

# MIC MISSION NEWS

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*To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923*

*100 Years  
of an Undaunted Mission*

## *One Day at a Time...*



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

## MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS - 2021

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

### JANUARY

**Prayer intention for evangelization –  
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

**Universal prayer intention – Listen  
to the Migrants' Cries:** We pray that the  
cries of our migrant brothers and sisters,  
victims of criminal human smuggling  
and human trafficking, may be heard  
and considered.

### MARCH

**Prayer intention for evangelization  
– 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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# A Star Named HOPE

In sports, there is always a rising star, that has value and supports the dynamism of the team for a victorious year. At the beginning of this year, I am sending you a star of hope, we need it after the surprises of 2020. This pandemic has caused many projects to tumble, bringing down structures that seemed to be solid. It has come knocking at our door and, in spite of us, has invaded us, changed our habits and created a new society where distancing, wearing face coverings, washing our hands and restricting gatherings become an obligation.

Our poor leaders no longer know what to do about this continuing situation. How can we convince a population to remain serene and optimistic in spite of everything? We feel our smallness before a future that does not depend only on us.

### HOWEVER...

We can consider another aspect of the situation: raise your head, keep confidence. How many people did not let themselves be discouraged by this uncontrollable situation? They have been creative, inventive, persevering, hence teleworking, virtual classes, meetings on the Internet... Even sports and concerts are growing and captivating our attention.

We are given several examples of people who have earned the Star of Hope and have kept their focus on their goal. Others before us have survived tragic situations, be it in Cuba, Africa or simply young people like Guillaume or that young Haitian woman who won the *Plume d'Or* at the *Alliance Française*. All of them have lived one



Photo: Shutterstock.com

day at a time and consider the future with a look full of hope.

Let us re-read Charles Péguy's poem on 'Little Hope', a beneficial source of reflection. *What amazes me, says God, is hope. And I can't believe it. It crosses the worlds and forges ahead. It leads, it loves... and makes everyone walk.*<sup>1</sup>

Hope makes us recognize the meaning of life, the beauty and the depth of the human being, it has a price and nothing is fatal. There is always a light at the end of the tunnel.

May the New Year shine in our eyes and warm our hearts. We are not alone, God is with us and he loves each of his children and takes care of us.

I send to each one of you this star called Hope, may it accompany you every day of this new year.

Happy reading! ☺

*Mireille-Paula Sanfey, m.i.c.*

<sup>1</sup> Charles Péguy (1873-1914)

# *A New World...*

## ONE DAY AT A TIME!



Photo: André Gadbois



**By André Gadbois**

For 45 years, Diane and I have been fortunate to live in the same house, the one we built with our hands and with the help of our friends. On this entirely wooded lot, accessible by a narrow path, we had to clear a space by cutting down several large trees to build it in the right place and thus admire a kind of new world before us. We still live in this wonderful home! Our children have grown up here and often come to celebrate or

have their children looked after. Every morning, a huge piece of cultivated land greets us; every season it teaches us about the beauty and growth of nature. Gradually, over the years, friendly neighbors have come to join us; they build, they improve the surroundings and, one day at a time, they bring us the very best of themselves. At the end of the street an elementary school was built. This educational facility opened the doors to people who have great hearts and who wish to build a better world. Our little road, though

narrow at the beginning, became a street where interaction and sharing have become a wealth in itself.

### TAKE THE TIME

A name was given to that piece of cultivated land. Knowing that creation comes forth from an Infinite Mind, we called it our Master Land. As we contemplate its vastness and changing decor, it knows how to renew us, to comfort us, to uplift us, to welcome us at all times. How faithful it is to its purpose, yet how often we neglect it. Spending time in presence of its silence, daring to be neutral as we contemplate its seasons can help us come to terms with our own dead ends or our growing progress. To disconnect ourselves from our day of hard work, from the stress of driving home and to release the fatigue by simply caressing and conscientiously feeling the texture of the earth can be very beneficial. In silence, it will do its work and renew you.

### TOWARDS A NEW WORLD

In our early years, as a couple, we lived in the city for practical reasons: my work, the birth of our first child and second one on the way. However, with time, we became disenchanted with the hustling and bustling of city life. Since we both loved nature, we broadened our thinking: Why not build ourselves a *new world*. The idea began to take shape and danced for joy. We chose our spot, away from city life and where, one day at a time, we could be reborn, grow, trust and sing with Félix Leclerc: *See the flowers have started again. In the stable the newborns cry out. Come and see the old rusty fence covered with cobwebs. The buds come out of death, Butterflies have golden coats. Near the streams are lined up fairies. And toads sing of freedom, and toads sing of freedom...*

Letting go of an important part of the past, daring to embark on the construction of an imposing change and TRUSTING in oneself and in one's companion and friends require a lot of solidarity. This new world has allowed us to reduce the pressures of daily life a little, to find time to relax, to welcome each season with pleasure and happiness, to live one day at a time. 🌸



## VENERABLE DÉLIA TÉTREULT 1865 – 1941

FOUNDRESS OF THE FIRST MISSIONARY  
COMMUNITY OF THE AMERICAS:

MISSIONARY SISTERS  
OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

*May gratitude fill your life,  
may it overflow!*

(DÉLIA TÉTREULT)

Lord,  
You who put in Délia Tétreault's heart  
An extraordinary capacity for wonder,  
Teach me today to see the beautiful, the good  
And the wonderful in the universe  
And in the people I meet.

You gave Délia  
The wisdom to glimpse the sun beyond the storm.  
Keep my heart open and sensitive  
To the abundance of Your blessings.  
May the recognition of these blessings  
Help me to overcome with confidence  
The difficult moments of this day.  
  
