

MIC

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MISSION NEWS



To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923

*100 Years
of an Undaunted Mission*

Quebec

YES,
I DREAMED!

Philippines

A RETURN TO
THE VILLAGE

Peru

A FACET
OF MISSION



MARIE BILODEAU, M.
1984

An inspirational dream...

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MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS – 2020

JANUARY

Promotion of World Peace

We pray that Christians, followers of other religions, and all people of goodwill may promote peace and justice in the world.

FEBRUARY

Listen to the Migrants' Cries

We pray that the cries of our migrant brothers and sisters, victims of criminal trafficking, may be heard and considered.

MARCH

Catholics in China

We pray that the Church in China may persevere in its faithfulness to the Gospel and grow in unity.

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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— ONE HUNDRED YEARS —

A breeze, no, A STRONG WIND!

On Pentecost day, a strong wind came to strengthen the apostles. Their fear was transformed into audacity. They travelled their world to proclaim the risen Christ.

One hundred years ago, the Holy Spirit, always in motion, inspired audacious Délia Tétreault to undertake something new. On May 20, 1920, she launched the mission magazine *Le Précurseur*, and three years later its counterpart, *MIC Mission News*. She had a message to transmit and believed in the power of the press. Like a strong wind, the Sisters wholeheartedly went from villages to cities offering the magazine and sowing the Word of God. In the 1950s, *Le Précurseur* had more than 172,000 subscribers. In his encyclical letter, *Mission of the Redeemer*, Holy Pope John Paul II, confirmed presenting and promoting the missions as a key element in the pastoral activity of the Church and with this in mind he

wrote: *It is necessary to spread information through missionary publications and audiovisual aids. These play an important role in making known the life of the universal Church and in voicing the experiences of missionaries and of the local Churches in which they work.*¹ Yes, many missionary vocations stem from having read stories about the missions in those magazines; many nuns, priests and lay persons consecrated their lives to work in mission countries abroad.

Ever since its foundation, the publication of *Le Précurseur/MIC Mission News* has been faithful to its goal. A persevering mission that resolutely braved all storms. So many changes occurred in the span of one hundred years; to keep our readers well informed and interested we adapted the style and content. The editorial team, always alert and in touch with sociological and ecclesial evolutions at home and abroad has been keen in presenting some world realities.

Our publication has dealt with many humanitarian issues. Our wish has always been to confirm the work of our missionaries who, in the field, denounce unjust conditions as well as poverty which deprive people from their human rights. We have encouraged those who partake in ecological projects to restore our suffering planet. Above all, that which we hold dear to our heart is Christ's message being his love for humanity. Our magazine supports "mission awareness" and we wish to keep it as our main focus.

To all our readers, we thank you for your interest and support. If we are still active after one hundred years, it is thanks to each one of you, present and past readers, who have contributed in helping us one way or another. The year 2020 will be one of gratitude, celebrating in Thanksgiving all the people who encouraged us and helped us remain faithful to Délia Tétreault's insightful vision.

Maria-Paula Sanfey, m.i.c.



¹ Pope John Paul II, *Redemptoris Mission*, December 7, 1990, No. 83

Yes, I dreamed!

To dream the impossible dream... to reach the unreachable star... to fight for the right... this is my quest... These words written by Andy Williams encourage us to turn away from illusions and move toward dreams that, like leaven, cause Humanity to rise up.



By **André Gadbois**

When I was twelve years old, the alley behind Bordeaux Street would transform into an ice rink or a soccer field, and it made me dream of friendship, victory and solidarity (a bit of a gang, like the Jews in the desert!). Then, I was fifteen, and the scout's honour made me dream of a global brotherhood, an enormous campfire to sit around and celebrate the joyful march of all the boys and girls of the world. At twenty-five, I dreamed of a classless society, without slums or contempt, where every person acted as each other's neighbour, and at forty, I dreamed of a school system in which struggling children were supported with tenderness and imagination. Now, in my sixties, I think my dreams are still a long way from being realized. Yes, I dreamed—I dreamed often of a world in which no one would have to live on their knees, except to meet the gaze of a small child who is crying, or laughing, with all his heart. And I still dream, despite today's reality, I persist, I resist gurus. I don't want to simply resign myself "because human beings are creators. We don't have to follow trends—we can turn them on their heads and belie them."¹

Dreams gather and connect

There are illusions (wealth, physical beauty, glory, success), and then there are dreams (bread and dignified work for all, free conversation, brotherhood, solidarity, reconciliation, equality). Illusions remain isolated in a clique, leading to unbridled competition; dreams gather and connect. It seems I must have tumbled into a bowl of hope when I

Jesus' dream was not a well-crafted, fully finished product.

was little... but I stand on the side of dreams, on the side of these distant, unknowable horizons that still mobilize hearts in favour of hearts. Think of the dreams of Martin Luther King, Jr., Abbé Pierre, Délia Tétrault, Jean Vanier, Jesus of Nazareth—these were not finished products, not well-designed, as the technocrats say these days: they were about planting a small seed first, like the Parable of

¹ PITCHER, Patricia. Artists, Craftsmen and Technocrats. HEC Press, 1994, p. 229.

² GADBOIS, Thérèse. Letter to her brother André, to Diane, Marie-Claude and Jean-Philippe.

