

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 51, Nº 4 | OCTOBER • NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 2024



To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923

*100 Years
of an Undaunted Mission*

At the Heart of...GRATITUDE



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

OCTOBER 2024

FOR A SHARED MISSION

Let us pray that the Church continues to sustain a synodal lifestyle in every way, as a sign of co-responsibility, promoting the participation, communion and mission shared by priests, religious and laity.

NOVEMBER 2024

FOR THOSE WHO HAVE LOST A CHILD

Let us pray that all parents who mourn the loss of a son or daughter find support in their community, and may receive peace in their hearts from the Spirit of Consolation.

DECEMBER 2024

FOR PILGRIMS OF HOPE

Let us pray that this Jubilee strengthens us in our faith, helping us to recognize the Risen Christ in the midst of our lives, transforming us into pilgrims of Christian hope.

**Masses for readers' intentions
offered in the following countries:**

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

At the Heart of... GRATITUDE

- 3 | A banquet!**
– Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.
- 4 | At the Source of M.I.C. History**
– Louise Pagé, M.I.C.
- 7 | Gratitude at Heart**
– Micheline Marcoux, M.I.C.
- 9 | From Recognition to Gratitude**
– Emmanuel Bélanger
- 11 | The Memory of the Heart**
– Marie-Claude Barrière
- 13 | In Recognition of these People
from Elsewhere** – Maurice Demers
- 15 | Gratitude**
– Sylvie Bessette
- 17 | Recognition: Beyond the Word,
an Experience** – Lise Tremblay, M.I.C.
- 19 | Gratitude at the Heart
of Protecting Nature** – Rachel Duplessis
- 21 | Gratitude**
– Ederlina Torres, M.I.C.
- 24 | With You, O Lord** – Léonie Therrien, M.I.C.

MIC Mission News

Mission magazine published
by the Missionary Sisters of the
Immaculate Conception

Offices
Missionary Press M.I.C.
120 Place Juge-Desnoyers
Laval (QC) Canada H7G 1A4

Phone: (450) 663-6460
eMail: leprecurseur@pressemic.org

Web Sites:
www.pressemic.org
www.soeurs-mic.qc.ca

Publication Director
Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Assistant Director
Marie-Nadia Noël, M.I.C.

Editor
Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Editorial Team
Emmanuel Bélanger
Sylvie Bessette
Maurice Demers
Éric Desautels
Nicole Rochon
Léonie Therrien, M.I.C.

English Traduction
Renée Charlebois

Proofreading
Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C.

Circulation
Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C.

Accounting
Nicole Beaulieu, M.I.C.

Layout and Design
Caron Communications
graphiques

Cover
Peru, Sr Ederlina Torres
with a group of students.
Photo: M.I.C.

Royalty-free photos
Pages 3, 9 and 24: Shutterstock,
Page 11: Susn Matthiessen/
Unsplash, Pages 19 and 20:
Pixabay

Member of the
Catholic and Ecumenical
Media Association

Tax Receipt
Registration Number:
NE 89346 9585 RR0001
M.I.C. Missionary Press

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

Canada

We acknowledge the financial
support of the Government of Canada.



EDITORIAL

A BANQUET!



By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

For World Mission Sunday, October 20, Pope Francis issued an invitation that is not to be missed: *Go and invite everyone to the wedding. God espouses humanity.* What a beautiful theme! However, the mission of Jesus is not limited to a particular month; this invitation challenges us every day as Christians. In all humility, the spouse becomes a servant, he does not sit at the head table. Instead, he is attentive to what is happening among his guests of every language and nation.

Such a call brings a flood of gratitude to our hearts, which is why the editorial team of the Autumn issue has chosen *At the heart of gratitude* as its theme. As you read through the various articles, you will discover many facets of this great virtue. Our foundress, Délia Tétreault, has made it a hallmark of our community. It is also true that, as we delve deeper into the Christian mystery, we see the many reasons to give thanks for the bounty in our lives.

During His mission in this world, the Lord showed Himself generous towards all, the small and the great. He has entrusted us with the task of spreading his message of love to humanity. An invitation to pass on to the people we meet, since the wedding is for all of us. We are invited...

Soon we will be celebrating the beautiful feast of Christmas, a reason to be grateful and thankful for this gift of the Son of God, who makes himself one of us so that each and every one of us can take part in his nuptial banquet. Isn't this an occasion not to be missed? All the more so as this feast of the Incarnate Son of God opens us up to great hope, the theme of Holy Year 2025.

Why choose hope? In a letter to Archbishop Rino Fisichella, who is in charge of organizing the Jubilee, Pope Francis sums it up as follows: *We must fan the flame of hope that has been given us, and help everyone to gain new strength and certainty by looking to the future with an open spirit, a trusting heart and far-sighted vision. The forthcoming Jubilee can contribute greatly to restoring a climate of hope and trust as a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire; that is why I have chosen as the motto of the Jubilee, Pilgrims of Hope.*

It is an invitation to live the year 2025 in a climate of hope and gratitude. To each and every one of you, I wish a wonderful Christmas and a joy-filled 2025, as we are invited to God's great feast.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.



AT THE SOURCE OF M.I.C. HISTORY

PERU

Excerpts from the M.I.C. DVD, *Peru*, by Louise Pagé, M.I.C.

1960. The history of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception continues to be written. Historical events influence decisions and force changes. Several Sisters working in Cuba left the country following the 1959 revolution. The Church of Peru was to be the new apostolic field for many of them, in response to the request of Bishop Gustave Prévost, priest of the Missions-Étrangères and Bishop of the apostolic vicariate of Pucallpa.

But before going any further, let's take a brief look at the history of Peru, this magnificent Latin American country.

The Origins

Three great periods (Pre-Columbian, Pre-Incaic and Incaic) shaped this country. Here is a brief review of each of them.

The first traces of human activity date back to around 20,000 BC. Rich in a unique cultural heritage and a multi-faceted natural environment, the country offers contrasting landscapes: inhospitable desert, breathtaking relief and virgin forest. Hence, three distinct regions: the desert coast, the Andes mountain range and the jungle, also known as the *selva*.

