

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 50, Nº 3 | JULY • AUGUST • SEPTEMBER 2023



To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923

*100 Years
of an Undaunted Mission*



The Joy of
the Gospel:
SERVING

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

JULY 2023

For a Eucharistic Life: We pray that Catholics may place the celebration of the Eucharist at the heart of their lives, transforming human relationships in a very deep way and opening to the encounter with God and all their brothers and sisters.

AUGUST 2023

For World Youth Day: We pray the World Youth Day in Lisbon will help young people to live and witness the Gospel in their own lives.

SEPTEMBER 2023

For People Living on the Margins: We pray for those persons living on the margins of society, in inhumane living conditions; may they not be overlooked by institutions and never be considered of lesser importance.

**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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EDITORIAL

5 minutes



By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Knock! Knock! Would you have five minutes for me? I have a small favor to ask you. Yes, I know, it may take a bit more time. It's true, but life is made up of these free moments that make everyone happy.

We have so many opportunities to be of service, to give joy freely, for example when the natural disasters occurred in Malawi and Peru where avalanches destroyed everything in their path, leaving all those people in need. Is a helping hand not welcome? Here in Quebec, during the spring river floods, countless services were rendered, transporting sandbags to prevent water from flooding houses. Service offered free of charge brings joy to the people who receive and the people who give. However, we are not always willing to leave our own comfort zone to reach out to others... Yes, those five minutes require openness, love and solidarity.

Was Jesus Always Available?

I reflected on the passage of the wedding feast at Cana (John, 2, 1-12). Mary, mother of Jesus, was invited as well as Jesus and his disciples. A wedding, a place of joy, of celebration, I imagine that Jesus, like the others, was pleased to meet all these people. And now Mary notices that the wine has run out and the party is not yet over. She approaches Jesus and says to him: *They have no more wine...* In other words: do something. And Jesus answers: *My time has not come...* It is unsettling, as Mary says: *Do as he tells you.* Jesus has no choice, he has to do something. He doesn't do it reluctantly, he gives the best of himself, some good wine, and the party continues joyfully. And from that day on, Jesus



has never ceased to give service throughout his public life. Even today, he is always attentive to our prayers to help us.

Hope Goes a Long Way

Sister Rosette Lafortune has understood this well... Despite the chaotic situation that persists in Haiti, the solidarity of the people brings a note of hope: never give up, hope against all hope. Father Midy tells us that a failure is not the end of the world, there is always a way out and a way to regain a zest for life. This is what Sister Monique's poetry tells us: May peace be with you.

Be happy during this beautiful summer season, set aside five minutes to be of service because happiness smiles on generous hearts and these moments of gratuity become little rays of sunshine that are conveyed to others. Delia Tétreault, our founder, used to say: *Sow happiness by the handful, it is still the bread that our land lacks the most.*

Enjoy your reading! 🍷

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

A Celebration from Afar



The M.I.C. at the Eucharist celebration – Photo M.I.C.

A question that makes me think: How did you experience, from afar, the celebration of the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the first M.I.C. in Cuba?

By Sara Olga Pérez Núñez, M.I.C.

As I reflect on this question, this is what comes to my mind. I believe that the fact that I was not able to participate in this celebration in Cuba allowed me to deepen the testimony of my Sisters. A testimony of a consecrated, community and missionary life, infused with thanksgiving and always in the company of Our Lady of Charity, Patroness of Cuba and Patroness also of the M.I.C. Region in Cuba.

In the midst of a grey day, marked by a heavy and silent snowfall, perhaps one of the last of this winter, I suddenly thought of what the first M.I.C. left behind when they went to Cuba. And I admired their missionary zeal, their courage, their trust in God to leave for a warm country where they would never see snow again! How many challenges awaited them that they could not even imagine before leaving!

So, in the silence, other memories came to my mind. I remembered, for example, my first meeting with the small group of Sisters who remained in Cuba in 1961, after the Law of Nationalization of Private Schools and Colleges, which provoked a massive exodus of religious sisters and brothers, priests and laity. During this

visit, I participated in one of their community prayers. At the beginning of the prayer, my heart grasped something that is difficult to explain. I felt in my soul as if life was flowing through the words that were recited, as if the Sisters were convinced of the love of the One to whom they addressed their prayers. Then, in talking with them, my first impression was confirmed: they were women in love with God, consecrated to Him, happy to belong to Him and to follow Him to the extreme.

On that same visit, I spoke with the person in charge of formation and asked her: *What is the purpose of the Institute?* She answered: *The Institute was founded to give thanks to God and to announce the Gospel to those who do not yet know it*¹. Her answer put an end to my vocational discernment, for I found in these words what my heart was looking for.

Joining the M.I.C. in Cuba in 1967 gave me the opportunity to know from the inside the life and mission of the daughters of our Venerable Foundress, Delia Tétreault. At that time the Sisters were looking for new paths for their mission and despite the difficulties of the moment, they maintained their joy. Little by little, I discovered the secret of this joy and of their missionary fruitfulness in the midst of so many limitations and external trials. Their communion with Christ made them strong and daring, joyful and confident, witnesses of a Truth and a Love that surpassed them and that they drew from each Eucharist. In this way, their daily life became a proclamation of the Word of God, even if, at that time, the mission of the Church was confined within the walls of its temples.

