Andrée-du-Sauveur
1926-2019
Montreal, Québec

On August 8, 1950, Andrée entered our community. Studies and social service were her strength. Blessed with many talents, she courageously embraced many challenges. In Japan, her musical talent was appreciated by young people where she served for twenty-five years. A woman of vision, she initiated and organized a center for immigrants in Montreal. As foundress and general directress of PROMIS during a period of twenty-five years, Sr. Andrée received awards from the Government of Quebec as well as the Government of Canada, and from various associations and ministries. The awards highlighted the integration support services which new immigrants and refugees receive from PROMIS. Then came time for Sr. Andrée to surrender; she, who at the age of eleven wanted to change the world, time had arrived for her to let go. She lived this ultimate stage of her missionary life peacefully.



JULIETTE OUELLET, M.I.C.
Sr. Marie-Juliette
1931-2020
Drummond, New-Brunswick

With the Word of God as beacon that illuminates and comforts, Sister Juliette surmounted all challenges, as early as her childhood years and throughout her missionary apostolic life. At the age of sixteen, an aunt who was a Providence nun facilitated Juliette's high school years and supported her in taking nursing science; she then pursued her studies in obstetrics. Her mission to Bolivia was most challenging. In Irupana and in Baurès, she re-established two abandoned hospitals. In Vancouver, B.C. she brilliantly inspired the personnel through her pastoral oriented work called *Mission Effectiveness*. On January 3rd, the Master of Life called his servant to her eternal rest. The ultimate Word: *Winter is over, come my beloved*.

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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At that time... a little flower

*Once upon a time,
There was a little flower,
A little flower of the fields.
One day, she had a dream,
A dream from Above
Yes, truly from Above.*

*The thing is, you see,
This little flower of the fields,
Carried in her fiery heart,
Something very special.
It was a charisma,
With a fragrance like no other.
And as the breeze of time,
Clothed her with years,
The fragrance revealed its name,
Behold, it was: THANKSGIVING!*

Léonie Therrien, M.I.C.