Photo:
Délia's Dream
(stained glass window
by Desmarais Robitaille)
Photo Credit: MIC




the Mustard Seed. These dreams were also about the audacity that emerges from turning inward, from silence. In these dreams, work is offered to every man and woman of good faith—we discard all the different forms of misery; there is no trap here. These dreams were true liberators for all—they make us stand up and LIVE.

He belied trends of the time

In magnificent words from the authors of Exodus, we seem to hear Yahweh tell his enslaved people: *I see the misery of my People and I cry. This is not what I dreamed for you; this is not why I created you, men and women of my People, I did not create you for this miserable life.* And Yahweh spoke of his dream to Moses, who hesitated before embarking on such an adventure. And Moses retold Yahweh's dream to his people, which drove him to walk toward the Promised Land. How many times thereafter did the prophets cry before the excess of this great dream, manifesting their anger, denouncing all the peddlers of these illusions who sought only their own success?

From these people, “born for a little bread,” came a Man who did not follow the trends of the time (power, glory, success) and who acted to reverse them, to belie them, to embarrass them. He took up the dream of Yahweh, whom he called “Abba,” and shared it throughout Palestine, describing a broad plan of the conditions needed to realize the dream (the word *conversion* held a special place). He tied an apron around his waist and got to work, emphasizing that, upon his departure, he would release a great energy that would render us liberators, liberators of misery, like Him. Standing before a hungry crowd, Jesus did not seek success but challenged his companions and said: *Feed them yourself* (Mt 14:16)! On another occasion, on the third night on the road to Emmaus, true to himself, he withdrew so that the disciples could continue what he had already started.

This is the mark of a dreamer that I love so much, and in whom I put all my trust. *Hope is knowing things are done in time, and they are not done without us, and the steps to get there are not useless detours or lost time. And sometimes, to realize God's plan, you have to leave, break away from everyday life—leave your country, as Abraham did, to an unknown land whose only guarantee is the Word of God, guiding us like a compass.*² 

God's Inspiration in Délia's Life

By Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C.

Daughter of God the Father whose creative work is unlimited, Délia Détreault was not short of inspiration when she sought to thank him for the graces she received from him. However, for health reasons or other motives, she went from one trial to another, such as, not being accepted to the Carmelite way of life, or failing to enter another religious order, and a missed opportunity to go to Africa as a lay missionary. Throughout her many years of dedication and involvement with the most disadvantaged, she courageously kept searching for the Will of God.

Though not entirely certain what God wanted of her, she inaugurated, with some other companions, an apostolic school for young girls wishing to become missionaries. Then, the Holy Spirit led her further; she and her collaborators chose to live a religious life. In 1902, the first religious missionary institute on the American continent took shape; in 1904 Pope Pius X gave it the name of: *The Society of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception* —WHAT JOY! Délia Tétreault was also the instigator of a seminary for the Foreign Missions Society in Quebec; she updated and encouraged the pontifical works of the Propagation of the Faith and of the Holy Childhood; she established retreat houses for women.

With the rising interest in foreign missions, Mother Délia wished to spread far and wide the missionary spirit. Understanding the vital role of the press, she launched the missionary magazine *Le Précurseur* in 1920 and three years later, the English version *The Precursor*, now known as *MIC Mission News*.

The super-Foundress (as we would say today) followed closely the development of the publication. In her letters, the name *Le Précurseur* appears some five hundred thirty-five times. She underscored the goal of the magazine as follows: *Propagate interesting mission news... Create an apostolic movement in our country... Awaken numerous missionary vocations... Give our benefactors some consolation upon reading the positive results of their generosity.*

Bring some consolation
to our benefactors by giving
them the positive results
of their generosity.

Mother Délia wanted a mission magazine of quality, enriched with topical issues and professional photos. To make it interesting, she urged the Sisters who were in the mission fields: *Write to us as often as you can, give us as many details as possible, this helps us to be one with you and to write your news in Le Précurseur... What vivid and moving scenes we could describe in Le Précurseur if you could write on the spur of the moment... Take notes as often as you can...*

To the editorial personnel, she indicated the *kind of content interested the readers...* And the presentation being important as well, she recommended: *Take care that the font size be easily read.*

IN PRAISE and Thanksgiving!



Photo: JComp

No details escaped her attention; concerning the quality of photos, she said: *If it were possible to have a photographer take the Cardinal's picture while he is administering the sacrament of confirmation to the neophyte, ask him to do so even though it could be costly... What a beautiful plate for our next issue Le Précurseur... The most appreciated photos are those depicting the Sisters working or with children playing. The photos have to be very well taken otherwise the negatives cannot be developed.*

The bishops granted Mother Délia the permission to distribute the magazine in their dioceses. She wrote: *I come to ask you a favor, that of allowing four of our Sisters, which are from your diocese, to present our little magazine Le Précurseur in the parishes where their families reside.*

To collect the subscriptions, she suggested that the Sisters seek help from the lay people: *Try to recruit some collaborators for our magazine Le Précurseur;*

we are in the process of preparing a letter to this effect. I will send you a copy, it will help you to recruit. She insisted on the importance of the magazine: *It seems to me that the most pressing matter, for the moment, is the distribution of Le Précurseur.*

This brief account of God's inspiration in Délia's life is noteworthy. The publication of a first missionary magazine needs to be highlighted because thousands of pages written over a period of one hundred years gave rise to a spiritual awakening. For the readers of the time, evangelization became their interest and it led them to open their minds and hearts to the missionary dimension in their own personal lives. Nowadays, evangelization includes openness to cultural diversity, to ecology, to justice for all, to development and to the proclamation of the Faith... 🌿



When you enter the **Délia-Tétreault Museum**, you are surrounded by hundreds of objects and images which have crossed the ages and oceans. In the Fall issue of **MIC Mission News**, the museum presented one of its treasures, the Magic Lantern. Another object of interest is described below.