Suddenly, I remembered an exhortation from our formation leader that helped me to grow in Christlikeness: *Remember, Sisters, that here there is no possibility of buying a Bible. Therefore, we are called to be living Bibles for the people.* Thus we began to enjoy more and more the sharing of the Word of God in community because it helped us to dive into the mystery of Christ and to live the incarnation of the Word in our daily lives through the action of the Holy Spirit. Wasn't this a simple and effective way to let the Word become flesh through us and thus make Christ more visible among our people?

There is something I would not want to forget. *The Canadian mothers*, as the Cubans called the first M.I.C. who arrived in Cuba, lived a very intense community life. Perhaps the hostile reality breathed by every believer in our island contributed to this deep communion within the ecclesial and religious communities, including the M.I.C. In this situation, the new Cuban generations of M.I.C. learned to give a place of preference to the proclamation of the Gospel through community life. It was also a way of putting into practice the Word of God: *That all may be one... so that the world may believe...*² as well as the desire of our Foundress: *Love one another so that all the people who will frequent your little convent will be able to say: How they love each other, those little Sisters!*³

In Thanksgiving

But the most beautiful thing I learned from the first M.I.C. Sisters who came to Cuba was the spirit of thanksgiving they lived in with Mary, our Immaculate Mother. This spirit gave a special colour to each of their actions. Yes, they were always attentive to do the will of God, like Mother Delia, and they looked for the grace of God in every reality in order to welcome it and put it into action according to the divine desire.

In conclusion, I can say that this re-reading was for me the way to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the arrival of the M.I.C. in Cuba. Here is a summary of my experience:



Sr. Bernardeta celebrates her 50th anniversary of religious life. – Photo M.I.C.

- An intense communion with all the M.I.C. Sisters sent to Cuba, who left behind a trace of the joy of the Gospel as much in the sunny days as in the cloudy ones.
- A thanksgiving to the Lord for what the M.I.C. have been and are for the Church and the Cuban people: a heart that loves God above all things and that, with Christ, shares the joys and sorrows of all the people they meet.
- A prayer for the Sisters of the present Region of *Our Lady of Charity*, that, energized by the gratuitous love of God and in creative fidelity to the M.I.C. charism, they continue to accompany the people in their search for life and hope.

And finally, I join my voice to that of *the Cuban* who, speaking of the Sisters in 1950, on the occasion of the centennial celebration of the national flag, in a warm speech, exclaimed: *They are strangers with a Cuban heart.* 🌸

¹ Constitutions of the M.I.C. Sisters, P. 21.

² Jn 17, 21-23.

³ Letter to the Sisters in Rome, December 13, 1926.

THE SOURCE OF OUR HISTORY

M.I.C. MISSION to the United States

The New World was discovered in 1492 by a Genoese navigator named Christopher Columbus working for the Spanish crown. This continent had already been inhabited for thousands of years by various peoples from Asia.



By Claudette Bouchard, M.I.C.

In September 1620, a group of separatists from England set sail for the New World in search of a new land where they could freely practice Puritan Christianity; others with the desire to become rich. They landed in Massachusetts.

On the West Coast in 1769, Spanish Franciscan missionary Junipero Serra founded the first Catholic mission in the United States.

The first thirteen American colonies formed a separate local government under the authority of the British Parliament. The fact that taxes were levied without colonial representation triggered the war.

On July 4, 1776, the colonies declared their independence from Britain and formed the United States of America.

The Great Migration

The Great Migration took place between the years 1840 and 1930. An estimated one million French Canadians immigrated to the United States. They were fleeing a devastating economic depression to find work in booming New England.



First house in Marlboro – M.I.C. Archives

How did the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, a French-Canadian Institute founded in 1902, come to be known in the United States?

In 1908, a 19-year-old girl, Anna Girard of New Hampshire, applied to join the Institute because of an address she found in a magazine: *Le messager du Sacré-Coeur*. She was accepted. Over the years, the M.I.C. community became known as Canadian Sisters, as some Sisters traveled to the eastern states to promote our missionary magazine, *The Precursor*.

The M.I.C. in Massachusetts

Cardinal Richard Cushing, appointed to the Diocesan Office for the Propagation of the Faith, developed the missionary spirit in the Archdiocese of Boston. In 1945, two M.I.C. promoters met with him to thank him for allowing them to offer our magazine in his diocese. He told them: *If ever you wish to establish a house in our diocese, you are welcome.*

On October 1, 1946, in the city of Marlboro, Massachusetts, the property at 187 Pleasant Street was purchased. It was to become a retreat center. Cardinal Cushing gave it the name: Our Lady, Queen of Missions. Sisters Beatrice Cornellier, Benoite Labelle, Nina Ennis and Françoise Lacoursière were the pioneers of this retreat house which welcomed women and young girls.



Missionary exhibition – M.I.C. Archives

Knowing well the needs of our foreign missions, the Sisters set up a workshop for women who wished to collaborate in our missionary work with their handicrafts.

In 1948, Cardinal Cushing invited the Sisters to participate in the Missionary Exhibition held at St. John's Seminary in Brighton. A beautiful booth displayed a variety of missionary items, as well as information about our foreign missions. It was a unique opportunity to showcase our Institute and our work.

Visit of Sr. Madeleine Payette, sup. gen., and Cardinal Cushing
- M.J.C. Archives

As the Marlboro mission flourished and the facilities were no longer adequate, Cardinal Cushing offered the property at 207 Pleasant Street in 1953. The Sisters reorganized the space to accommodate more retreatants. The large grounds of Our Lady, Queen of Missions became a true campus.