The migrants who arrived over the centuries developed several civilizations, giving rise to the coastal, Andean and *selva* cultures. By observing the vestiges of their daily lives, we can discover their way of living. They lived in communities where work was divided between the men, who hunted and fished, and the women, who gathered food.

A certain philosophy of life and death already existed. We know that these people adopted a polytheistic religion thanks to statuettes and ceramics found during archaeological digs. They worshipped anthropomorphic deities with animal heads: puma, condor, snake... The formulation of their beliefs is expressed in the cult of the dead and funeral rites that demonstrate their religious know-how.

As for doctors, they practiced trepanation for therapeutic purposes. The *tumi*, a semicircular-bladed knife, was used for operations, and coca as an anaesthetic. What's more, the hydraulic engineering of these civilizations was remarkable. We still marvel at their skills today.

Peru is a paradise for nature lovers: the diversity of landscapes, flora and fauna makes it the very symbol of biodiversity. Agriculture and livestock breeding are well developed. Handicrafts, pottery, cloth weaving and goldsmithing (with gold, silver and copper) are also exceptional.

Two pre-Inca empires appeared between 600 and 1100 CE: the Wari Empire (in what was to become Peru) and the Tiahuanaco Empire (in future Bolivia and northern Chile). The Waris were great builders; they developed a system of terraced farming and structured their kingdom with numerous roads.

Three centuries later, the Incas emerged as the heirs to these pre-Inca civilizations. Under the reign of Cusi Yupanqui, known as Pachacutec, the Incas, whose origins can be traced back to their capital, Cuzco, managed to extend their empire from Colombia to



Pucallpa, Peru, 1960 – From left to right: Sr Émilienne Marchand, Mgr Gustave Prévost, Sr Fernande St-Pierre Desmeules and Sr Gisèle Guinois, M.I.C. Photo: M.I.C. Archives

Chile, and into Bolivia and Argentina, in just 50 years. The Inca civilization thus synthesized previous cultures and adopted the cultural manifestations of the conquered peoples.

The Arrival of the Spaniards

In 1532, the arrival of the Spanish completely overturned the Inca Empire: the priest Vicente de Valverde, emissary of the conquistador Francisco Pizarro, asked Atahualpa to embrace the Catholic faith. He offered him a copy of the Bible. As the gift was of no interest to him, the emperor threw the book to the ground. Witnessing the scene, Pizarro immediately gave the signal to attack. Within minutes, all the Inca officers were killed. The total destruction of the main military forces and the capture of their leader put an end to the independence of this nation.

Under Spanish rule, the conquest was brutal: the vanquished were stripped of their lands and sent to the mines of present-day Bolivia, where two-thirds of them died of gas asphyxiation. Later, the new chief, Túpac Amaru, led the indigenous uprising and forced the colonizers to soften their policies.

During this sad period, the missionaries were able to defend the natives and respect their religious culture, integrating their traditional beliefs with those of the Christian faith.

Towards Freedom

The people of Peru speak Spanish, Aymara, Quechua and other indigenous languages, many of which are disappearing. The Catholic religion has been adopted by the majority, but popular religiosity prevails over a well-informed faith.

In 1821, Argentine general José de San Martín attacked Lima. On July 28 of the same year, he proclaimed Peru's independence. Over the years, the country was ruled by a succession of conservative and military regimes.

Almost one hundred and fifty years later, in the early 1970s, the Catholic Church in Latin America experienced a period of ferment full of hope for the poor. It witnessed the birth of *liberation theology*, proposed by Gustavo Gutiérrez, with its emphasis on the little ones and the fight against poverty, and the participation of believers in social protest movements. However, tensions arose between the conservative ecclesiastical hierarchy and the followers of this new school of thought.

Unfortunately, a counter-revolution broke out. The Church called on the faithful to refocus on its spiritual message. To this end, many traditionalist bishops belonging to Opus Dei took charge of key dioceses. However, since his accession, Pope Francis has been trying to correct this trend by appointing bishops according to his own heart. Sects and evangelical churches are gaining an increasing number of followers, particularly among peasants.

The M.I.C. in Peru

On January 21, 1960, three Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception arrived in Lima. By March, they were already on their way to Pucallpa. They discovered the peoples of Amazonia and witnessed their suffering, marked as they were by exclusion and poverty. They settled into a modest rented house with no running water, sewage or electricity. What's more, they had to adapt to the scorching heat. Fortunately, the population was young, welcoming and Catholic at least by name. *Pucallpa is a city to be evangelized*, said Bishop Prévost.

They were soon joined by five Sisters, three of whom taught at the secondary school run by the priests of the Missions-Étrangères. All were committed to helping families in the neighborhood. From the beginning to the present day, two lines of action have guided their commitment: integral family education and evangelization.

After two years in the field, a need arose: to build a boarding school for young girls from the villages scattered along the river. New missionaries arrived, enriching the group. Some were committed to the school, others to community and pastoral work. Education included social training, and therefore extracurricular activities, notably through the Catholic Student Youth, the Girl Guides, the Legion of Mary, the Cadettes of the Sacred Heart and a cooperative (a savings bank for female students).

From 1967 to 1975, the Church in Pucallpa experienced major upheavals as a result of the military takeover. It strived to devote its energies to the social project and support the population in defending its rights. It therefore intensified the formation of Christian communities. Sisters accompanied the Catholic Workers' Youth and the Christian Workers' Movement.

The unionization of teachers led to an upsurge in strikes and protests, with many calling for the departure of religious authorities from the school network. A few Sisters remained active at the school, however, and the state recognized it as a *model school*. In 1978, the community handed over the keys and total responsibility for the institution to the Ministry of Education. However, a few Sisters were still authorized to give catechism classes. These courses were inspired by the Latin American Bible, with the aim of training young people to participate in the country's social action.

It was also a sad era of terrorism. The Shining Path, a Maoist movement founded in 1970, was targeting young people to carry out its revolution, hence the importance of accompanying public school students



Sr Thérèse Beaudet and Sr Jacqueline Breault in Pucallpa between 1968 and 1972 with students. Photo: M.I.C Archives

on a journey of justice, non-violence and democracy. The Sisters then devoted themselves to vicariate and parish ministry.