The Secret Life of Objects

INK-STONE-STICK



By Alexandre Payer

Exhibitions Commissioner
Délia-Tétreault Museum

Ink Preparation:

1. Place the inkstone on the work surface. Pour a small amount of water in the hollow section.
2. With the end of the ink stick held between your thumb, forefinger and middle finger, gently scrub the wet stone in small, circular motions until a black ink forms, adding water as needed.
3. To test the ink's thickness, place a drop of the ink on the rim of a saucer or a deep dish using the stick. If the drop forms a bead without rolling down the edge, the ink is ready!

Each item is as indispensable as the next, yet many visitors to the museum are often perplexed by these objects, and don't immediately understand the essential function that unites them. Indeed, who could have guessed that the fate of this "stick," shaped like a curved jewel, nestled in its emerald silk, would be slowly crushed? That this dark, dull stone, in its modest case of varnished wood, could be the crucible of age-old art?

Since ancient China, the ink stick and inkstone (along with paintbrush and paper) were part of the "Four Treasures of the Study," also known as calligraphy. While the ink stick is made by moulding a solution of hardened rubber, resulting from burning fat or tree branches, the inkstone is crafted from carved stone—usually

shale, which is how it gets its darker colour. The Duan inkstone exhibited at the museum was sculpted in Zhaoqing—a prefecture-level city in the Guangdong province in southern China—in a regional variety of polished volcanic tuff (which gives it its subtle purple hue). The bas-relief design on top represents a dragon, soaring through the clouds in pursuit of a pearl of wisdom.

Sister Maria Bourdeau's work on Manchurian customs and traditions around 1930 demonstrates the significant effort it took to adapt to a new reality: "For the missionaries, the study of [Chinese] characters is difficult. Our alphabet contains 26 letters; in China, there are 40,566 characters, only 4,000 of which are in common usage." Speaking to immigrants visiting the museum, it's evident these "challenges and adventures in faraway lands" that awaited the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception also awaited these immigrants, who had much to overcome to begin their new lives in Québec.

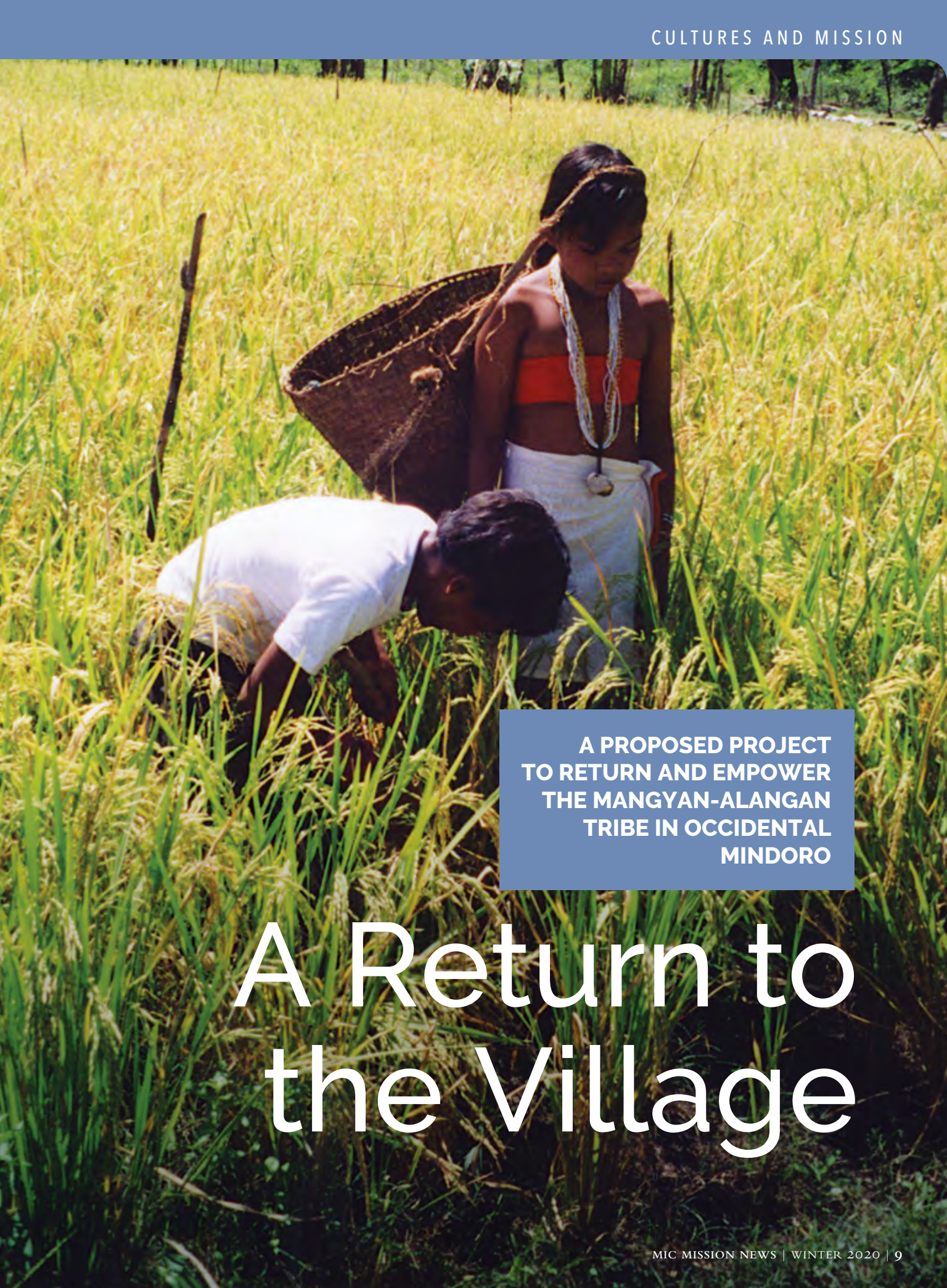
This leap into the unknown—at the heart of the missionary ideal—is echoed in the immigrant experience. Every object, every visit reminds us of this: Communication is not a one-way street. Becoming familiar with the other, learning their story and culture takes patience, compassion and curiosity—the very conditions of sharing.