In January 1958, Cardinal Cushing offered to open a postulancy in our new residence. There, over the years, several young women continued their religious formation. While deepening their religious vocation, they also learned French in order to integrate into a French-Canadian community.

In the Marlboro area, there were no kindergartens. At the request of the parents, in 1957, the Sisters transformed the chapel into a kindergarten. For fourteen years, this ministry touched the hearts of many children.

In 1961, an extension was added to the house and on May 2 of the following year, Cardinal Cushing blessed the new home under the presidency of Sister Madeleine Payette, Superior General of the M.I.C. For nine years Our Lady, Queen of Missions Retreat House flourished. In the early 1970's, activities declined and in 1973, it was decided to end our successful Marlboro mission. Cardinal Cushing was a tireless supporter throughout these twenty-seven years in his diocese. We will never forget his great benevolence.

In Other States

In the Archdiocese of San Francisco in 1894, the Paulist Fathers were entrusted with the Christian community of the former St. Mary's Cathedral, in Chinatown. In 1971, they made an urgent appeal to our Institute for personnel for the Chinese mission in San Francisco.

In July 1972, our Sisters were ready to accept the challenge. They arrived at Saint Mary's Chinese Catholic School in San Francisco's Chinatown. Over the years, they assumed different functions. Living above the school, the Sisters soon became acquainted with the population of Chinatown and learned that of the 94,000 Chinese living in the neighborhood, only 7% were Christian and 3% Catholic. They took charge of the religious education programs, developing a missionary spirit in the parishes and schools. In

May 1991, after nineteen years of ministry to the Chinese community in San Francisco, the Sisters left this mission.

In 1986, Sister Patricia Blanchet felt a call to evangelize simple hearts eager to hear the Word of God in the barren desert of Sonoran, Arizona. Sisters from the Philippines came to join her and for thirteen years they worked there.

Following the death of Sister Patricia, the community ended 51 years of our Institute's mission presence in service to the Church in the United States of America.

From 1908 to 2023, the Institute welcomed 42 young American women who became missionaries in various parts of the world. We give thanks for the mission accomplished and the blessings received. 🙏



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At the Service of the World



Sr. Estelle Fontaine reads to Sr. Elisabeth Méthot, semi-sighted. – Photo: M.-P. Sanfaçon

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

On Sunday evenings, I enjoy watching the TV program *Découvertes*. The host, Charles Tisseyre, presents advances in science, recent discoveries in health, planets, the environment and technologies, and just recently he spoke about fossils that were discovered by archaeologists. They are billions of years old and reveal little secrets about the origins of the world. I admire the enormous potential given to the human spirit by God. Thank you to all these researchers who help us better understand the great secrets of our universe. What great services they render to humanity!

A More Modest Call

Indeed, we are not all called to do great research, there are more modest tasks that are indispensable to the well-being of society. There are teachers, nurses, business leaders, workers and many others who serve humanity. We are dependent on each other, *no man is an island*, as Thomas Merton said, and it is so true. Let us think of the elderly

who patiently wait for the services necessary to their well-being; of those who are handicapped and thirst for a word of encouragement; of people in distress who need help. Independents have no place in our societies. Sooner or later they become aware that we are all interrelated.

To Excel is to Serve

Pope Francis said in a homily: *The value of a person no longer depends on the role he plays, the success he has, the work he does, the money he has in the bank, but rather on the service rendered to his neighbor*¹. Let us think of Mary of Nazareth who leaves in haste to help her cousin Elizabeth, her pregnant relative. Let us think of all the people who help in nursing homes. I see companions who read to our sick Sisters and how many others who are attentive to the needs of others. The Lord tells us: *I am among you as one who serves*². *Whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant*³.

A good example is the story of the paralytic⁴, which is worth a little reflection: *Jesus returned to Capernaum. When word came that he was at home,*

he gathered so many people that the space in front of the door could not hold them. He was preaching to them. Some people came to him, bringing a paralytic carried by four men. When they could not get to him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof of the house where he was, and through this opening they lowered the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, Son, your sins are forgiven. I command you, rise, take up your bed and go to your house.

This pericope shows us in a situation of great friendship or compassion. It is not the paralytic who asks for his healing but his friends who intercede for him, and they do not hesitate to help him. Seeing the crowd that prevents them from reaching Jesus, they go up on the roof with the paralyzed man to lower him right in front of Jesus. They have faith, trust and great concern for their friend. They do not spare their efforts, their sympathy makes them ingenious and resourceful and they finally achieve their goal. Their friend is healed. How happy they must be! The paralytic will certainly be grateful to his friends and to Jesus. What a beautiful lesson in friendship, in caring for others, in service!

A Free Gesture

What is my capacity to help? Sometimes we feel useless, gloomy, we would like something to change in our lives. We just have to open our eyes to our surroundings: a neighbor may need help. A smile,

a friendly word, and small gestures can change the routine. I know a young lady who invited her neighbor to a restaurant. The neighbor, in turn, was so enthusiastic that she suggested inviting the couple next door. A friendship was formed between them all and they now happily do many favors for each other. A gesture can have many repercussions and I am sure that their lives have taken on a new dimension. We don't have to look far, often it is in our own family, a brother, a sister, a person in our neighborhood. There is distress that is lived in silence. Let us be perceptive and offer help that is discreet but very present in our solicitude, our friendship. Someone is waiting for this gesture of comfort from us.