In 1983, after 23 years of evangelization, the M.I.C. joyfully celebrated the perpetual vows of the first Peruvian Sister, Sr. Ederlina Torres, at Pucallpa Cathedral. Later, another Pucallpina, Sr Maria Goretti Garcia, became provincial superior of the M.I.C. province of Our Lady of Peace for Latin America.

Here is the list of cities where the Sisters have been present for evangelization, education, support of the oppressed, social commitment and the defense of human rights: Pucallpa (1960), Lima (1962), Yauri-Espinar (1972), Santa Luzmila (1985), Tate (1996), Cajamarca (2002) and Manantay (2017).

Today, the M.I.C. are still present in the capital, Lima, and in Manantay, in the diocese of Pucallpa. There are 14 of them, one is still in formation and another is on mission in Japan.

The Sisters in Peru continue to draw inspiration from their objectives, updated in line with the documents of Vatican II and those of the Latin American Church. For them, evangelization is a *living with*, a solidarity in search of the emancipation of an oppressed and believing community. The Gospel becomes the leaven of justice and of integral liberation for the family and society. 🌸

Gratitude at Heart



Délia's dream (I.A.), Monica Ruiz, M.I.C.



By Micheline Marcoux, M.I.C.

First of all, I'd like to ask a few indiscreet questions. When was the last time you expressed gratitude to someone? To whom? And for what reason? When we speak of gratitude, what comes up spontaneously in you? Is it natural to express your gratitude on a daily basis? Can you think of anyone you would describe as having a *grateful heart*? The list of questions could go on and on!

Recognition, Gratitude and Motives

If I close my eyes, words come to mind that are related to the word gratitude. They describe a state of mind,

an attitude of the heart that expresses the beauty, goodness and delicacy of the grateful person. Each one brings his own colour, like a beautiful rainbow on a rainy day when the sun comes out to wink at us! I'd like to share some of these words with you: gratitude, grace, bounty, thanksgiving, thank you, wonder, joy and so on! They are more than just words, they reflect the inner landscape of a heart that is grateful to others, life, nature, loved ones and, needless to say, God!

The motives are manifold. A hello to life when you wake up, the beauty of nature, someone's smile, an extended hand, a pat on the shoulder at a difficult

time, the sharing of a family meal, the devotion of parents, the patience of teachers, a service rendered, a birthday celebrated, a phone call to a lonely person, a pardon offered, a visit to an elderly lady, free help to someone in need, congratulations on a successful job, a favor received from God, and the list goes on!

Délia Tétreault and Gratitude

When we think of people who were witnesses to this virtue called gratitude, Délia Tétreault (1865-1941), foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, now venerable, stands out for the radiance of her intuition. The central element of her vocation was the recognition in her life of the gratuitousness of God's love for us to the point of giving us his Son and hence her desire that all the children of the world should know him. She expresses this in a letter that is considered to be her life testament:

The apostolate [...] was given to us, it seems to me, by the Blessed Virgin as an external means of showing our gratitude. God has given us everything, even his own Son, so what better way to pay him back — as much as a weak creature can do in this world — than to give him children, chosen ones who will also sing his praises for ever and ever?

She continues: *May all our lives be, through prayer, sacrifice and work, a perpetual song of gratitude for ourselves and for all those who forget to thank the One to whom they owe everything* (September 4, 1916).

Giving thanks for those who forget to do so — that's what's new! For Délia Tétreault, expressing her gratitude to God seems to be a novelty. In her letters —over 1,600 of them — gratitude or one of the words associated with this attitude of the heart, in particular gratitude, thanksgiving, joy and other virtues, speaks to us of what inhabited her, what gave a particular colour to her missionary vocation, to the mission of her Institute, throughout her life.

She writes: *At last, let us ask for the spirit of gratitude. To work for the sacred interests of God by every means within our reach, and to thank him unceasingly for*

ourselves and for all men, is, in two words, the exact end of our work (July 19, 1904).

Keep your joy well and communicate it to those around you; it leads to gratitude, one of the aims of our society (May 31, 1917).

Nor should we forget that our apostolate must be carried out in a spirit of gratitude: let all our thoughts, words and deeds converge towards this point. There are communities dedicated to reparation, ours is dedicated to thanksgiving: let us give thanks for our religious family, let us give thanks for ourselves, for our natural family, and for all mankind (December 30, 1925).

Gathering our Moments of Grace

There are so many reasons to give thanks! said Délia Tétreault in the last century, a phrase that is still relevant today!

Thanksgiving, that attitude of the heart towards God, is our way of expressing our gratitude for his love, benefits and blessings. In his letter to the Colossians (3:15b 17), St. Paul writes:

And be thankful. Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Before the evening rest, the ideal moment to look back on our day, it becomes easy to pick out all those moments of grace when we can recognize God's action in our lives, the signs of his love in nature, in events or even in the gestures of the people around us. Here is an interesting suggestion I read somewhere: take a few minutes each day to keep a gratitude journal, in which you note the things, big and small, for which you are grateful. In closing, a quote from Hans Christian Andersen, a 19th-century writer: *Gratitude is the memory of the heart.* What more can I say? 🌸

FROM RECOGNITION TO GRATITUDE



By Emmanuel Bélanger

First of all, it is a duty of recognition to write this review article. The Roman orator Cicero said that *gratitude is not only the greatest of virtues, but the parent of all others* (De Officiis, I, XV).

The term “duty” has had bad press since kindergarten, as if it were synonymous with hard work and overwhelming tasks. However, I believe it should be given a new lease on life. Duty is what the conscience calls upon to accomplish what is right and allows freedom to flourish. The same could be said of recognition and gratitude.

Recognition is the most practical of intellectual exercises. In fact, it is one of the first to be taught to children, and it is easy to see at an early age who has been taught and who has not.

Acknowledgement of a benefit must necessarily precede thanks. For the child, it is literally a matter of using his intelligence and his heart to spot it, and then giving thanks for it with the help of those lovely words, *thank you*, which, in French, recalls divine mercy: *merci*.



My wife Anna and our son David. Photo: Emmanuel Bélanger

But gratitude is above all a spiritual exercise. It helps us to move away from a dualistic worldview, inherited from practical Manichaeism, where events are either good or bad. As if good and evil were two antagonistic forces of equal value at work on earth.