May Your grace always be with me!

Amen

(DÉLIA-TÉTREULT MUSEUM)

# Giving Meaning to Life

Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen said, "Life is monotonous if it is meaningless; it is not monotonous if it has a purpose." I like that! Certainly in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic that has shaken the world since the end of last year, if one is not vigilant, life can seem meaningless. We may tend to live in fear, helplessness and stagnation in the way we use our time and resources.



By Cecilia Mzumara, M.I.C.

## ABOLISH SOCIAL INJUSTICES

In some cases, life has changed for better or worse. In Malawi, for example, political and economic life has come to a halt in recent years, particularly following the failed presidential elections in May 2019. Malawi's judiciary took the bold decision to cancel the May 2019 presidential elections and called for their re-run a year later. Citizens reacted; they were fed up with corruption and political domination.

This 6<sup>th</sup> poorest country in the world (according to its Gross Domestic Product) proved that "human poverty" is caused by social injustice and corrupt political systems. They degrade human life, promote the widening of the gap between rich and poor and are against the common good. These evils cannot be allowed to reign indefinitely. We need a class of leaders who enhance local production, job creation, fair incomes and promote the well-being of the majority of the population.

## A NEW DAWN

Thus, on June 23, 2020, Malawi experienced a new dawn of freedom with free and fair presidential elections that resulted in a new political leadership of a government of national unity. In the midst of Covid-19, the people dared to vote for a new leadership for a just political governance

that will hopefully fight the social ills perpetuating abject poverty. Indeed, the old leadership has been replaced by the opposition parties. Since then, the violent mass demonstrations have given way to a certain calm that once again reigns over our nation!

## AND COVID-19?

At the same time, we are pleased that in Malawi and Zambia, the number of new Covid-19 cases is decreasing. In our community groups, where we are trying to stay home and protect ourselves, we have realized that something new has emerged. The freshness and changes we are experiencing in all spheres of life can only be attributed to the power of the Holy Spirit who transforms us from within and makes our world a better place to live in despite the challenges and crosses of life.

Therefore, as our venerable Mother Délia said: *Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with his gifts... and often invoke the Blessed Virgin under the title of Our Lady of Good Counsel. [With them] you cannot fail to do an excellent job.* We put our trust in God hoping against all hope until the end of the Covid-19 pandemic. May all of us, with hearts full of gratitude and hope, continue to do our best to give meaning to our lives today and always. 🙏



# The Story of a Lifetime

In February of the year 2020, Sister Jeanne Ostiguy, M.I.C., celebrated 75 years of consecrated life. She is a woman who fascinates me. I love to watch her live. At first glance, there is nothing flamboyant about her, but she irradiates a light that shines through her whole person. In the life of this 94-year-old religious, simplicity and nobility meet, joy and peace embrace.



By Marie-Nadia Noël, M.I.C.

## THE CHARACTER

Sr. Jeanne has a fragile appearance and a calm voice. However, a surprising inner strength and a firm will emerge from her frail body. When she looks at you, a spark of humor, a sign of her lively spirit, shines in her eyes.

As a young girl, she already possessed the qualities that were to make her a missionary with a great heart: the sixth of nine children, from deeply Christian parents, she liked to participate in the activities of her parish. After a three-day retreat, she entered the M.I.C. convent on February 1, 1943. She was only 16 years old. After a period of formation lasting 5 years, she left for Cuba.

## A JOURNEY AS A FIGHTER

Sr. Jeanne admits being surprised at the turn her life has taken. She wanted to consecrate herself to God out of fear, to *win her heaven*. She believed that a life given to God could bring salvation. *I went from fear to total self-giving*. The 54 years she lived in Cuba shaped her being.

She was part of the first group of M.I.C. Sisters sent to Cuba in 1943. She was in charge of the kitchen at the boarding school in Colón and of the catechesis offered to the women of the area. A mission that she carried out with joy and dedication. A few years later, however, the mission took a new turn.



Photo: Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Felipe Pérez Valencia in his thesis, *The Cuban Catholic Church, Between Political and Ecclesiastical Reform*, relates that in Cuba, in January 1959, the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista was overthrown and replaced by a revolutionary government of Marxist orientation headed by Fidel Castro. He writes how, between 1959 and 1960, the new administration adopted a set of laws aimed at

eliminating the bases of the capitalist system and initiating the construction of a new society of a socialist nature, a prelude to a communist system<sup>1</sup>. This meant the nationalization of all institutions. During this period, the nuns, religious men and women and priests who worked in Cuba had the choice of staying or leaving the island.

Sr. Jeanne was part of the group of missionaries who chose to stay. For her, this decision was a difficult experience but was rich in teachings. *I wanted to be with the people in their emancipation, their quest for freedom.* The road traveled by the Cuban Church has been painful, but at the same time, it has been full of life and hope. Finding new forms of presence after the nationalization of institutions was not easy, it was necessary to be inventive. *I was afraid but I was there. Eliette Gagnon, M.I.C., was a good animator for us,* Sr. Jeanne later confided to us. *The human being needs solidarity to face the difficulties of life,* writes Pope Francis in his new encyclical: *No one can face life in isolation.[...] We need a community that supports us, that helps us and in which we help each other to look ahead*<sup>2</sup>. These are years of proven fidelity, of trusting surrender into God's hands. Sr. Jeanne's fidelity to the Lord is proportionate to her love for her brothers and sisters. *Hope made me dare and I believe I did well.* Although aware of the difficulties and dangers, Sr. Jeanne went out to meet people with the attitude of a simple and ready-to-serve person.