Today, when the networks and means of human communication have made unprecedented advances, we sense the challenge of finding and sharing a mystique of living together, of mingling and encounter, of embracing and supporting one another, of stepping into this flood tide which, while chaotic, can become a genuine experience of fraternity, a caravan of solidarity, a sacred pilgrimage⁵. Such happiness can be ours when we are attentive to others. Joy is a communicating vessel for happiness between ourselves and others. ∞

¹ Pope Francis Homily April 7, 2020, St. Martha's House Chapel.

² Luke 22:27.

³ Matthew 20,26-27.

⁴ Mark 2,1-12.

⁵ *The Joy of the Gospel*, N° 87, P. 65, Ed. Médiapaul.



Gang-related violence and the high risk of kidnapping still persist in Haiti. Despite this unprecedented crisis, the people continue to hope for a better life.

HAITI

A HOPEFUL RESISTANCE WILL TAKE YOU FURTHER

By Marie Rosette Lafortune, M.I.C.

Haiti is going through one of the most difficult periods in its history. Since its independence, it has been a struggling country. Today, in the chaos in which the country is immersed, some have little hope of escaping this reality; others believe that the spirit of solidarity and patriotic love that reigned among our ancestors before independence must be reincarnated. In this fight for its dignity and pride, in its own way, Haiti will never give up.

A Haitian proverb states: *Depi w gen tèt, ou espere mete chapo*, (if the head is there, it is possible to wear a hat). The truth of this proverb is a breath of inspiration that must carry us, through thick and thin, to hope beyond all hope. We must hope, because those who lead the country to the edge of the abyss are like straw: one day the wind of the Dessalines's freedom will carry them away.



High school students – 3rd on the left: Sr. Lise Tremblay, M.I.C., in the center: Sr. Jeancilia Louis, M.I.C. – Photo M.I.C.

Indeed, violence, corruption and all the rest are still obvious in Haiti. Children are orphaned in the blink of an eye by the unjust disappearance of their parents. Families cry day and night for a murdered loved one, and the authorities are stuck in their indifference. The free-flowing tap of kidnappers keeps on wasting the water of human life without constraint. Education, the basis of a serious society, is still the target of politics. Unemployment has become a type of work, and begging, the salary, which pushes brains to work elsewhere. A climate of fear is as prevalent as the oxygen we breathe.

All of these scenarios generally engender fear, frustration, anxiety, bitterness and weaken the impetus to believe that our beloved Haiti will be able to pull through. There is no easy solution to these problems. However, this country of blue and red has won before

and it will one day decisively adjust its hat. Hope goes a long way...

To hope, this second theological virtue, is not for Haitians a pretext to resign; it is not to let God act in our place. To hope is to want to grow, to stretch out our patriotic hands, to move forward in the patience of intelligent *marronage* where each ladybug learns to shine again for the other.

To hope is to believe that something will change in our camp. Nevertheless, we must work together to restore frayed education, to value the youth and their talents, to practice patriotic sensitivity, to eradicate the chronic indigestion of power in so-called politicians and to know how to discern our choices.

HOPE IS YOUNG PEOPLE REFUSING TO TAKE THE EASY ROAD BY JOINING GANGS TO EARN THEIR KEEP.

The Credo of Hope

In spite of all the problems the country is enduring, life goes on in Haiti and there is a sense of hope. The signs are numerous:

To hope is to appreciate the effort of those peasants continuing to sow in the burning sun to feed the Haitian people. To hope is to meet the thrift store vendors, trying to attract the attention of passers-by with smooth words. To hope is to support the gesture of a poor family, adopting a baby boy to save him from malnutrition, in spite of their own six children. To hope is to encourage the 13-year-old who goes to night school after pushing his wheelbarrow of sweets in the morning to pay his school fees.

Hope is young people refusing to take the easy road by joining gangs to earn their keep. Hope is the believers, the friends, the people of good will who are helping to rebuild the churches that were shaken during last year's earthquake. They believe that God is part of their existence. Hope is the teachers and students who gather in makeshift sheds to save the school year with dignity. To hope is also to thank our friends, our foreign benefactors, who humanely support us. Our thanks to Pope Francis who carries the Haitian people in his heart and prays for them often.

I leave you with these words from a Haitian Jesuit:

Hope for Haiti, today? It is not easy.

However, hope for a new Haiti.

Above all, commit yourself so that your hope can be victorious.

Despair in Haiti and of Haiti, today? It is very easy.

However, hope anyway, do not give up.

Above all, be committed to actions that build.

Despair in Haiti and of Haiti, today? It is very easy.

However, do not let yourself go down the slope of desperation.

Above all, commit yourself in your way of being, acting and speaking.

Despair in Haiti and of Haiti, today? It is very easy.

However, the easy way is not necessarily the right way.

Above all, commit yourself, and inspire our youth to love their country. ∞

BEING PLEASING TO GOD:

Precious Kateri Tekakwitha

Who will teach me what is most pleasing to God, that I may do it?

— Kateri's motto



Tableau : Anne-Marie Forest

By Anne-Marie Forest

Likely born in 1656 to an Algonquin mother and an Agnier (Iroquois) father, Kateri became a spiritual model with this motto.

On her tombstone, located in the St. Francis Xavier Mission in Kahnawake, are inscribed these words: *Kaiatanoron Kateri Tekakwhitha*, meaning: *Precious Kateri Tekakwhitha*. She was beatified in 1980 and canonized on October 21, 2012.