RECOGNITION THUS BECOMES AN ART TO BE CULTIVATED, A DISCERNMENT OF ALL THOSE MOMENTS WHEN WE KNOW HOW TO SEPARATE THE WHEAT FROM THE CHAFF.

No, it is about humbly understanding that more or less everything in the world is beyond us, from the gift of life to our personal gifts, difficulties and suffering. That the greatest gifts are hidden in the present moment and in the ability to recognize them on a daily basis. Recognition thus becomes an art to be cultivated, a discernment of all those moments when we know how to separate the wheat from the chaff (Mt 13:24-30).

In fact, the Christian vision of the world is that of a good creation that is wounded by the presence of evil. Evil is inextricably linked to the original goodness of creatures.

We need only read the first chapter of Genesis to recall this central origin, which recurs like a refrain: *And God saw that it was good.*

Evil always acts as a parasite: it must graft itself onto a healthy organism in order to proliferate. Recognition in its ultimate form, gratitude, is precisely the antidote to the evil that gnaws at humanity.

It is not a question of taking the place of God, who will ultimately separate the wheat from the chaff at the end of time, but simply of

recognizing and giving thanks for the history of salvation that the Lord is writing with each and every one of us, not in spite of, but thanks to trials and difficulties.

This is the principle of the Cross, and also of the Eucharist, which precisely means *thanksgiving*, for it was by becoming incarnate in the midst of His creation that God wished to save humanity.

Recognition is the first step towards gratitude, the virtue that completes the circle and allows the gift to bear fruit. As long as we walk this earth, good and evil will be intertwined, but, as the Catholic writer J.R.R. Tolkien has Sam Gamgee say in the second volume of the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, when all hope seems lost: *There's some good in this world, and it's worth fighting for!*

This is what St. Paul says in his second letter to Timothy (4, 7): *I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.*

For my part, I give thanks for the fatherhood I have been given to experience this year, for my son and for the woman God has put in my path, but also for the Church and its centuries-old tradition, which enable me to see the world through different eyes and to live, asking for grace to be renewed day after day by Jesus Christ, who died and rose again out of love for us. 🌊

By Marie-Claude Barrière

As we contemplate our existence, we have had and still have a thousand and one reasons to thank heaven. At one time or another, we have all counted our blessings and marvelled at having received so much. But is thankfulness simply the natural, spontaneous impulse that arises from an unexpected gift, or does it have deeper roots? What if it were rather an art of living, an inner disposition to be developed and a virtue to be cultivated? At least, that's what thinks Robert Emmons, author of *Thanks! How the new science of gratitude can make you happier*¹, in his essay that explores the many facets of gratitude.



The Memory of the Heart

For this American psychologist, a leading expert in the so-called science of gratitude, it is more than a one-off feeling, it is an enlightened decision. With a great deal of patience, and the exercise of mindfulness, we can recognize and taste the many blessings we have received. Of course, in our hectic lives, this training of the mind to live in the here and now is always demanding. We need to know how to preserve a space of silence within ourselves on a daily basis, nurtured by prayer and meditation. The popularity of gratitude diaries in recent years is a good example: noting down three to five occasions for rejoicing, morning or evening, has

I CAN CHOOSE TO BE
GRATEFUL WHEN I AM
CRITICIZED, EVEN WHEN
MY HEART RESPONDS
IN BITTERNESS.

become a sacred appointment for many people. It allows us to become aware of and admire the prodigious abundance in which we live, and which we too often take for granted.

Now, giving thanks on bright days is, on the whole, relatively easy. But how can we persist in the darker moments, when troubles pile up and a simple *thank you* struggles to cross our lips? That is when we need to observe the discipline spoken of by Dutch priest and writer Henri Nouwen, author of nearly forty books on spirituality, quoted by Robert Emmons: *Gratitude as a discipline involves a conscious choice. I can choose to be grateful even when my emotions and feelings are steep and hurt and resentful. [...] I can choose to be grateful when I am criticized, even when my heart responds in bitterness. [...] I can choose to listen to the voices that forgive and to look at the faces that smile, even while I still hear words of revenge and see grimaces of hatred*².

According to Nouwen, recognition is more a matter of will than of objective circumstances. By consciously turning our gaze towards the beauty and goodness of the beings around us, so as to focus only on their inner light, we cultivate gratitude. Because we are determined to see them beyond their flaws and weaknesses, our sisters and brothers in Christ always appear to us worthy of love, even if some days they do not show us their most beautiful face.

And what is even more wonderful is that when, against all odds, we remember the acts of kindness and generosity of others, life lights up. Bitterness, revenge and hatred are overcome. We open ourselves up to forgiveness. As if the saying were perfectly true: *gratitude is the memory of the heart*. It's a selective memory, a form of charity.

However, like any discipline, gratitude cannot be acquired overnight. It requires humility. We often take credit for our small and great feats, when, as we know, all graces come from God. We must never forget how closely the words *gratitude* and *humility* are linked. It is no coincidence that the Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard calls gratitude *the low door*. It's the door through which we must enter. It is by bowing that we admit our complete dependence on God. It would be presumptuous to rely solely on our own strength: the Holy Spirit must be with us.

GRATITUDE IS PERHAPS THE FIRST STEP TOWARDS A HAPPIER, BLOOMING HEART.

Finally, if, as Robert Emmons claims, gratitude is a virtue, it remains an ideal to be attained, requiring courage and determination. But, he says, our efforts are never in vain and, even more surprisingly, we are the first to enjoy the fruits! Indeed, experimental studies have clearly demonstrated that the practice of gratitude generates multiple benefits, including emotional benefits: *people feel more loving, joyful and enthusiastic*. And we're not talking here about temporary happiness, but lasting bliss. A kind of immunization against bad luck. A kind of virtuous circle.

If you think about it, gratitude is perhaps the first step towards a happier, blooming heart. In these times, when cynicism too often prowls, it is offered to us as a bold challenge. It is up to us to rise to it. 🌱

¹ Robert A. Emmons, *Thanks! How the new science of gratitude can make you happier*, Houghton Mifflin, 2007.

² *Ibid.*





In Recognition of these People from Elsewhere

Sr Marie-Josèphe Simard, during the summer party of M.I.C. health service employees.