In Cuba, Sr. Jeanne in the middle of her catechists – Photo: M.I.C.

Indeed, Sr. Jeanne, who at first feared for her salvation, now knows that she is loved with unconditional love. *It is at the end of one's journey that one truly discovers the heart of God.* She has always been at the service of life. She has been close to the poor, the abandoned, the sick, the marginalized. With them, she has rekindled the candle of hope.


Our creative freedom has the power to transform us into a sign of life and hope where despair reigns. A special thanks to Sr. Jeanne who, each day at the time of our prayerful meeting, lights the candle of hope. 🕯

<sup>1</sup> Felipe Pérez Valencia, *L'Église catholique cubaine, entre réforme politique et réforme ecclésiale : la réception du concile Vatican II à Cuba (1963-1998)*, Doctoral Thesis in Religious Sciences, p. 146.

<sup>2</sup> Fratelli Tutti (8).



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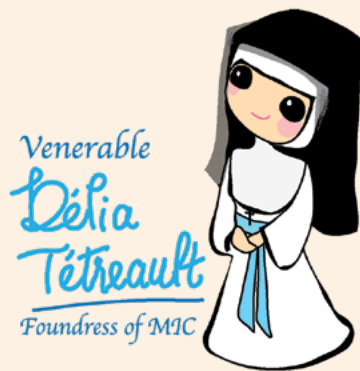
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# Hong Kong, Good Hope School

*An original way to animate the students with the caricatures of the artist Yvy Chan. Under the fairy fingers of the artist, the caricatures come to life to deliver their message of hope, joy, peace and to make our foundress Délia Tétreault known in a pleasant way. An original idea by Sr. Pauline Yuen, Director.*



Venerable Délia Tétreault,  
foundress of the MIC



Délia's friendly greeting:  
*Hello everyone!*



No, it's not okay, life brings  
its share of difficulties.



Let's walk together,  
our responsibility is  
to create joy.



Let's give happiness  
generously. Let's sow joy!



Let us keep our hope  
and live in the present  
moment. It is the only thing  
that belongs to us.

# Wendell, a Star in the Firmament of Haitian Literature



By Louis Gary Cyprien

Even in the tumult of its permanent crises, recurring instability and extreme poverty, Haiti, from time to time, wants to show the world that it is a land of stars in literature. The latest is Frantzie Wendell Monexile. This name has been written in gold letters in the global landscape of the French-speaking world since this twenty-year-old girl was crowned winner of the *Plume d'Or 2020*, an annual competition for students of the *Alliances Françaises*, of foreign nationality.

Of the thirty-two (32) winners from ten (10) different countries for this 2020 contest, four (4) are from Haiti.

## WHO IS WENDELL?

Wendell presents herself as a fighter, a dreamer who, thanks to her motivation and her faith in God, sets no limits to her ambitions. Raised in a modest family in a populous neighborhood of Les Cayes, the country's third largest city, she exudes the joy of living. Her face, always adorned with a radiant smile, highlights a beauty that none of those who know her can deny.

Yet this appearance of Miss Beauty does not exempt her from being an eye-catching girl who wants to push the limits of her knowledge and know-how every day. This explains her assiduity and her love for reading, dancing, sports, music and modern languages. Already during her early teens she was seen on the stage more than once confronting her talents as a singer or beauty queen with other competitors. Throughout her career as a child and teenager, from elementary school with the Sisters of Les Cayes, through secondary



Frantzie Wendell Monexile – Photo: Josianne Desjardins

school at the *Collège des Frères*, to graduation and university studies, Wendell has proven to be a role model for the youth of her country. She has always opted for excellence.

Currently, she is a student in Legal Sciences at the *Université Publique du Sud aux Cayes (UPSAC)*. One of her dearest dreams is to travel, to visit France in particular. And since the publication of the results of the *Plume d'Or 2020* competition by the *Alliance Française* in Les Cayes on October 10, 2020, this dream is about to become a reality. According to the rules of the contest, the winner of Plume d'Or is entitled to a one-week stay in the country of Emmanuel Macron.

Thanks to Wendell's determination, Haiti shines at the top of the French-speaking world. Her performance in the competition has earned her unparalleled notoriety in the country. For her, reading is the main element in forging knowledge, but it is also thanks to the amount of reading she has accumulated over the years that she was able to win this contest. 📖

# Love and Protection of Creation

Attracted by the spirituality of St. Francis of Assisi and inspired by Pope Francis' encyclical letter, *Laudato Si'*, Sister Lilia understood the joys of a simple and happy life. Her farming parents taught the spirit of mutual help and respect to all members of the family.



Photo: Adobe Stock



By Lilia J. Frondosa, M.I.C.

We felt love for each other and also for animals, plants and all living organisms. On our property we had cats and dogs as pets and animals for protection.

We ate farm products. For ploughing, most of the time it was team work. There was also a garden for vegetables and fruit trees, a real treat in the kitchen. We went to the market only once a month. We did not hesitate to share what we harvested on our land. We lived at the rhythm of nature, thanking God for his generosity and for our simple and happy lifestyle.

## EXCERPTS FROM *LAUDATO SI'*<sup>1</sup>

This way of living has made me understand many things! We are all interdependent. I think that's what Pope Francis meant when he said: *The whole universe, in all its manifold relationships, shows forth the inexhaustible richness of God... Hence we need to grasp the variety of things in their multiple relationships. We understand better the importance and meaning of each creature if we contemplate it within the entirety of God's plan. God wills the interdependence of creatures ... The spectacle of*

*their countless diversities and inequalities tells us that no creature is self-sufficient. Creatures exist only in dependence on one another, to complement one another, in service of one another*<sup>2</sup>.