When she died at the age of 23, her face, scarred by smallpox, was transfigured. It appeared more beautiful than it was when she was alive. It gave joy and strengthened everyone's faith¹.

I WILL LOVE YOU IN
HEAVEN, I WILL PRAY
FOR YOU, I WILL
HELP YOU.

This last remark inspired the iconography of this painting that is dedicated to her. I have placed Kateri in a spiritual dialogue with Jesus walking close to her. The Jesuit Father Jacques de Lamberville was her spiritual advisor. Walking in Ignatian spirituality, Kateri had developed her

prayer in heart to heart with the Lord. She refused marriage, saying that no man could take the place of Jesus in her heart. She took a vow of virginity on the Feast of the Annunciation in 1679. Her last words, repeated three times, were: *Jesus I love you* and to her friend Marie-Thérèse Tegaiauenta: *I will love you in heaven, I will pray for you, I will help you.*

In Manawan, I am also a witness to the values of respect for elders, ancestors, traditions, family and the perseverance of leaders to take a stand for the future of generations to come.

This struggle to preserve language and territory, for recognition of their need for health care, for

IN MANAWAN, I AM ALSO A WITNESS TO THE VALUES OF RESPECT FOR ELDERS, ANCESTORS, TRADITIONS, FAMILY AND THE PERSEVERANCE OF LEADERS TO TAKE A STAND FOR THE FUTURE OF GENERATIONS TO COME.

As she is known as the Lily of the Mohawks, I painted Jesus holding a lily flower and a shell filled with water, because she herself had asked for baptism, which she received in 1676.

I have offered art and evangelism workshops to Innu and Atikamekw communities. I continue to discover the multiple facets of a culture that I know little about, by collaborating with allied or native speakers.

By going to meet families and elders, I am a witness to wounds that are still present and that cross generations, through the trauma of residential schools, missing children, women victims of violence, laws that are still discriminatory.

I have therefore depicted Christ wearing the crown of thorns, but also the stigmata, traces of wounds but also of hope, showing him in solidarity and present to the suffering of the First Nations in his body of the Risen One who conquered death.

autonomy and political choices of governance that follow their own philosophy, is anchored in the roots of their history and a spirituality that listens to the Spirit and is translated into concrete actions such as Kateri took when she committed to care for the sick and to the education of children.

The deer is the image of her spiritual thirst: *As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God*².

The eagle represented in the sky is a symbol of the presence of the Creator in the territories, in the story of Kateri and of the accompaniment of the Spirit during my work as an artist which is for me prayer and thanksgiving. 🦅

¹ Father Claude Chauchetière's Manuscript.

² Psalm 41:2.

Missionary Commitment in Philippines

Mother Delia, our foundress, used to say:

IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO GOD IN WORDS; WE MUST SHOW IT IN OUR ACTIONS.

Indeed, missionary life requires a continuous commitment to the people. The Lord is present at every moment.

Gérarlyn Saldua, M.I.C., a young Sister, gives us a glimpse of her missionary service through photo-language.

All Ages are Important to the Missionary.



Young People are Eager to Learn.



Pilgrimage to the Lord of Mercy.



Introducing Youth to Ecological Work.



Getting your Feet Wet With the People.



Walk in Solidarity With the People.



A Great Celebration Among the Indigenous People. – Sr. G  rarlyn Sald  a and Sr. Elisabeth Relacion, M.I.C.

Growing and Progressing



By Nicole Rochon

After a cold and harsh winter, spring is hesitant and uncertain. So why not come to the rescue by singing: *Nature awakens, everything will revive in the sun. Oh! the free and pure minute of awakening of the countryside. Around you the moment proclaims love, faith, freedom. O son of the soil, open your soul and your eyes to beauty*¹.

As the current world order does not predict, alas, a promising or reassuring future, we may as well gather here and now with people of good will, always singing, ready to work, who wear their hearts on their sleeves, animated by a true *joie de vivre*. So in our own circles, we must refresh, if needed, the way we communicate with others with an open heart and mind. This requires that everyone change their behavior, for example improve their listening skills, make themselves accessible to young people, stand by them in their endeavors and support the needs of the weakest.

When in charge of a mission in the Church, renewal through prayer, meditation, reflection, attendance at a retreat or conference can be a source of inspiration for ourselves as well as for the people around us. During Lent, I had the opportunity to participate in a Saturday afternoon retreat. We began by sharing food that was brought by all participants. This moment of welcome, of meeting, gave rise to a beautiful fraternity, a desire to experience a time of pause and reflection together. Afterwards, a documentary film *L'heureux naufrage* was presented. This documentary brought together several people from different backgrounds to express themselves

on the post-Christianity situation in Quebec². A time of integration followed allowing us to share in small groups. The central question was: *How do we deal with our feelings of emptiness?* We exchanged through discussion, sharing our thoughts, raising consciousness and making commitments.

Deal with our feelings of emptiness, we must. We must give it meaning by letting ourselves be challenged by this reality which is our own, this environmental crisis which is not only economic, social or political but also spiritual. Take a moment to stop and reflect on the elements: air, water, fire and earth. Understand the space they hold, the importance we give them in our daily life. The involvement and commitment of young people proves just how critical the situation is. From the midst of their occupation, they have succeeded in influencing each other by putting their awareness to work through achievements of all kinds. And this, in a jovial, meaningful, inspiring way. Who has not been roused by the gatherings organized throughout the world by Greta, the young Swedish woman? So here we are...