Photo: Monette Ouellette, M.I.C.



By Maurice Demers

The growing influence of right-wing populism in Europe and Christian nationalism in the United States is a major concern in international politics. Many elements of the political programs of these conservative movements have points in common, varying according to the different national realities. While there are divergences in the social programs they defend or in their international relations, an aversion to immigration and the fear that it will allow non-Westerners with different religious beliefs to integrate into the community are points of convergence for these political parties.

The most recent elections in France almost gave power in the National Assembly to the far-right Rassemblement National (RN), which topped the first

round of legislative elections with 33.2% of the votes. It took an agreement between the other parties to withdraw the candidates who finished third in the initial vote, so as not to split the vote in the second round. While the strategy worked to block the RN, which finished third, it still achieved a historic score. Opposition to mass immigration (mostly from the former colonial empire) is a political stance that rallies many citizens in France, and is not about to disappear.

In the United States, grumbling about high levels of illegal immigration is providing a base of support for Donald Trump's candidacy, which has links with the far right and Christian nationalist groups. The Republicans defend themselves by saying that they are not against legal immigration, but rather against



Photo: Monette Ouellette, M.I.C.

the uncontrolled entry of hundreds of thousands of people fleeing poverty, violence and oppression. Yet in June 2024, Louisiana's Republican governor, Jeff Landry, signed into law a bill requiring the Ten Commandments of God to be posted in the state's public schools, from kindergarten to university. This seems to directly contradict the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, which states that Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, the U.S. version of the concept of secular government.

Obviously, this political stance, which has also been attempted by Republican states in the Midwest, does not sit well with welcoming newcomers with religious beliefs that differ from the Judeo-Christian tradition. But this trend takes place in a context where the balance of power has been transformed by the dominance of conservative justices on the Supreme Court (six against three), lending itself to the promulgation of laws inspired by Christian nationalism, but also to attacks on the rights of women and sexual minorities.

A country obviously has the prerogative and legitimacy to control who enters and settles within its borders. This is even necessary to maintain the rule of law. However, the rhetoric articulated by right-wing

populists and Christian nationalists tends to confuse all types of migration and promote laws that privilege the white, Christian population. A truncated and distorted version of history and national identity is thus promoted, omitting its colonial component (relations with aboriginals in Canada, nationals of the former colonial empire in France and victims of American imperialism in the United States). Homi K. Bhabha wrote:

The Western metropole must confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar migrants and refugees, as an indigenous or native narrative internal to its national identity; and the reason for this is made clear in the stammering, drunken words of Mr. 'Whisky' Sisodia from The Satanic Verses [by Salman Rushdie]: The trouble with the Eng English is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means.

This situation reminds me of a Sergio Arau film released twenty years ago, *A Day Without a Mexican*. The rather ridiculous plot takes a satirical look at the consequences of the sudden disappearance of all Mexicans from the state of California due to a mysterious pink fog surrounding the territory.

The economy and even part of social life are instantly paralyzed, as the people who pick the fruit and vegetables, mow the lawn, do the housework and look after the children are no longer there (tasks performed mostly by migrants from south of the border).

The aim of the film was to show that American society should be grateful for the labor of these people from elsewhere. This logic applies just as much to the United States as it does to France or Quebec. Often, political speeches, even those that don't come from the extremes, don't show enough gratitude for the work that is accomplished. In this season of harvest, a thought about this reality can help bring harmony back to our societies. 🌿



The M.I.C. Mission News team celebrating Christmas. Photo: Laurent Bouchard

Gratitude

By Sylvie Bessette

The M.I.C. Mission News issue you are reading right now is all about gratitude, a vast and nuanced notion. But what is gratitude? Basically, it is the acknowledgement of a fact. For example, we can sign an acknowledgement of debt, a legal document certifying that we owe someone a sum of money. Acknowledgement of prior learning, on the other hand, can be used to determine someone's level of education or accumulated experience, enabling him to advance in his academic or professional career.

The preceding examples underline the often objective nature of this word. But we can take this a step further and observe what happens when we recognize that we have received a benefit from another person, a gesture that makes us feel good and brings us joy and happiness. Another feeling can then arise, that of gratitude.

Gratitude is more emotional; in that it enables us to appreciate a positive act or word. This mental aptitude for tasting what makes life beautiful and pleasant leads us towards others and enriches our psychological life. It enables us to make connections by recognizing a good deed.

This observation naturally leads me to reflect on the passage in Luke's Gospel (17:11-19) that recounts the healing of the ten lepers:

On his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice: Jesus, Master, have pity on us! When he saw them, he said: Go and show yourselves to the priests. And as they went, they were

cleansed. One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him. And he was a Samaritan. Jesus asked: Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner? Then he said to him: Rise and go; your faith has made you well.

While all ten lepers recognized that they had been healed, only one returned to express his gratitude to Jesus for having delivered him from the disease. Expressing gratitude to one's neighbor or to God allows us to enter into a relationship with him or her, and to step outside our own psyche.

Family ties are partly based on the recognition that we are members of a group, a kinship. This membership builds us up and teaches us to share emotions, activities, encounters and discoveries. Most of the time, it leads to feelings of gratitude towards those who have raised us and given us moral values.

Sincere friendships also build us up. Someone has recognized our value and wants to establish and

nurture a relationship with us. The fact that this friendship is long-term gives it a dimension that, for me, belongs in the spiritual realm. The meeting of two minds and two hearts can create bonds as strong as, if not stronger than those of blood. I'm fortunate to have such a close relationship with two childhood friends, whom I've known for over sixty years. What an extraordinary opportunity to be able to share with them a common history, joys and sorrows, in a solidarity that stands the test of time! My gratitude for their loyalty and unfailing support is infinite.

It's worth reflecting on what makes us happy, what comforts us, what makes us feel good. It's important to recognize these things and be grateful for them. Because then we know that we are valuable in the eyes of those who love us, on earth as in heaven.

The Lord said (Is 43, 1.4): *I have called you by your name [...], Because you mean a lot to me, because you are precious and I love you.* For this, we should express infinite gratitude, for in these words, God recognizes our humanity and our need for his love. 🌿



Pharmacie Dorian Margineanu inc

**PROUD PARTNERS OF YOUR
COMMUNITY FOR OVER
20 YEARS!**

Phone: 514-384-6177
Fax: 514-384-2171





Sr Lise in the new garden. Photo: Kyoko Takahashi, M.I.C.