Photo:
Inkstone

Sources:
MIC Archives

Délia-Tétreault Museum

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

A Return to the Village

(Part 1)

There are approximately 370 million indigenous peoples spanning seventy countries worldwide.¹ The Indigenous Peoples are culturally distinct individuals and societies. Their identities are linked to the land in which they live, and on which they depend on for survival. In the Philippines, the Mangyans² of Mindoro have their own language and cultural identity. Their history has been linked with their relentless struggle to claim their ancestral lands. Even if protection has been sealed through the *UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* drafted on September 13, 2007,³ the slow process of addressing their clamor for their ancestral domain has been disregarded and downplayed by the local government and politically influential lowland Filipinos.

Thus, the struggle to secure the ancestral domains of the Alangan Mangyans has become a rallying cry of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, particularly of Sr. Beverly Romualdo. Working with the members of that tribe, the Sisters have realized there was potent ground of revival and assurance of the fulfilment of the desire for self-determination.



Photos: Page 9: In a rice field, an Alangan-Mangyan woman in traditional attire with a helper; Above: Sr. Lilia Frondosa at the special ceremony of a milk pig. *Photos Credit: C. Hong, M.I.C.*

¹ See <https://www.iwgia.org/en/indigenous-world/retrieved on January 2018>.

² There are 8 different Mangyan groups (Iraya, Alangan, Tadyawan, Tau-buid, Bangon, Buhid, Hanunoo and Ratagnon) on the Island of Mindoro and all are distinctively different including their languages. Mangan is just the collective term used for the indigenous peoples found on Mindoro.

³ <https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenous-peoples/declaration-on-the-rights-of-indigenous-peoples.html/retrieved on January 2018>. The UN declaration emphasizes the rights of Indigenous peoples to maintain and strengthen their own institution, cultures and tradition and to pursue their development in accordance with their aspiration and needs.



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

The Alangan Magyans' Struggle for Self-Determination

The Alangan Mangyans are found in the municipalities of Naujan, Baco, San Teodoro, and Victoria in Oriental Mindoro, and in the municipality of Sablayan in Occidental Mindoro. The term Alangan was derived from the name of a river and mountain slopes in the upper Alangan Valley.⁴ Traditionally, women wear a skirt called *lingeb* with the g-string called *abayen*. The upper covering is called *ulango*, made from the leaf of the wild buri palm. The men wear g-strings with fringes in front.

The Alangan Mangyans practice *swidden* agriculture/slash and burn cultivation, a technique of rotational farming.⁵ Like all other Mangyan tribes, the Alangans chew Betel nut all day long so as to numb their feeling of hunger. However, betel chewing also has a social dimension. Exchange of betel chew ingredients signifies social acceptance. The Mangyans were the first to inhabit the island of Mindoro, comprising ten percent of the whole Mindoro population. For centuries, they lived peacefully along the coastal areas of Oriental Mindoro, where they fished for a living. That was until migrants from nearby islands settled on the island. To avoid disputes, the mild-mannered and peace-loving people gave up their land, moved to the mountains, and came down only for food and other necessities.

Sadly, they have been treated as second class citizens like other indigenous peoples in the world. For years, they have been exploited, neglected and discriminated against by lowlanders. They have experienced being misjudged as uneducated and uncivilized people. They often struggle with poverty. They survive by farming root crops and fruits; the only livelihood they know. They resent the Tagalog settlers who drove them away to the remote mountainous areas. Tagalog planters employ them for “dirty work” such as cleaning the plantations from unwanted plants or even converting forests into plantations which contributes to further reduction of their habitats.

It is in Mindoro Occidental that Sr. Beverly Romualdo started her missionary battle for the protection of rights of the Alangan Mangyans' ancestral domains.