O YOU WHO ARE, how great you are in all the world! Your splendour exceeds the brightness of the sky; the children see it, the little ones sing it; at the sound of their voices evil flees³. 🌿

¹ Translation of Albert Viau, *Le réveil rural*, 1937.

² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDhItCCB7Bg>

³ Excerpt translated from Psalm 8 Revisited by Eloy Roy
<https://eloyroy.blogspot.com/2019/07/psaumes-1-25.html>

A FAILURE IS NOT THE END OF THE WORLD

By Godefroy Midy, S.J.

Take up and read, you have probably experienced a failure, a trial in your life, whether you are young or old.

I am speaking to you in this way because I have had my own experience of failure. I did not pass the official exams for the primary school certificate.

I cried, not so much because of the failure as because I was the only one who failed. I was ashamed of that.

So what? It does not mean that I've failed at life, does it? I succeeded. A beautiful journey. A beautiful story. As a priest, I was able to do some good, both at home in Haiti and in other countries.

No, a failure, a trial, is not the end of the world. Our life is simply a story of four seasons: spring, summer,

autumn and winter. In spring the birds sing; in winter the leaves fall.

Are you going through a trial? You will get through it, you must get through it. Each of us has strength in reserve.

Sometimes, just when we want to give up and curse life, a rainbow appears on the horizon. At home, the peasants say that *it drinks water*, a symbol of hope since the sun's rays pass through the drops of water.

No, a failure, a trial is not the end of the world, especially when the good Lord himself counts on us. And Jesus, our older brother, was victorious over his suffering. ☁

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CYCLONE FREDDY

M.I.C. Sisters of Malawi IN SERVICE DRESS



With winds that were not very strong but carried torrential rains, the cyclone caused heavy flooding and deadly landslides in Malawi, a landlocked country where a state of emergency was declared. The tragedy left at least 225 people dead.

By Luke Bisani

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (M.I.C.) donated various items to the victims of Cyclone Freddy in the village of Ntauchira, Nguludi-Chiradzulu District.

Speaking after the donation, Sr. Charity Zimba, M.I.C., Provincial Superior for Malawi and Zambia, said she was overwhelmed by the level of destruction mainly in the southern region of Malawi.

We saw what happened to our brothers and sisters here in the southern region of Malawi, and through our schools in Malawi and Zambia, we mobilized to come to donate, said Sister Zimba.

She added that the donations come from students in their schools as well as from communities under the auspices of the M.I.C. Sisters.

Our students in Malawi and Zambia have contributed generously to this initiative, and this is what we teach them: to be in solidarity, to be attentive to the needs of others, added Sister Zimba.

The Provincial Superior added that donated items included children's and adults' clothing, basic food items, and cleaning items (pots and buckets).

TO BE IN SOLIDARITY, TO BE ATTENTIVE TO THE NEEDS OF OTHERS.

Ntauchira is one of the hardest hit villages in Malawi, with reports that the entire village was swept away by mudslides from a nearby hillside. Eleven people were reportedly killed and seventeen are missing. Other reports indicate that 159 people were injured and admitted to the Nguludi Mission Hospital, and some were transferred to the Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital (QECH).

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception are women of various nationalities who have recognized the extraordinary love of God and have felt the call to dedicate their lives to the pursuit of the mission of Jesus Christ in the world of our time.

They are present in Asia (China, Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Philippines and Vietnam), Africa (Malawi and Zambia), Madagascar, South America (Bolivia and Peru), the Caribbean (Cuba and Haiti) and Canada (Quebec and Ontario). ∞



Sr. Charity Zimba helps disaster victims – Photo M.I.C.



The students have largely contributed to the relief of the disaster victims – Photo M.I.C.



THE SMOKE WAS WHITE

By Léonie Therrien, M.I.C.

Ten years ago, on March 13, 2013, St. Peter's Square in Rome resonated with applause.

A white smoke finally drifted out of the chimney of the Sistine Chapel. For several days, thousands of pilgrims had been feverishly waiting for this sign to know who the conclave had elected as successor to Benedict XVI. Finally, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, a popular Argentinian, appeared on the balcony in a white cassock. Inspired by the life of the *povellero* of Assisi, he will be called Francis I. He is the 265th successor of Peter and his motto will be: *Miserando atque eligendo* (*poor but chosen*).

A pope from South America who had given up the residence of the archbishopric to live in a modest apartment. Similarly in Rome, he chose to live in St. Martha's House rather than in the Vatican. *The servant prevails over the sovereign.* He was and is a man of faith committed to prioritizing the poor. Their presence challenges the Church. *He is a pope of the heart* who finds himself Bishop of Rome, Primate of the Catholic Church and Head of State.

He meets these numerous responsibilities at the heart of his new priestly mission, this new call to serve, with courage and tenacity.

From memory, we can enumerate the values that he promotes and/or defends according to his responsibilities: *building bridges and not walls, building a field hospital for life's wounded, going to the peripheries, leaving it to God to judge, putting an end to the culture of waste in nature and in humans, putting an end to world war bit by bit, examining worldliness in one's life as well as in the Church, etc...*

In his new mission as head of state, many countries have been visited. (We welcomed him in Quebec in July 2022.) Likewise, as spiritual leader of the Catholic Church, he is the pastor we wait for at the Vatican window on Sundays for the Angelus, and for the General Audience on Wednesdays in St. Peter's Square or in the Paul VI room where he gives a catechesis with a very varied content: spiritual discernment, the beatitudes, prayer, old age, etc...