RECOGNITION: Beyond the Word, an EXPERIENCE

By Lise Tremblay, M.I.C.

Who hasn't experienced those moments when the mere fact of being recognized gave him a sense of existence? You're so-and-so, I met you in such-and-such a place, a few years ago, at such-and-such an event. This simple phrase, accompanied by a frank smile, makes you relive those moments with the person, who naturally expresses joy.

Let's take this a step further. To have recognition for something, to say thank you, to feel gratitude, is this not a way of saying YES to the life that springs up from all sides, despite the circumstances that may mask its face? Is life not immortal?

Let gratitude fill your life, let it overflow, said Délia Tétreault. This feeling allows us to recognize and appreciate what we are, what we have and what fills us with happiness; gratitude invites us to see the good side of things.

Experiencing gratitude on a daily basis is an experience worth sharing today.

On February 1, 2024, three Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception arrived in Granby, a city where, for 64 years and in various forms of commitment, MIC Sisters have succeeded one another. After several years of reflection and prayer, this long-cherished missionary project became a reality. The diocese of Saint-Hyacinthe welcomes us back; it has the privilege of being the home diocese of Délia Tétreault, foundress of the congregation.

Why speak of gratitude, and even better, of thankfulness, since our return? Because it is right and proper to acknowledge the hospitality offered by the diocesan pastor, Bishop Christian Rodembourg, by the Notre-Dame parish priest, Mr Danik Savaria, and the laity. Over the days, many hard-working volunteers, under the responsibility of the churchwardens, spared no effort to prepare a welcoming and supportive setting. Through these gestures of generosity, sharing and selflessness, we recognize men and women of heart, in solidarity with the mission entrusted to us. In the name of their faith, these people participate in and support the work of the few priests committed to the service of the great parish of Notre-Dame.

Nor can we forget the kindness and mutual support of our Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. The mission of some is the mission of others, and this is how our common mission is realized.

Amazed by so much selflessness, we say the simple words: thank you! Like a painter on canvas, we immortalize these acts of kindness, respect and sharing. Our whole environment speaks to the dedication of these people, their know-how and their skills. The recognition of so many gifts is one of God's blessings that we welcome and contemplate every day.

In a short time, we had everything we needed to organize a home. We received in abundance, which enabled us to reach out in turn. In his second letter to the Christians of Corinth (8:15), Saint Paul reminded them that at the time of the manna, those who gathered a lot had nothing left over, and those who gathered only a little had enough. This was our time of manna.

When we look around the house we live in with gratitude, the magic words we learned in childhood

spring to mind. This *thank you* extends outside our walls, where we find flowers that also express the generosity and affection of many people. Little by little, we create an environment that reminds us of the beauty of beings and things, and invites us to praise the Source of all grace, our benevolent God. Each plant we put into the ground has a name or brings back a memory.

Thanks to life, gratitude to the universe, to nature in all its diversity. Gratitude for the rain and the sun: they are indispensable and encourage nature to grow and flourish. Each *thank you* is a flower that beautifies our common home and reminds us of our mission to protect this habitat, which is on loan to us and which we must keep healthy for future generations.

Thank you is much more than words: it opens us up to the gratitude that fills us with happiness. It is in this spirit that our commitment to the local people and to those who have come from all corners of the globe — our sisters and brothers who have recently arrived in Quebec — is born. 🌱


MAGAZINE PUBLISHED BY THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

*I support the mission by
subscribing to the magazine!*

\$10 /YEAR
DIGITAL
SUBSCRIPTION

> www.pressemic.org





Gratitude at the Heart of Protecting Nature



By Rachel Duplessis

The Earth and its elements are the substratum of our mortal experience. It provides support, shelter and nutrients for living beings on their journey here on earth. However, it must be said that the planet, although resilient, possesses limited riches. We already know that the use and exploitation of natural resources has reached unprecedented levels in recent years, offering little respite for the most vulnerable species and communities.

Acknowledging these calamities should not plunge us into an unhappy and pessimistic state, but rather be used as a lever to act with benevolence. The more fortunate among us, not in financial terms, but those who are spared from environmental disasters, can continue to enjoy nature and its benefits.

Let this blessing enable us to be grateful and to grow in our desire to preserve life and its beauty. Gratitude for nature can transform our relationship with the environment and engender more eco-responsible and respectful behaviour. This article explores both why we should be grateful to nature and how this gratitude can play a central role in its protection.

Nature provides a range of ecosystem services essential to our survival. Here are just a few of them.

Climate Regulation

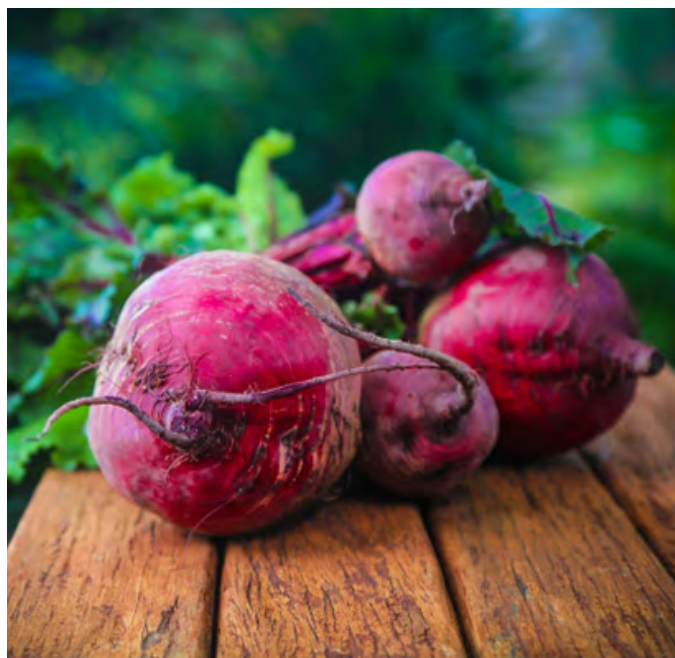
As well as offering panoramic views of changing colors through the seasons and providing oxygen to our lungs, the world's forests remove from the atmosphere every year more than 10 billion tonnes of CO₂ emissions, a greenhouse gas, helping to reduce global warming¹. The oceans also help regulate the climate by absorbing excess heat from the environment². Here is another reason to appreciate these great expanses of water, which bring us peace and serenity through their immensity and the sound of their eternal waves.