The journey as “Kaagapay”

Sister Beverly has been a co-traveller of the Alangan Mangyans in their quest for their land. As an MIC Sister committed to the mission of the congregation, she has found her place as a “kaagapay”—a fellow sojourner in the struggles of the Alangan Mangyans against discrimination, abuse and oppression. In many instances of her life, she questioned her calling as a co-journeyer, a protector, and as a front-liner in the defense of the tribe. She often mulled over the question: *Is being a “kaagapay” a fulfillment of my missionary zeal and my calling as a religious?*

Her narrative is replete with joyous encounters and empowering boldness as she became the voice, the hands, and legs of this tribe. With them she has encountered her caring God for the marginalized and the oppressed. Time with the Alangan Mangyans has been redemptive moments wherein God's presence could be felt and experienced.

She found relief in the Indigenous People Right Act (RA 8371) which emphasizes the importance of their right to self-determination, respect for the dignity of their values, traditions, practices and institution. Propelled by the love for the marginalized Alangan Mangyans, Sister Beverly worked to help them fulfill their desire which was to claim their ancestral lands and to be equally recognized as active participants in public decision-making and self-organization.

The Phenomenological study of Gatdula (2012) reveals how crucial is the issue of ancestral land ownership. For the Mangyans, land is sacred. It gives life to all peoples on earth. Their identity, culture, traditions are linked to the land. It is on their land that the values of sharing, ecological integrity and non-possessiveness are made more palpable. It is not just their home. It denotes their roots, their heritage, and their life. ☞

⁴ Leykamm, 1979;

⁵ Quiaoit, 1997

What I Have, I Give to You

The MAHEREZA Center is a social, medical, and cultural center at the service of the human person. It is under the direction of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and is located in a poor section of the Capital Antananarivo, Madagascar. Our motto is: *As passionate disciples of Jesus' mission, we witness the joy of the gospel to the world.* Everything we do is for the good of the people and the glory of God.

By Noëlline Rasoafara, M.I.C.

Photos: N. Rasoafara, M.I.C.



There is a decreasing number of children suffering from malnutrition

Infants from six months to five years of age, who are undernourished, receive their midday food portion from a health care agent and they are checked by a doctor every week-end. BRAVO... and THANK YOU to all our benefactors.

School age children take their lunch at the school canteen. For the poorest ones, this is their only daily meal.



Dentistry responds to a crying need due to poor dental hygiene

This is a rare service which is greatly appreciated by the population. Approximately four hundred fifty patients, per month, come for treatments.



Support is given to poor children and families who wish to pursue their studies and realize their dreams

The enrollment counts one hundred forty-five students classified in three groups: the first, second and third year. They are forty-five in the third year preparing for their exams.

Empowerment and literacy for the youth


Currently there are sixty-seven young girls, age fifteen and older, who have learning disabilities are being taught and guided.



Our dispensary is a LIFE center...

...we struggle against infantile mortality by means of prevention. We observe very closely the pregnant mothers from conception to delivery followed by post-natal check-ups.



We take this opportunity to thank all our benefactors who have been so generous. Thank you for supporting us in our mission work which helps so many individuals to stand tall with dignity. By means of our magazine *MIC Mission News* we are able to communicate with you the successful stories which are the fruits of your generous sharing. We are most grateful and may you be Blessed a hundredfold in return. 

ECOLOGY CONVENTION -URGENT INITIATIVES TO BE TAKEN

By Lilia Frondosa, M.I.C.

Sister Regina Villarte, M.I.C. Provincial Superior of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in the Philippines, requested Sr. Librada Bantilan and Sr. Lilia Frondosa to attend a National Convention of Diocesan and Religious Ecology Ministers. The convention was organized by the URGENT INITIATIVES, spearheaded by a group of different non-government organizations and Catholic Ecological Ministries implementing the Encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si'*. The conveners of URGENT INITIATIVES were: Bishop Broderick Pabillo, Father Pete Montallana and Yeb Sano of Greepeace Southeast Asia.

There were forty-five dioceses who responded out of eighty-five. There were four bishops, twenty parish priests, twenty-five religious sisters and fifty lay persons from all over Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao.

The purpose of this convention was to hasten the healing of Mother Earth by proposing a FIVE YEAR ROAD MAP towards a CARBON-FREE PILIPINAS. The road map recommends that all families convert to the ecological values stated in *Laudato Si'*: Internalizing one's interconnectedness with nature like the indigenous people practice every day, develop a simple lifestyle, etc.



There were three speakers. Mr. Yeb Sano from Greenpeace Southeast Asia presented: *Climate Change and the Urgency to Act*. Attorney Genee Mislang from Tanggol Kalikasan and head of the Alternative Law Groups presented: *Responding to Ecological Challenges: Legal and Extra-Legal Options*. Bishop Broderick Pabillo, from CBCP¹, spoke on *Ecological Spirituality*.

Other topics were presented in light of ecological challenges experienced by different groups from Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. Better practices were introduced in areas of illegal logging and mining; in the management of ancestral domains, rivers, seas and coastal areas, garbage, organic farming, etc...

To better adapt to climate change, the following were proposed:

- 1) Adopt a simple life style; pray for ecological conversion; prefer walking if possible; lower electrical and water consumption.
- 2) Dispose waste properly: sort out what can be recycled or used as organic fertilizer, eco bricks, etc.
- 3) Plant and cultivate, protect the trees, encourage urban gardening and natural farming.
- 4) Recruit families, and neighbors to organize groups in towns and provinces to lobby for environmental policies.
- 5) Elect candidates who defend the environment.