Hence the conviction that, *as part of the universe, called into being by the one Father, all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect*<sup>3</sup>.

If this is the truth about God and the environment, then what we see of the current state of our planet is contrary to our beliefs as Christians. The prayer that follows is intended to make us aware of the destruction of our natural habitat, our common home bequeathed by God.

## PRAYER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

*Almighty God, we raise up to you our thanksgiving for all the wonders of creation, of which we are a part. We are thankful to you for providing and guiding the march of the universe with such wisdom. We recognize that we did not manage nature responsibly; we believed that we could subject it to our will. The environment suffers from our neglect and we reap the results of our abuse and indifference. We turn to*

*you, beloved Father, and ask you to help us become more responsible for the goods you have given us, and more generous to the underprivileged. Amen.*

### ACTING WITH THE CHURCH

I see the kindness of the Lord every day of my life and I cannot remain indifferent to what is happening in the world and even less so in the Philippines, my country. The spirituality, bequeathed by Mother Délia, is that of Thanksgiving, which consists in thanking God for all that he has given us. How can I stop praising and thanking him? How can I remain silent about what is happening in our common home?

These problems affect me so much that I cannot help but get involved with the Church that launched the Second Plenary Council of the Philippines based on Pope Francis *Laudato Si's* encyclical. Climate change is threatening humanity and, according to scientists, this situation is irreversible unless we act immediately to reduce air pollution.

I asked to go to work on the island of Mindoro with the Mangyans to participate in programs to plant thousands of trees; we recruited and trained indigenous people to become forest rangers, responsible for the protection of their ancestral land. These programs have greatly facilitated the process of obtaining land titles to their ancestral land. In collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, we have also taught indigenous farmers ways to improve their farming methods in order to increase their crops and have sustainable agriculture.

### ECO-FRIENDLY BRICKS

To reduce pollution caused by plastic waste and help find solutions to climate change, I encourage groups to participate in workshops that teach how to make eco-friendly bricks. These bricks are made from plastic bottles filled with pieces of plastic such as plastic bottles and plastic bags. The bottles are then recycled into material with which to make tables or chairs for children. After a series of courses and workshops given to teachers, staff members, maintenance employees, students and parents, our school the Academy of



Jars made with bottles filled with plastic – Photo: L. Frondosa, M.I.C.

the Immaculate Conception has created a mini park made of eco-friendly bricks!

At the moment, I am still working with the Archdiocesan Ministry of Ecology as a facilitator of the Global Catholic Climate Movement (GCCM). 🌿

<sup>1</sup> *Laudato Si'* is Pope Francis' second encyclical. With the subtitle "Safeguarding the common house", it is dedicated to environmental and social issues, to integral ecology, and in general to the safeguarding of Creation.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, Social Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, n°86.

<sup>3</sup> *Laudato Si'* n° 89.

# Resilience... on a daily basis!

Coronavirus, COVID-19, SARS-CoV-2, whatever we call it, everyone knows what we are referring to. This pandemic has turned our lives upside down. We don't seem to see the end of it on the horizon yet. The pandemic has really struck in all spheres of our lives: student life, at work and especially in our social interactions.

**By Guillaume Fournier**

## MY LIFE AS A STUDENT

I am a student at Laval University, Quebec City, where I have been pursuing a Bachelor's degree in Microbiology since the fall of 2018. When I learned last March that the university was being closed, I didn't think that 7 months later I wouldn't still be back there. Needless to say, an online course is not like a classroom course. It's much less lively sitting alone in your basement in front of your computer than in a classroom full of students with a professor in front. You can tend

to feel isolated and distractions quickly diminish your efforts to stay focused on the task at hand. The changes are not limited to that, the activities are not the same at work. When I go to work, I have to wear the mask while some of my friends who are teleworking stay home to do all their tasks on the computer.

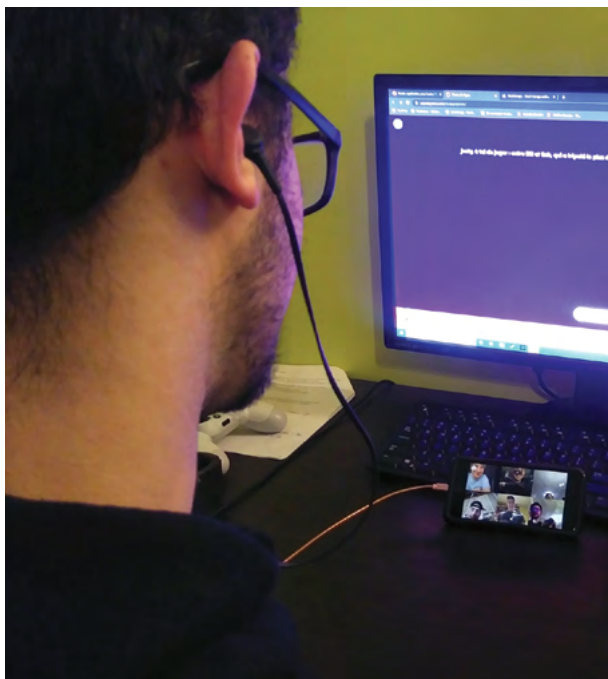
## MY SOCIAL LIFE

Social life is not what it used to be. You don't get the chance to meet with friends as much as you used to. Which means that we don't get so involved in projects anymore. No more overnight trips into the wee hours of the morning, no more last-minute organized activities and no more quiet evenings that often turned into parties. It no longer revolves so much around us, whether it's for me in front of my computer during my classes or for my friends working hard in front of theirs. Of course, we would like to meet like we used to, but the situation doesn't allow it and we are well aware of that. Our lives are turned upside down and yet they continue...