Access to Drinking Water

At a time when nearly a billion people do not have access to drinking water, watersheds provide water for drinking, agriculture, manufacturing and recreation, as well as habitat for wildlife and plants. Wetlands and forests play an essential role in water filtration, while plants remove dangerous levels of nitrogen and phosphorus from fertilizer run-off. Let's spare a thought for this essential, if unequally distributed, resource.

Food Security

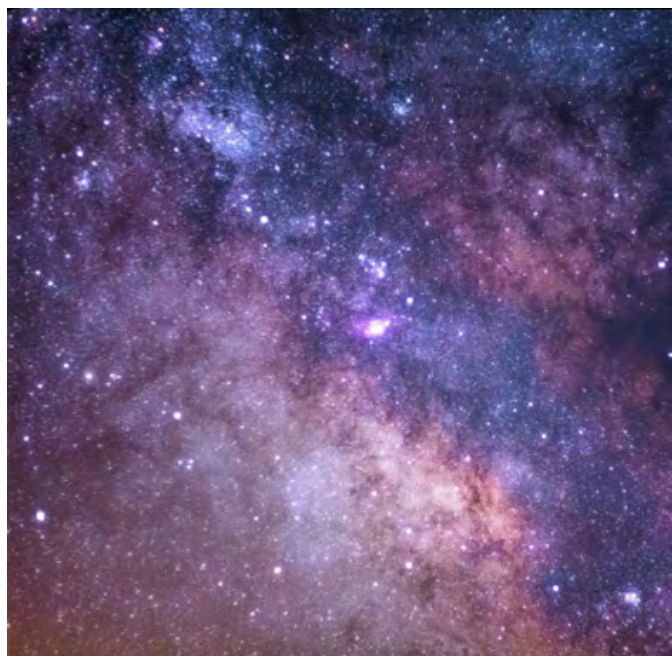
Nature provides us with the energy our bodies need by offering us healthy food. We can produce it in a way that preserves and respects ecosystem. *The living God who made the heavens and the earth and the sea and everything in them [...] He has shown kindness by giving you rain from heaven and crops in their seasons; he provides you with plenty of food and fills your hearts with joy.* (Acts 14, 15b.17)



Gratitude for Ecosystems

By cultivating gratitude for these ecosystem services, we become aware of our dependence on nature and the need to preserve it. This attitude can encourage more sustainable practices, such as reducing our carbon footprint, conserving water and promoting organic farming. Recognition reminds us that we are an integral part of nature, and that our well-being is curiously linked to the health of ecosystems.

This beautiful planet and everything on it are God's creations. All humanity should gratefully use what He has given, avoid wasting life and resources, and use the earth's bounty to care for the poor and needy.



Feet on the Ground and Head in the Stars

I am personally grateful for the sky. This celestial vault that separates us from the vast universe presents us with a variety of pictures: sometimes blue, sometimes grey, sometimes turbulent, sometimes peaceful. My favourite is the one sprinkled with white dots sparkling on a black canvas. When my gaze is focused on the sky, be it clear or starry, I forget for a few moments everything that's going on down here. A pause, a respite, a hope.

It is important to see and appreciate God's glory and greatness in everything around us, because the state of the human soul and that of the environment are interconnected: each affects the other. The planet, all living things and the expanse of the universe bear eloquent witness to Him. 🌌

¹ Cf. Nancy Harris and David Gibbs, "Quantifying Carbon Fluxes in the World's Forests", World Resources Institute (wri.org).

² Cf. Francisco de Melo Viríssimo and Elizabeth Robinson, "What role do the oceans play in regulating the climate and supporting life on Earth?", Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment (lse.ac.uk).



The joy of participating together in the parish. Photo: M.I.C.

Gratitude

By Ederlina Torres, M.I.C.

The presence of several M.I.C. Sisters from other countries who joined our mission in Latin America has left its mark on our history, as a spiritual legacy. This presence remains alive in our hearts. Today, we are three Sisters in Pucallpa, a town in the Amazon region of Peru. We live in the Manantay district. We have just inaugurated the Santa María de la Esperanza Center for Human Promotion. Sister Raeliarisoa Marie Colette is the director, Sister Rosario Del Pilar Zari Vidal the administrator, and I am the community leader working in pastoral ministry in the small church of Saint John Paul II. We know that mission is both a gift received from God and an act of gratitude to him: a divine gift and a grace to be shared.

Mission: A Gift Received

God takes the first step and calls us. His initiative awaits our response. A vocation is a free gift that brings us closer to God and to others, and urges us to share our spiritual riches. This is its essence. *Freely you have received, freely give* (Mt 10:8). Jesus sends us on a mission with this powerful invitation. Having encountered a lost and suffering humanity, He felt compassion for mankind and wished to multiply His work of salvation through us. Mother Délia used to tell us: *The response to selflessness is characterized, in everyday life, by love for your neighbor*. We believe that this is why Jesus, the master of the harvest, called us and led us to Manantay.

We used to live in the center of Pucallpa. In response to Pope Francis' invitation to bring Christ to the existential peripheries, to the poorest, a new house has been built in Manantay, a deprived district of our city, close to an ambitious humanitarian project.

WHEN YOU HAVE GOOD NEWS TO TELL, YOU LOOK CHEERFUL. WHAT WOULD THE PAGANS THINK IF THEY SAW THAT YOU WERE SAD?

Our mission is built around three essential pillars: education, health and sustainable development, favoring the environment and economic autonomy. This initiative has experienced remarkable growth over the past eight years. The combined efforts of missionaries, volunteers and local partners have provided invaluable assistance to a population facing numerous socio-economic challenges. Through its holistic approach, the mission strives to create a profound and positive change in the lives of the inhabitants of this remote region of Peru. Manantay is characterized by massive migration, mainly from the country's central sierra and elsewhere in Latin America. The population is growing rapidly and now numbers 113,470.