Sr. Lilia J. Frondoza, M.I.C. was one of those who presented a report concerning practical examples of the MICs' apostolate among the Indigenous Peoples: Mangyans, Irayas and the Alangans. Her video entitled: *"The Mangyans, our Brother, our Responsibility"* was not projected but copies were transferred to the participants' USB flash drives.

Every day, the conference started with a prayer and meditation on God's Creation; it ended with a mass celebrated by the different bishops and participating priests.

Letters were prepared urging government officials, bishops, clergy, religious men and women, lay faithful, to heed the call of UN world-wide scientists who repeat that unless we do something drastic to repair our common home, we will all regret the consequences. In October 2018, at the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate scientists warned: *There is only a dozen years for global warming to be kept to a maximum of 1.5C, beyond which even half a degree will significantly worsen the risks of drought, floods, extreme heat and poverty for hundreds of millions of people.* ∞

¹ Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines

Photo: Participants at the National Convention

Photo Credit: From the Convention

The Courage of a Woman

There are families who live a harmonious, happy life with all the necessary things they need for a good livelihood; meanwhile, others have to fight to survive. Sister Noëlline works in a poor district of Tsaramasay, Madagascar. Confronted with the misery of the people, she asks herself many questions.

By Noëlline Rasoafara, M.I.C.

The following is a true story which awakens our consciousness to the fact that certain women must struggle alone to assure the future of their children. Working with them, we become more aware of the necessity and need of greater solidarity between people in order to realize the dream of a new humanity.

Mr. Rakotoarivelo, forty-five years of age, was a blacksmith and father of three children. Unfortunately, he died of cancer on July 8, 2018. His wife, Augustine, thirty-three years of age was pregnant with their third child. The loss of her husband was heartbreaking. She and her husband did not have a scholarly education needed to confront life's demands. Her situation became precarious; to earn the family's daily bread, she had to accept doing peoples' laundry.

Augustine's second born child suffers from an inguinal hernia. She is trying to find a way for him to be operated and taken care of. Fortunately, the family receives some help from our Mahereza nutritional center.



Photo Credit: N. Rasoafara, M.I.C.

All the pre-natal consultations and Augustine's caesarian operation were assumed by the Mahereza Center. The post-natal check-ups were also done at our center, including health care and vaccination.

For rent, the mother pays 8,75 euros per month (9.64 USD). The small family lives in one room, the space is sectioned in half for the bedroom and the kitchen. The daily expense is 1 euro, for food. She does not have the means to pay for electricity therefore at night a candle lights the small room.

The death of Mr. Rakotoarivelo has left this widow with very little to live by, but she tries to take care of her children the best way she possibly can. In spite of the difficulties, she hopes to offer her children a happy childhood and she is ready to sacrifice herself to assure them a better future. ☞

Bloom and Make the World Beautiful



By Ruth Christine Nyalazi, M.I.C.

Each year we have the joy of welcoming candidates who feel called to the religious life in our congregation. The local MIC communities who are designated to introduce the aspirants to a new way of life realize that they have a delicate task. Having been some years in such a position, one comes to realize that it is God who works in the hearts of the aspirants. I am always amazed to see the transformation which gradually takes place in the lives of those young adults who aspire to follow Christ.

Here, at the English Novitiate of Baguio, St. Joseph Province, in the Philippines, we observe this little miracle each year, in May, when the novices begin their formation — their spiritual journey. In 2019, four young women namely: Elizabeth Oang Nguyen Thi and Mary Nhuong Nguyen Thi from Vietnam as well as Rabecah Wiseman Nzunga and Anastazia Zimba from Malawi, Africa happily began their journey with a creative symbol representing their unity and joy of being together and from diverse backgrounds. Colorful flowers surrounding a lit candle stood on a drawn circle of hands; it stood for Christ who will help them blossom and live together as a family. They understand very well the meaning of diversity; their sincerity and openness toward others are assets to succeed their new way of life. Every day, we see them working, praying, recreating together. Their attitude reminds us of the true nature of Mother Délia's dream, i.e. diversity in its purest sense. These young

women are not defensive; their deepest desire is to consecrate their life to God and live life to its fullest, including accepting surprises. Leaving behind their family, their homeland and the Postulate where they received their initial training in religious life, they arrive in a new environment, certainly sympathetic but somewhat different. However, this does not destabilize them, they quickly adapt. They interact with workers, visitors, they admire the beauty of nature, the dogs, the rabbits, and all of creation. As they take part in many activities they slowly integrate and enjoy every moment of life.

Here in Baguio, the people bless us with their presence and freely interact with the novices while sharing life's precious moments. Their parental support motivates young people to feel at home and to experience a touch of God's love.


In the course of their formation, the novices experience being transformed by a life of prayer, silence, conferences, and daily chores. Some MIC Sisters in the province accept coming to the novitiate to give courses. Sr. Nancy Vyso who lives in Manila is one who lovingly gives her time for the novices. With her, they experience faith-filled moments with God, self, and others. Despite life's difficulties they dare to embrace healing and complete transformation; they have role models who can engage them at deeper levels.

PHOTO:
Junior MIC Sisters
in formation with
Sr. Nancy Vyso, M.I.C.
(center) – Philippines
Photo Credit:
R. Nyalazi, M.I.C.