## SEE LIFE DIFFERENTLY

We still find how to have fun together, to keep in touch, but in different ways. Those screens that seemed to keep us away from each other are now able to bridge the distance between us. We know that we have a role to play, a resilience to develop to get through this situation. We have the ability to change things for the better not only for ourselves but for others as well. We are all in this together. I believe that making an effort is a form of respect for all those we come into contact with.

Photo: Caroline Fournier





A family meal – Photo: Eric Fournier

Especially by not making this situation worse, from which no one is spared. I believe that this pandemic context gives us the opportunity to bring out the best of ourselves, to show that we are stronger to overcome these circumstances and it invites us to make an effort to build a new world. A world where we will all have the chance to enjoy the good things life has to offer.

### HAVE A POSITIVE OUTLOOK

I will not engage in activities as I did before this pandemic, I am taking this into account while thinking of others. For myself, I'm finding new ways to have moments of pleasure where I can enjoy life. I have no intention of letting myself be overwhelmed by this situation from which I have so much to gain. In fact, I find that confinement has been an excellent opportunity to get closer to my family. I have come to understand better these people with whom I have shared such an important part of my life and whom I thought I already knew well.

I appreciate the moments spent with my family, our dinners where we discuss our days or various subjects concerning current events or our interests. Cooking with my family is an activity that I have been able to restart and that makes me live pleasant moments. I like to take the time to go for a walk with my brother. We got to know our neighborhood better and rediscovered the parks we went to when we were kids. I have been fortunate to appreciate my family's inspirational strengths, my brother's positivity, my mother's energy and my father's calm and resilience.

As for my studies, I am gradually managing my situation better, avoiding distractions such as my phone, and finding new ways to motivate myself, focus and work more efficiently. I'm getting used to the new working conditions, I know that once again I'm doing my part to help others and I get some satisfaction out of it. I believe that, in the end, confinement will have been a good time for me, a time that will have shaken up my everyday life and allowed me to reflect on various subjects and to improve myself. Many changes have taken place in my life; it is a fact that we must accept in



Guillaume and Sébastien – Photo: Caroline Fournier

order to begin to adjust to this new reality. It is up to me, to us, to make these changes positive so as to make our world of tomorrow better, because despite everything that is happening around us, life goes on. 🌀



# *The Winding Road towards the Reunion of All Believers.*

Photo: DR



**By Maurice Demers**

From the earliest days of New France, religious communities have played a key role in providing health care in Quebec. Religious missionary communities, who work in this province, have also provided health care in several countries. The second issue of *Le Précurseur*, in September 1920, tells us about...

*... thousands and thousands of poor people crammed into a reserved area of Guangzhou in China [...] paralytic, blind, tubercular, broken old people, impotent and incurable. It is the city authorities who have parked them in such a way within limited areas. Sick and destitute, they would depend on charity, and charity is unknown there, or almost [...] Another method of dealing with the infirm would be that of our nuns [...] The method of our missionaries, we can guess it. They will not send away the miserable. They will go out to meet them. They will go smiling, eager to bring in their eyes joy and consolation<sup>1</sup>.*

Disabled people have benefited from the good care given them by members of religious communities, from the Christian charity of these good souls. Nevertheless, the path towards the integration of these people into society and also towards an equitable participation in the community of believers has been much more difficult.

A first step towards this integration was the founding of the *Christian Office for the Disabled* in 1963 by Marie-Hélène Mathieu and *l'Arche* in 1964 by Jean Vanier. The latter group's vision has been to make known the gift of people with an intellectual disability, which is revealed through mutual relations, sources of transformation<sup>2</sup>. Thus began a dialogue with these people who are no longer considered mere recipients of care.

But this was only the beginning of an awareness. In fact, we can read in *La Presse*, August 9, 1977, that a couple, suffering from multiple sclerosis, had been refused a religious marriage. We read in the article that *Father Jacques Saint-Michel, of the diocese of Quebec, declared that the Catholic Church refuses to give the sacrament of marriage to men who are impotent or incapable of having sexual relations*<sup>3</sup>. A former weightlifter, Reynold Racine, was in a wheelchair. The couple married civilly.

The 1970s saw the birth of the first associations and groups defending the rights of disabled people, following the initiatives of previous decades to assist war amputees. From then on, governments and churches adapted, very gradually, to give access for disabled people to their facilities and better integrate them into social life. As Dominique Greiner points out, beyond these adaptations, the theological reflection on disability had developed little in the French-speaking world, but there had been interesting advances in the English-speaking world.

*For more than two decades, disability activism and the disability studies have led theologians to invest in the question of disability. They discovered not only a problem, but a real theological issue. He goes on to explain: Disability, as most authors remind us, is always a social construction, a cultural invention rather than a personal and private*

*problem. Categorizations or hierarchizations of disabilities are never neutral. They reflect a society's hierarchy of moral values*<sup>4</sup>. Reflection on the issue of disability leads us to question our relationship with our common condition marked by vulnerability, which affects everyone at some point in their lives.

This evolution has transformed the Catholic Church. First of all, on December 3, 2000, Pope John Paul II celebrated the Jubilee of Disabled Persons which valued the importance of these people in the great Christian family. In his message for the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on December 3, 2019, Pope Francis affirmed for his part:

*We are called to recognize in every person with a disability, including complex and severe disabilities, a unique contribution to the common good through his or her personal and original biography [...] Making good laws and breaking down physical barriers is important, but it is not enough if the mentality does not change as well, if we do not overcome a diffuse culture that continues to produce inequalities, preventing persons with disabilities from participating actively in ordinary life*<sup>5</sup>.