Mission: An Act of Gratitude

Wherever we find ourselves, we recognize that this land and its people are a gift from God to us and to the Church, and an opportunity to express our gratitude to Him. Mother Délia Tétreault said: *The apostolate [...] was given to us, it seems to me, by the Blessed Virgin as an external means of expressing our gratitude.*

Here is something we have experienced in Manantay. It is common for people here to consult healers when they are ill. Luis, a young man of 21, was battling a rare form of skin disease called erythema nodosum leprosum. The disease was putting his faith to the test. Following local tradition, his parents initially

entrusted him to one of these healers. But Luis' condition worsened. That is when we stepped in, seeing him not as a leper, but as a child of God in need of help. We convinced the family to take Luis to hospital, where Dr Lucas urgently prescribed thalidomide, a drug considered almost miraculous in this case. Unfortunately, there was a shortage of this restricted remedy in Pucallpa and throughout Peru.

Faced with this desperate situation, Dr. Milton Ozório Moraes, a Brazilian doctor moved by his story, managed to procure it. In July 2018, he sent it to Dr. Lucas. As soon as Luis began treatment, his condition improved rapidly, offering new hope for a cure. Although his family still hesitated between the healer and the doctor, Luis chose to trust Jesus for his healing by praying with us. Soldiers from Pucallpa offered to give him blood for a much-needed transfusion. Little by little, Luis regained his health. Today, he works and joyfully bears witness to his renewed faith. This experience strengthened our gratitude and our desire to share Christ's love.

Mother Délia used to tell us: *You are going on a mission to bring the good news. When you have good news to tell, you look cheerful. You are going there to bring the best news there is, so you will have to be cheerful all the time. What would the pagans think if they saw that you were sad?*

The blessings of a mission accomplished in this state of mind are multiplied. Those who benefit bear witness to the gift they have received, and give thanks to God. As the Foundress of our Institute used to say: *It is selflessness that helps to give Thanksgiving its proper face, revealing the features of the Benefactor: the selfless God. Beyond the gifts they have received, believers have experienced the divine benevolence that makes their thanksgiving praise burst forth.*

We also thank God for our benefactors, since their collaboration makes us realize that together we have a great responsibility to share our faith and give thanks to God. We now understand better the importance of Délia Tétreault's wish to her daughters and listeners in this message: *May all our lives be [...] a perpetual song of gratitude [...] for all those who forget to thank the One to whom they owe everything.* 🙏

With You, O Lord



MILAGROS GOMEZ, M.I.C.
1942-2023
Manila, Philippines

Disturbed at the age of seven by the death of her mother, Milagros took flight as a teenager through apostolic commitments: member of the Sodality of the Virgin Mary and catechist. Mary became her mother and confidant. Her connection with our community through teaching at Immaculate Conception Academy in Greenhills led her to the novitiate on July 2, 1970. Her influence as an educator was exceptional. The Missionary Press team in Pont-Viau benefited from her competent contribution from 2002 to 2005. In May 2023, Mila showed signs of deteriorating health. Despite medical assistance, she left us on July 5, 2023. THANK YOU, Mila, for the flavor of your life: *Amare et Servire*.



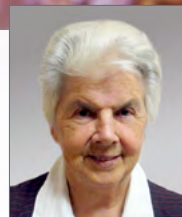
MICHELINE LAGUË, M.I.C.
Sister St-Michel
1940-2024
Montreal, Quebec

Humanitarian events sparked a missionary spirit in the still-young Micheline. The MICs' visit to her school took her to faraway lands... As a teenager, she was a leader in various social movements. She entered the novitiate on August 8, 1960. After a brief stay in Taiwan, she returned to Ottawa to study theology at St-Paul University. She obtained her doctorate. While teaching at the same university, she became involved in the *Femmes et Ministères* network, the Madeleine Delbrel study and research on Venerable Délia Tétreault. Unbeknownst to her, a cancer was slowly developing, and on February 21, 2024, she left us for eternal Thanksgiving.



HÉLÈNE HÉTU, M.I.C.
Sister Hélène-du-Sacré-Cœur
1927-2024
Montreal, Quebec

The seventh of sixteen children, Hélène had a happy childhood. As a pre-teen, she dreamed of giving her life to Jesus; she waited until she was sixteen, in 1944, to enter the novitiate where her sisters Jeannette, Annette and Irène were already living. In 1950, Haiti welcomed her. The ease with which she learned Creole helped her get involved in pastoral work in the parish and in the Mornes to which she would travel on horseback, to teach catechism to children and help promoting women's rights. When she returned to Quebec in 1982, she created works of art for all occasions, gifted as she was by her creative craftsmanship. In 2007, her health failed her. Her praying heart kept her a peaceful and serene missionary, who on April 12, 2024, responded to the invitation to rest in God.



RITA OSTIGUY, M.I.C.
Sister Marie-Luc
1933-2024
Ange-Gardien, Quebec

Fascinated by the wonders of nature, an inheritance from her happy farmer parents, Rita passed on this dynamic *joie de vivre* to those around her as a missionary. She entered the novitiate on February 1, 1958. After completing her training, she proved to be a great educator of the Christian faith and human growth in Guatemala and Bolivia. A creative, generous and responsible woman, she dared to take on new projects, such as a day-care center for prisoners' children in Cochabamba, Bolivia. On her final return to Laval in 2004, she became involved in the parish's infant baptism program. In 2017, illness struck hard. Rita bounced back slowly and enjoyed receiving visitors. On April 21, 2024, she said YES to the awaited Spouse who was to usher her into eternal Beauty.

The eyes and the hearts of Christians throughout the world turn to Bethlehem; in these days, it is a place of sorrow and silence, yet it was there that the long-awaited message was first proclaimed: ***To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord*** (Lk 2:11). Those words spoken by the angel in the heavens above Bethlehem are also spoken to us. We are full of hope and trust as we realize that the Lord has been born for us; that the eternal Word of the Father, the infinite God, has made his home among us. He became flesh; he came "to dwell among us" (Jn 1:14). This is the good news that changed the course of history!

Wishes from Pope Francis, which we have borrowed to wish you
a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year 2025!