This gives the novices the impetus to commit themselves in the life of the local Church at one village Chapel of Tocmo where they lead the Sunday services when the priest is not available. With the help of Sr. Melanie Delfin, M.I.C. and AsMIC members, they offer catechism classes to the nearby school every Tuesday. Besides giving communion to the elderly, and accompanying children in the surrounding community, they are Eucharistic ministers at St. Joseph Parish. They are happy to undergo the training needed for this special ministry. One novice said: *I receive communion,*

but I never thought that one day I would hold Jesus myself and give Him to others. What a joy, what a blessing. This is part of their dream as they search for meaning. To give Jesus to the world, making the world a beautiful place. Mother Délia said: *If we would really understand our vocation, we would die of happiness.* It is our commitment to nurture our MIC vocation, to become beacons of hope and joy for them and to help them find their true call *that they too may sing God's goodness for centuries to come.* ☺



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The MIC Sisters in Latin America / Photo Credit: MIC

A Facet of Mission

Internationality and Globalization: Effects on Life in Mission

By **Monique Fortier, M.I.C.**

The grand missionary dream of Mother Délia, we, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, have been living it for more than one hundred years. Throughout the years, it adapted to the changes of time, according to the needs of the peoples. In the twenty-first century, the world lives in the age of globalization. In large cities, there is a mix of cultures and modern communications have eliminated all frontiers. Where I live, the M.I.C. Province consists of two countries namely Peru and Bolivia. We are twenty-nine Sisters from six different nationalities: Peruvian, Bolivian, Chilean, Madagascan, Haitian and Canadian; together we share fraternal life. The age range is between thirty to seventy-six years; two postulants are in their twenties. We

can say that we know about the intercultural and intergenerational realities. It is most challenging because it requires attentive listening, it demands understanding, dialogue and readiness to forgive. Another factor to consider is that our education, our ways of thinking and doing are very different.

An anecdote on this subject. My religious training took place in South America. The eve before my entrance to the novitiate in Peru, I and other novices decided to decorate the community room for the event. We traced and cut letters of a long sentence once spoken by our Mother Foundress; it took us a lot of time to finalize our goal. The day following the celebration, we had to take down those letters. I removed them delicately so as not to ruin the paper lettering,

but a Peruvian Sister tore down the letters one after the other. This bothered me. So, I brought to her attention the fact she could no longer use those letters if she ripped them apart. She replied: *But, as we are doing this together, has it not been pleasant to share our life experiences?* It was the efficient Canadian confronted by the Peruvian who privileged the relationship.

We both had our reasons, it was a question of priority and values. Living together, differences even out. What is important and keeps us united in fraternity is our faith in God's love and the call we received to witness Him who wants happiness to be in every human heart. Pope Francis marvels us as his spirituality corresponds to ours when he says: *The important thing is to live the joy of the Gospel.*

Intercultural living helps us better understand our adopted compatriots and opens us to unconditional acceptance, compassion, mercy, tolerance, forgiveness; all are possible and can help us become happier. Our spirituality of Thanksgiving helps us to always perceive the good, the beautiful, and with certitude see the presence of a loving, compassionate God in people, in events and even in trials.

In Peru, we live with the poorest, those who are in the Andes and the Amazon. In periphery to the City of Pucallpa, we have a house and in a disadvantaged area of Lima we have a college. Every Saturday, some Sisters take public transportation, often overcrowded, for a five hour ride to reach a region that has been destroyed by the heavy rains and landslides in 2016; they participate in the people's communal activities and encourage them in various ways.

Our revenues are limited; the only lucrative work we have is the college in Lima, where we maintain low scholarly fees in order to allow young people from modest families to have a sound education embodying Christian values. This college can remain open thanks to the generous donations we receive from organizations and benefactors who come to us as Divine Providence. Though globalization is criticized, we must not forget to recognize its

benefits. There are no more frontiers to spread goodness.

To participate in mission means: educating children, offering them a good meal at noon, giving women sewing courses as a means to support their families, providing medical help to sick people and offering the Word of God to people in remote regions. A chain of evangelical love is becoming stronger by way of material donations, the evolving interest in mission works, through our magazine MIC Mission News and prayers. God sends us and so do the generous people of our homeland, for without families, friends, and benefactors, mission would be impossible. We are there in the name of a Church, that of Quebec, and in the name of all those who believe in us and support us.

To love God and neighbor is to open our eyes to all that is good and beautiful in our world. During my short stay in Quebec, I travelled by way of public transportation. I have the chance of understanding three languages and I found it

interesting to hear people talk. One day, on the bus, two new arrivals were talking together. One said she was doing volunteer work. The other replied it was enough for her to learn French and to work. The first woman explained to

The important
thing is to live the
joy of the Gospel.

her that volunteer work was a part of the Quebec culture and it was a way to be better integrated and know the people of her new country. I must say that I felt really proud. *Volunteer work is part of our culture!*

We have a country that has been blessed and our people are generous. I hear a great deal of criticism regarding individualism and consumerism, but there is also much sharing, solidarity, and love of neighbor. Though I am aware that religious practice has diminished, Christian values have remain an identity of our people. Jesus Christ is always present in Quebec and that fills me with joy and thanksgiving.

With all my heart and in the name of all the MIC Sisters in South America, we *"thank you"* for participating in our mission. Keep us in your prayers and be assured that we keep you in ours. ☺

One Hundred Years – Yet Still Youthful!