People with disabilities have tenaciously moved from being people who are in the good graces of charitable souls to individuals who make a "contribution" to the community, thanks to the dialogue that has been established between everyone in society. This is an appreciable evolution towards a world where the humanity of all is valued. 🌈

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<sup>1</sup> *Le Précurseur*, vol. 1, num. 2, September 1920, p. 31-32.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.larche.ca/fr/mission-et-vision>

<sup>3</sup> *La Presse*, August 9, 1977, p. A3.

<sup>4</sup> Dominique Greiner, "Quand les théologiens parlent du handicap", *Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale*, 2009/HS n° 256, p. 133.

<sup>5</sup> <https://fr.zenit.org/2019/12/03/The-pope-calls-for-recognition-of-the-unique-contribution-of-people-with-disabilities-to-the-common-good>

# "PROMIS" Kept its Promise



Arriving at the intersection of Chemin de la Côte-Sainte-Catherine and Decelles Avenue, I saw a huge brick building proudly bearing the PROMIS sign. From memory, I try to make a retrospective of this neighborhood organization that now has a regional scope. Mr. Delfino Campanile, director since 2011, was kind enough to receive me so that we could discuss the current issues he faces, in the continuity of the milestones proposed by Sister Andrée Ménard, m.i.c., 30 years earlier.



By Audrey Charland

## CURRENT IMMIGRATION SITUATION IN QUEBEC

First of all, I believe it would be relevant to demystify certain aspects of immigration to Quebec, since there seems to be several preconceived ideas on this subject. Indeed, the media, most of the time, focus on a few specific cases and inform the population about a partial, even biased reality.

So I did a little research in the reports issued by the Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion. In 2017, the francization rate of newcomers was close to 86%. Language does not seem to be a barrier to integration. The majority of immigrants choose to settle in the Montreal metropolis where job opportunities and access to services are better, while 20% will opt for the suburbs or another urban environment.

Immigration has many positive impacts. In addition to countering the aging of the population, it helps to diversify it. The presence of newcomers offers many cultural, professional and social opportunities. Quebec, proudly advocating inclusiveness, has everything to gain by facilitating the integration of those who want to get involved. PROMIS is part of this movement.

## RESTRUCTURING ACCORDING TO REAL NEEDS

The mission of PROMIS has always been to offer services to immigrants. Over time, the clientele has evolved. It is now composed mainly of future permanent residents who are educated, French-speaking and selected by the province. The organization has therefore had to adapt by reorganizing its internal structure, establishing a collective agreement and emphasizing the implementation of quality interventions, delivered by people with solid training.

PROMIS also developed an intervention tool for social integration and employment counselling. One of the most frequent problems relates to integration into the job market. Many immigrants from the middle class are highly disappointed and disillusioned to find that they will not have access to the same job categories in Quebec as in their native country. A dilemma then arises for them: keep a food job and risk "de-skilling" themselves over time or tighten their belts and go back to school to obtain a diploma equivalence?

From now on, the main concern is the acquisition of a certain autonomy. PROMIS provides advice to guide users and direct them to complementary resources. As Mr. Campanile mentioned, the individuals who attend the organization he directs often seek "quick survival strategies"



Adrienne Guay, M.I.C., and the young women at PROMIS

(for example, where to buy groceries), but they are already well informed about the provincial immigration process.

### NEW ISSUES, NEW CHALLENGES

The clientele of refugees and asylum seekers who require medium or long-term follow-up represents only a small proportion of PROMIS' clientele, which is about 5,000 users per year. In order to continue working with the immigrant population, it was essential to adjust the services according to their needs and the current technological imperatives.

With this in mind, the organization adopted a five-year strategic orientation plan, divided into several components. First, there was an expansion of the scope of services offered and a diversification of partnerships and to increase the potential for auxiliary resources. In addition, PROMIS proceeded to increase the level of employee training and improve the professionalism of its interventions in order to respond to contemporary migration realities. Finally, the exploration of new sources of funding remains a central issue to carry out the various projects undertaken.

However, money is not the only factor relating to the continuity of PROMIS. A transformation is currently taking place in terms of the form

that the interventions provided take and will take, and this in synergy with the technological momentum of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The Web, which opens up an infinite number of possibilities, a "cyber-neighborhood" where relationships can be forged and information can be obtained quickly and easily, is a cutting-edge promotional vector reaching a global audience. It is an essential ally.

All it takes is  
"providing the right help  
at the right time".

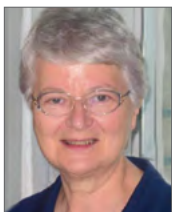
In closing, here is Mr. Campanile's conclusion: *In tune with Quebec's socio-cultural context, this organization continues to meet the needs of newcomers, who are different, certainly, but always present. All it takes is "providing the right help at the right time". Over time, PROMIS has earned its reputation in the settlement sector by offering services adapted to the immigrant population of Côte-des-Neiges and throughout the Island of Montreal. Having a particular concern for evolution and evaluation, I have no doubt that the future will bring increasing recognition to this dynamic team, which takes its mandate of inclusion to heart.* ☺

# One Day at a Time

So many different transitions in life can lead someone to choose to walk one day at a time! Or at least to slow down at a sharp bend in the road, especially if it's not the one that would have been chosen.

Who in the world, since January, has chosen what is happening to the entire planet? What stage of planetary life have we reached? The effects of a transition can remain active for years. What wisdom can guide individuals, communities and finally humanity towards a new normality?