Over the years, how many encyclicals and/or apostolic exhortations have highlighted his priorities, which still remain inspiring: *Laudato si'* (*The Common House*), *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), *Amoris laetitia* (*The Joy of Love*), *Fratelli Tutti* (*All Brothers*), *Gaudete et Exultate* in reference to the Beatitudes.

At present and since October 10, 2021, the whole Church is in Synod, *walking together, an itinerary of three years lived in communion, participation and mission.* And what of his daily tweets?

Through this modest and synthetic overview of the life of Pope Francis, after 10 years of papacy, can we not affirm that he is a Shepherd in the heart of God and that he is not afraid to let himself be imbued with the smell of the sheep. Doesn't this also show that JOY and SERVICE are of primary importance to him?

There is no doubt that when he will go to the Other Shore, this Word of Jesus, in Lk 12:37, will become a reality: *Blessed are the servants whom the Master finds awake when he comes. Truly, I say to you, He will dress himself for service and have them recline at table, and he will come and serve them.* 🙏



Peace Be with You

Peace be with you!, he said.
It was a spring morning.
It could only be a spring morning.
More than 2000 years ago.

By Monique Bigras, M.I.C.

Peace be with you!

Go and tell that to the thousands of people who have for music the continuous whistle of the bullets and the thunder of the guns.

Go and tell that to the children of Bolivia who sleep on the sidewalks, in front of churches or in empty tombs and whose only family are the street gangs, the last step they can cling to preventing them from sinking into despair.

Peace be with you!

Go and tell that to the sick, the handicapped, the abandoned old people whose horizons are the crushing walls of a shamefully white room where they cry out angrily for the deliverance of death.

Go and tell that to the jobless, the homeless, the countryless, to all those people cut off from their roots, their dignity, deprived of the taste of dance and song.

Go and tell them this if you have the nerve and your peace will come back to you because they have become impervious to this illusion of peace that we have too often falsely offered them. You will find the door closed, padlocked, barricaded. It hurts, it hurts too much to be rejected again,

again and again. Dare to tell them anyway if you believe.

Go and tell them that everything is still possible, that everything can start again. Patiently, one step at a time, one word at a time, because drop after drop, a glass will eventually fill. Never give up. In every age of our history, there have been men and women who believed, who had the courage to love, to become peacemakers. Do not break the chain of this vibrant line of troubadours of the impossible.

Raise your head. Roll up your sleeves. Carry your heart at arm's length but please offer your wish with love, with light; gently, respectfully without breaking anything, like a breath, a balm on their wound.

Then, with assurance, in the clarity of new creation; a song will rise from the broken bodies, a hand will timidly slip into yours, a look still veiled in doubt will meet your gaze.

And the sweetest, most intoxicating symphony of joy, of peace regained, will rise from the depths of the divinized humanity.

Yes, there is room for hope.

PEACE IS WITH US! 🌊

With You, O Lord



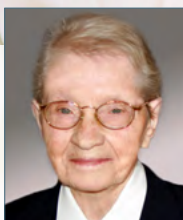
GISÈLE GUINOIS, M.I.C.
Sister François-de-la-Providence
1934-2022
Montreal, Quebec

At her first communion, at the age of 6, Gisèle experienced a call to follow Jesus in religious life, which was realized on August 8, 1952, when she entered the novitiate. An experience in the Catholic Student Youth and help at home to assist her sick mother indirectly prepared her to take up missionary challenges. The Peruvian Selva welcomed her first in 1960. The opening of a first mission required apostolic audacity and creativity. Sister Gisèle knew how to listen to the people, to discover their pastoral expectations and to respond adequately. After having given so much of herself, her return to Quebec in 2008 was necessary. She said: *I have had a beautiful missionary life. I am very grateful. The Lord has been good to me.* In His goodness, He called her back to Himself on December 16, 2022.



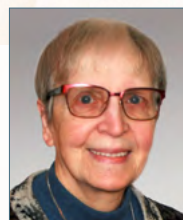
JULIETTE DESNOYERS, M.I.C.
Sister Bernard-Marie
1923-2022
Mascouche, Quebec

Juliette was present at the taking of the habit of her sister Yvette on February 11, 1944. Her call to religious life was confirmed and she joined her sister on August 8. From 1950 on, Latin American countries: Cuba, Chile, Guatemala, Bolivia, benefited from her skills. For her part, she appreciated the human and joyful warmth of these peoples. She was a much appreciated and sought after teacher because of her great capacity for adaptation and her numerous successes. She was equally at ease in social assistance, pastoral work and youth work. The prisoners of Totonicapán, Guatemala, found in her a provident presence. She returned to Quebec in 1974 and it was at the cusp of her 100th birthday that she passed through the Kingdom's door on December 17, 2022.