In May 2020, our magazine *Le Précurseur*¹ will be celebrating its centennial. Through this publication, Délia Tétreault, our Foundress, wanted to make known the mission works of the MIC Sisters who were sent abroad. She once said: *I believe that it is a God given grace to missionaries that distance does not separate them from those they leave behind.* To achieve her goal, Délia applied the new technologies of her era.

¹ *Le Précurseur* – its English counterpart *MIC Mission News* began 3 years later in 1923.

By Marie Rosette Lafortune, M.I.C.

In May 1920, the first edition of *Le Précurseur* was introduced to the public. It became the tree from which each province of the Institute would come to gather information and discuss/share on the subject matter, thus building solidarity and a team spirit; it also enabled the Sisters to take up the different challenges that come with mission. They wove a communication network called *life-giving testimonies and evangelization*.

Two witnesses who have been touched by what they read in *Le Précurseur* accepted to relate their experiences.

AN MIC ASSOCIATE SPEAKS:

Evangelization can be considered as the Word that is read, heard, meditated, and shared. Mrs. Fritz Brunache tells us how she has been touched.

I am Cayenne, i.e. from Les Cayes, Haiti. I taught for forty years, twenty of which was in a congregational school. I considered this career to be a vocation. One day, an AsMIC (MIC Associate) invited me to a reunion animated by Sr. Laurence Tourigny, M.I.C. From my very first contact with *Le Précurseur*, I felt in communion with the life of Mother Délia, that sun which projects its rays as far as the horizon on a summer morning. *When*



Mrs. Fritz Brunache, AsMIC

we are joyful, we run, we fly, obstacles become lighter, said Délia. I soon understood that even when confronted with difficulties, our heart must project hope. Since that day, I have been enriched by those reunions and for me *smiling* has become a virtue. In his fanciful way, God has attracted me to him and his presence is deeply felt. Whether I am with my apostolic groups, the choir or the sick people I visit on a regular basis, my heart sings of God's love. Sincere thank you for the one hundred years of witnessing the Good News via this mission magazine *Le Précurseur*.

A FORMER STUDENT TESTIFIES:

We met and interviewed Mr. Pierre Éril, a former student of an MIC school in Coteaux. His spontaneity, his joy, seemed to resonate with the rhythm of a centennial which *Le Précurseur* will be celebrating.

Mr. Éril, would you speak to us about your experiences with the MIC Sisters?

It is a pleasure for me to greet all the readers of this magazine. My name is Pierre Éril Charles. I grew up with the MIC Sisters at Coteaux, south of Haiti. I was in an elementary all boys' school when Sr. Louise Gauvin asked the director to send her some young students who could collaborate in a pastoral evangelization project. The goal was to initiate the boys in becoming witnesses of the faith.

How did the initiation process unfold?

I have many good memories of the formation we received. Sister Louise thought I was alert, dynamic, joyful, devoted, and wise. I learned so much from the Sisters; they taught us how to lead a choir, how to prepare sound commentaries for the Mass, how to read well the liturgy of the Word, how to prepare bouquets for the altar and decorate the church, in other words, it was liturgical art in general. After my primary education I went to secondary school where Sr. Louise taught me to become a God-loving man. After a natural disaster, she one day said to me: *God lives in us and is with us in all situations, but he wants to act with us, not without us.* With time, I became her pastoral assistant. One day, while going through some printed materials, I came across *Le Précurseur*; as I looked at the photos, the missionary aspect inspired me to follow that road.

Are you still being motivated by the pastoral formation you received?

I sincerely feel proud to be involved in the mission of the Church. The latter has become for me a place where I am re-energized. God is at the center of my life, and I feel I am a laborer in his garden. Currently, I work for Les Cayes



Mr. Pierre Éril Charles

Diocese. My apostolate includes: catechesis, pastoral care of the family, training chapel directors, choir accompaniment. I am a member of the Cathedral's parish council, and director of the education program for the Catholic schools in Les Cayes. All this knowledge I owe to Sr. Catherine Drolet and to Sr. Louise Gauvin who was a mother to me.

What images come to your mind when you think about those faith educators?

The Sisters touched our lives and lived our realities in many ways. They did not measure the extent of difficulties they met. We saw them travelling on horseback to the remotest areas, crossing rivers, mountains and valleys, to reach the hearts and to evangelize. Those images say much about their faith-filled dedication.

In conclusion, the Sisters witnessed God at work; they instilled in the youth a sense of God and of his creation. May the flowers of *Le Précurseur* continue garnishing the field of evangelization.

Our duty it to sow and God takes care of the harvest. This mission magazine does not only speak of memorable experiences but has become a way of evangelization. 🌿

A photograph of a man and a woman in a room with a white brick wall and a large window. The man is standing on the left, wearing a brown blazer and white trousers. The woman is sitting on a black stool in the center, wearing a white blouse and brown skirt. To the right, a harp and a cello are visible on the wooden floor.

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*Someone listens,
someone shares,
Someone hears,
and someone cares,
Someone says
a kindly word
And joy and hope
are gently stirred.*

*Someone is
in need of you,
Needs a cheerful
line or two,
Be the one to
light their day,
Sending happiness
their way.*

*Someone needs
a friendly smile,
Just to make their
day worthwhile,
Show a little
kindness too,
And kindness will
return to you.*

Iris Hesselden