Photo: Adobe Stock



By Pauline Boilard, M.I.C.

## A TIME TO LISTEN

*The period we are going through right now is strange, difficult, wearisome; it's quite painful to have been like this in this instability*

*for months*, a friend told me recently. He got the idea to focus on the essential of his mission and to try to be more or less idle... or let's say to do nothing... In silence, to take the time to listen to life in and around oneself, through the human and natural environment, which could eventually, one day at a time, reap a better understanding and integration of this new reality that persists. Hope, what a gentle and discreet strength!

Reflecting, thus, images inspire me. For example: A road facing the unknown beckoning us to walk ahead notwithstanding the surprises it might hold; just as this bench inviting us to stop, pause in silence before taking too many steps at once;

living two days in one with the risk of taking the wrong direction. Wouldn't it be better to take a time of interiority before continuing on the road? But how can this be done?

## A TIME OF TRUST

Many biblical verses like to provide the reference. In the Jerusalem Bible, Psalm 46 (45) under the title *God is with us* Verses 2 and 11 affirm that *God is both refuge and strength for us, a help always ready in trouble[...]* *Be still and acknowledge that I am God, supreme over peoples, supreme over the world!* This revelation of God is already present in Exodus 14:14: *Yahweh will do the fighting for you; all you need to do is to keep calm.* We also know the rebuke of Isaiah 30:15: *For the Lord Yahweh, the Holy One of Israel says this: Your salvation lay in conversion and tranquility, in serenity and trust and you would have none of it.*

In the midst of the unknown, the unpredictable, it is normal to experience doubt, uncertainty,



anxiety and helplessness. It is therefore not easy to convert to remaining calm and confident. Would this be a path of faith for today?

Our foundress, Venerable Délia Tétreault, used to say: *Live in the present moment. It is the only thing that belongs to us.*

### A TIME OF INVITATION

Jesus did promise in John 10:27 that we could hear his voice and follow him on the road we have taken. One day, this invitation will be heard in order to live a relationship with God, it will open our hearts and minds; we must believe in it and invest time and creativity in it. A relationship with God is developed and nurtured in daily action and conversation. This relationship becomes more and more open through those signs that arise from personal and ambient reality. It is an invitation, to a daily activity that is both attractive and demanding. It is a call to stop and remain attentive to God's presence and to expose

to him the feelings and concerns that inhabit us, even the simplest ones, and to be attentive to the universe that challenges us. In the course of these free moments and without knowing how, in the slowness imposed by the rhythm of living one day at a time, the Holy Spirit can free an interior space to imperceptibly bring a different vision of things and of humanity's unfolding history.

At the end of a welcomed new reality, as at the end of a shared hope – peace is established. The Virgin Mary welcomed, recognized, praised the divine presence, the action of God who came in history and at the same time she set herself in motion. Her encounter with Him changed everything in her life, it was no longer a story, it was a marvelous experience, an interior knowledge that formed and directed her life from day to day. ☺

# With You, O Lord!



**MARIE-THÉRÈSE  
BEAUDETTE, M.I.C.**  
*Sister Thérèse-Martin*  
**1932-2020**  
Vegreville, Alberta

Sister Marie-Thérèse made her first missionary journey by train on January 27, 1951, leaving her family in Alberta to enter the Novitiate in Quebec. Her second journey was in 1958 to Hong Kong. A perceptive educator, she knew how to capture and develop all the growing talents of her students. Her natural leadership ensured her success in administration and in local or provincial authority in Hong Kong, the Philippines, Quebec and as Vicar General. She knew how to create bonds of friendship with people of all social classes. For about ten years, she worked ardently for the cause of the beatification of our Foundress. In the evening of her happy life, Marie-Thérèse would say: "I received the hundredfold promised by Jesus".



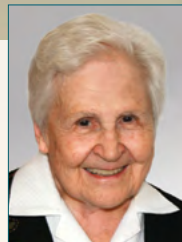
**ESTELLE MESSIER, M.I.C.**  
*Sister Anne-de-la-Présentation*  
**1932-2020**  
St-Charles-sur-Richelieu, Quebec

Orphaned of her mother at the age of 3, Estelle grew up surrounded by love in the home of her maternal grandparents. Her high school and university studies in education prepared her for the mission that awaited her. Welcomed into the novitiate on February 1<sup>st</sup>, 1952, she fulfilled her missionary dream in Madagascar from 1962 onwards. In addition to being a remarkable educator, she was involved in several social networks, which earned her the medal of Knight of the Malagasy National Order in 1985. Returning to Quebec in 1995, Sister Estelle dynamically took up the challenges of community services, especially in Pont-Viau. Then, on June 24<sup>th</sup>, she suddenly reached the other shore. Astonishment! Sad reality! She kept herself in shape early in the morning, walking along the shores of Rivière-des-Prairies! Goodbye, Estelle! THANK YOU!



**FRANÇOISE MASSICOTTE, M.I.C.**  
*Sister Thérèse-de-la-Trinité*  
**1922-2020**  
St-Tite, Quebec

In the peaceful countryside of St-Tite, Françoise experienced years of simple happiness that made her a companion with whom it was good to live. She was awakened early to the mission by a missionary aunt, Sister of Providence, and entered our Novitiate on August 8, 1946, after her studies in education and a successful teaching experience. In 1957, our schools in Haiti benefited from her exceptional talents as a joyful and competent educator, specializing in catechesis. In 1990, upon her definitive return, she discovered the wealth of different cultures at the M.I.C. Center for Immigrants in Quebec City. In September 2000, our Health Care Services welcomed the one who "no longer remembered" as she said, and on June 29, 2020 she left us, giving us, among other things, the legacy of a lovingly communicative smile.