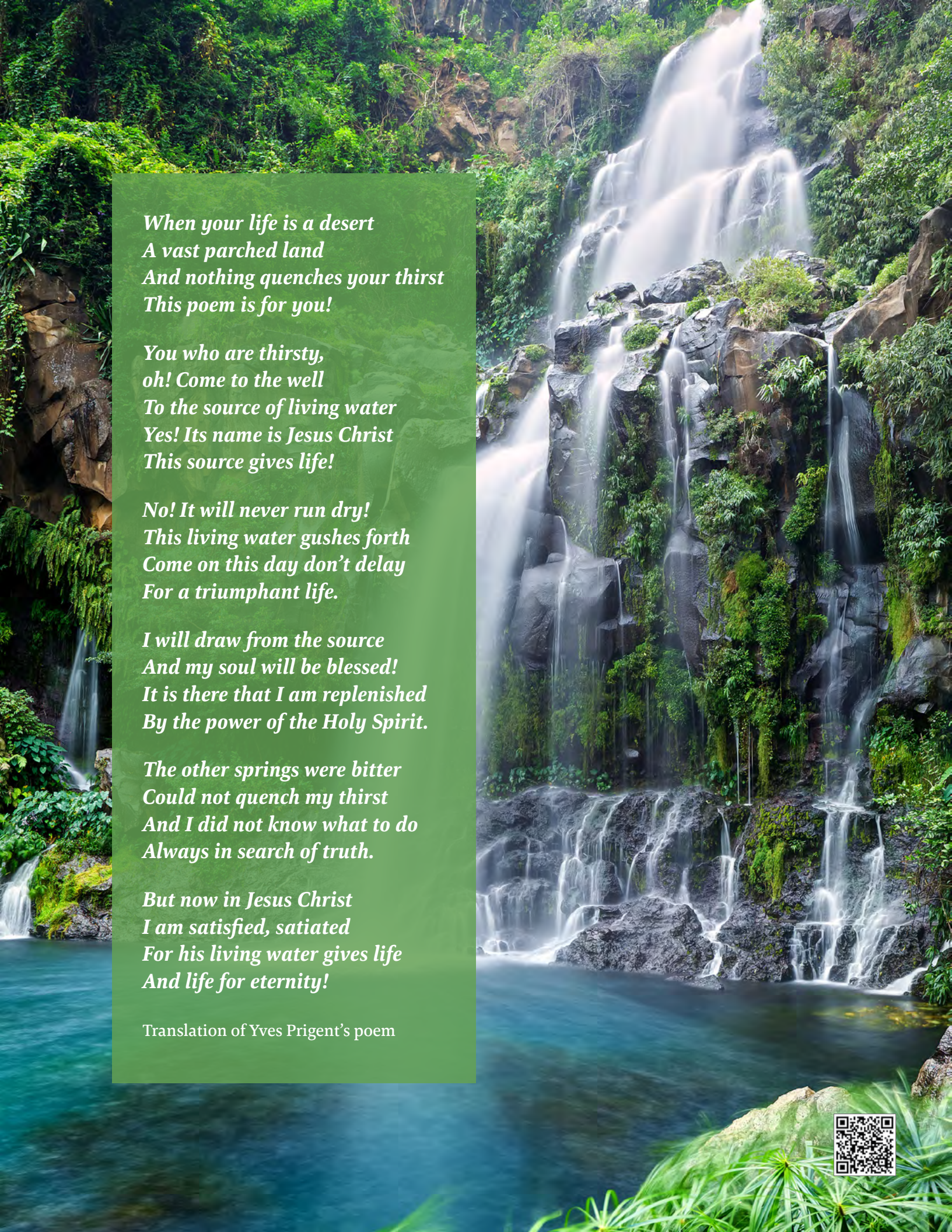
ANITA DUBÉ, M.I.C.
Sister Marie-Anita
1926-2023
St-Eusèbe/Kamouraska, Quebec

Natural empathy, kindness, and calmness make Sister Anita a comforting presence who listens, creating a climate of serenity and peace. A Marian spiritual life open to the world led her to the novitiate on August 8, 1947. Once her formation was completed, it was in education that she connected with youth, first in Quebec and then in Haiti, a beloved people: *When I arrived in Haiti, I felt at home right away.* She lived there for 25 years working in education and multi-faceted mutual aid. In 2008, she returned to the *service apron* at home for ten years. Then began for Sister Anita, a serene stay in our Health Services, until her entry into the Father's House on January 8, 2023.



MARIELLE PATENAUDE, M.I.C.
Sister Pierre-Chanel
1934-2023
Montreal, Quebec

On May 15, 1934, Marielle was welcomed into a deeply Christian home. No one suspected the evangelical impact she would have on society. Welcomed to the novitiate on February 1, 1954, she left for Japan in 1963, became a novice mistress and was involved in parish ministry. She returned to our country in 1971. A short missionary quote could very well define her special calling: *The Lord gave me an attraction to the rejected, the marginalized, the unloved, the prisoners.* Her heart and the door of her modest home were open to those who needed listening, presence, love. A small community of faith was thus formed. On January 27, 2023, her mission took on the colour of eternity according to the Father's plan.



*When your life is a desert
A vast parched land
And nothing quenches your thirst
This poem is for you!*

*You who are thirsty,
oh! Come to the well
To the source of living water
Yes! Its name is Jesus Christ
This source gives life!*

*No! It will never run dry!
This living water gushes forth
Come on this day don't delay
For a triumphant life.*

*I will draw from the source
And my soul will be blessed!
It is there that I am replenished
By the power of the Holy Spirit.*

*The other springs were bitter
Could not quench my thirst
And I did not know what to do
Always in search of truth.*

*But now in Jesus Christ
I am satisfied, satiated
For his living water gives life
And life for eternity!*

Translation of Yves Prigent's poem