**YOLANDE MOQUIN, M.I.C.**  
*Sister St-Raoul*  
**1925-2020**  
St-Jerome, Quebec

A certain leadership seemed to be innate in Sister Yolande. At a young age, she decided that she would be a teacher and a nun. At her father's insistence, she agreed to pursue her studies in English, later happy to be bilingual. After hesitating between marriage and religious life, her first call brought her to the novitiate on August 8, 1948. Leaving early for Hong Kong, she was a creative director-administrator who opened our schools in Good Hope and Tak Oi. Welcoming and demanding, she sowed love and hope for the future in her students. Back home, she devoted herself to our Chinese missions in Ottawa and Vancouver. Then came the last stage of her life, to be managed in our Health Care Services: a phase of thanksgiving leaving her to meet God, on July 19, 2020.

# MIC Mission News

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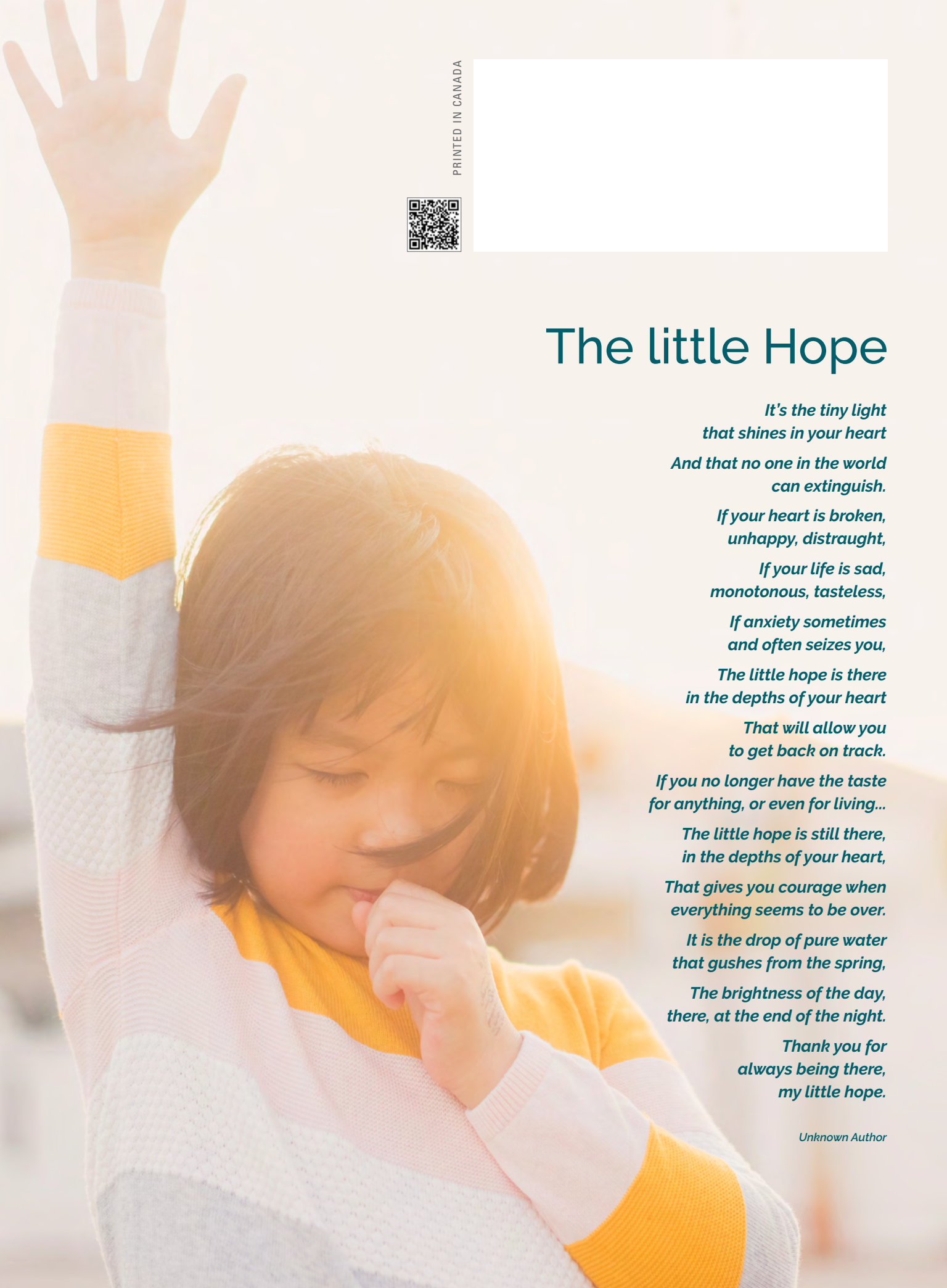


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# The little Hope

*It's the tiny light  
that shines in your heart*

*And that no one in the world  
can extinguish.*

*If your heart is broken,  
unhappy, distraught,*

*If your life is sad,  
monotonous, tasteless,*

*If anxiety sometimes  
and often seizes you,*

*The little hope is there  
in the depths of your heart*

*That will allow you  
to get back on track.*

*If you no longer have the taste  
for anything, or even for living...*

*The little hope is still there,  
in the depths of your heart,*

*That gives you courage when  
everything seems to be over.*

*It is the drop of pure water  
that gushes from the spring,*

*The brightness of the day,  
there, at the end of the night.*

*Thank you for  
always being there,  
my little hope.*

Unknown Author