

MIC

VOL. 50, Nº 1 | JANUARY • FEBRUARY • MARCH 2023

# MISSION NEWS



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

*100 years  
of an Undaunted Mission*



## The Joy of the Gospel: GATHERING

PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION



## MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

### JANUARY 2023

**For Educators:** We pray that educators may be credible witnesses, teaching fraternity rather than competition and helping above all the youngest and most vulnerable.

### FEBRUARY 2023

**For Parishes:** We pray that parishes, in true communion, may increasingly become communities of faith, fraternity and welcome towards those most in need.

### MARCH 2023

**For Victims of Abuse:** We pray for those who have suffered harm from members of the Church; may they find within the Church herself a concrete response to their pain and suffering.

### 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 Joyful Energy...



By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Heavy snowfalls will often cause power outages. Only then do we realize how dependent we are on this electrical energy. No light, no heat, we feel helpless, disoriented. It's as if life is on hold. When I was in Haiti, we quite often experienced power failures; life would stop, a silence would set in, but when the lights came back on... I can still hear the cries of joy from the population. Life resumed... Might we say that electricity is a joyful energy?

I think of the people who live in war zones, forced to hide in dark and unsanitary shelters; what is their experience like? I can't help but feel for these victims. However, mutual help and attention to each other's needs can provide much consolation. Imagine the people of Kherson in Ukraine, how happy they must have been to finally find freedom! The light!

The Lord experienced human life and understood that we cannot live without light, without joy. From the beginning of creation, God said, *Let there be light*, and creation came to life. Christ tells us, *I have come that your joy may be complete*. Of what joy does Christ speak? Yes, discovering the joy of believing, deepening its importance for us, men and women, being attentive to the signs of God's thirst in our lives. Living one's faith in these events changes our perspective.

This is what missionaries experience every day, whether in Asia, Africa, Latin America or North America. They have found joy in sharing their faith with the people through their work in education, care of the sick, catechesis and social services. What a joy to share deeply in the life of the people, the treasures of faith, to discover God acting in each human being.

Hence the importance of a true, sincere encounter. To listen to others: to share in their joy, their suffering, to be all to all. To discover in others what makes them thrive, the joy or the sorrow that inhabits them, and to share it. A sincere friendship is an invaluable gift in the life of every person. It is the gift that the Lord offers us by coming to live among us. He offers us his love, his joy, his light.

As we begin this year of 2023, in the name of the whole team of the M.I.C. Missionary Press, I wish you a year of light, of joyful inner energy. May it illuminate the events that this new year has in store for us, so that we may have the strength and joy to live them in serenity and trust in our loving Father.

Enjoy your reading. ☺

*Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, m.i.c.*



# Created for the Encounter



**By Agathe Durand, M.I.C.**

In recent days, I was fascinated by a forum being held for interreligious dialogue organized at the initiative of the King of Bahrain. From the beginning, the presence of Pope Francis left its mark: *The East and the West are more and more like two opposing seas. We want, he said, to sail on the same sea, choosing the path of encounter, the path of dialogue.*

The recent COP27 meeting in Egypt on global warming, the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) summit in Cambodia, the G20 in Bali, demonstrate the action of leaders in the face of the need for agreements beyond all borders, for the betterment of humanity.

During these events, the media make us witnesses and push us to actualize or reread constructive human encounters, on our own level. Doesn't Pope Francis invite believers to live a spirituality of encounter, bearer of fraternity, in diversity?

The composite societies that we live in offer frequent spontaneous multi-ethnic and multi-religious encounters, of which we are unconscious or indifferent. And yet, with the rising generations, there is a growing opportunity to weave bonds of neighborliness, of free time and service, in a new coexistence.

What missionary has not experienced the community and social repercussions of his sharing, following the footsteps of Jesus of the Gospel? Through the years, his discipleship and his entire life were transformed by facing the unknown and the joy of encounter in the various lessons that became his everyday life.

Encounter, a path of mutual enrichment, often comes to the rescue of the most diverse solitudes, among them the sick, the elderly or the marginalized. What a difference it makes when the presence of children, relatives, and volunteers works its magic to flood with love these lands which are so thirsty for humanity!

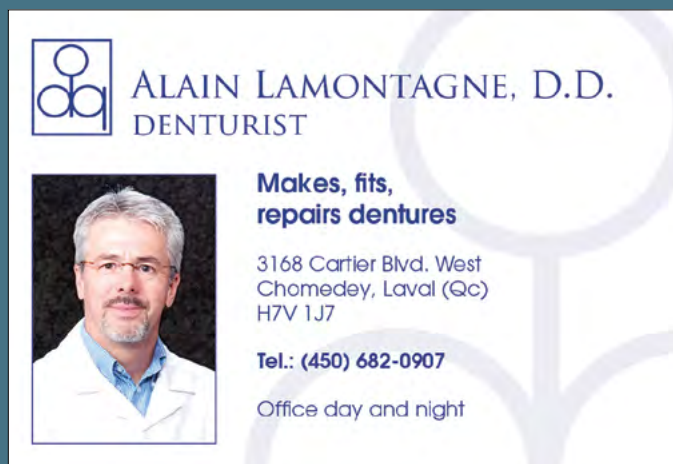
After these recent years under the universal yoke of COVID 19, what assessments can be made, what impact has it had on the human need for encounter? Like a tiny intruder, it has crept in everywhere, isolating loved ones, cutting ties, and often leading to the hospital, and to the cemetery too. If we look closely, we can also see human ingenuity, like a rival in search of solutions and, above all, of encounters.

All the levers of creativity have been used, whether it was through neighbourhood and sharing to meet immediate needs, or through a plan B for the most diverse large-scale projects. This is how the Institute of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception managed to carry out, in the midst of the pandemic, a daily general assembly lasting three months with 49 participants in thirteen countries, guided by the

competence and the Zoom intervention of a companion in Peru. We made it through the unthinkable through learning, trust, walking together virtually, to recognize once again in wonder the action of the Creator and an audacious agreement to meet with each other in these unprecedented days.

## ENCOUNTER, A PATH OF MUTUAL ENRICHMENT, OFTEN COMES TO THE RESCUE OF THE MOST DIVERSE SOLITUDES, AMONG THEM THE SICK, THE ELDERLY OR THE MARGINALIZED.

How can we not look in this same perspective at the project of SYNOD 2023, launched by the Pope to bring together all peoples and hear all cultures' views on marching together in the universal Church? It is already underway; it is up to us not only to be aware but to follow its evolution as the priceless encounter that it may be. 🌊



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# Meeting Immigrants, Past and Present



By Éric Desautels

In recent months, the issue of immigration has often been in the headlines: labour shortages, debates on immigration thresholds, the reception of refugees arriving from Roxham Road. The level of debate on this issue varies. Some public discourse portrays immigration in a negative light, even relying on persistent prejudices and stereotypes. The latter sometimes concern the beliefs of immigrants or their willingness to adapt to Quebec culture, to learn French, to share common values. In a society where pluralism is on the rise, immigration issues call for tolerance and openness to people from elsewhere.

## Meeting the Chinese Community in Quebec

These issues are not new. When the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception were founded, there was concern to help immigrants arriving in Quebec. Delia Tétreault's commitment to the Chinese community is well known. Let us recall that at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Chinese community was facing strong racism and prejudice in Canada, mainly in the West. Many members of the Chinese community moved and settled in Montreal. This situation culminated in 1923 with the adoption of the Chinese Immigration Act, which limited the expansion of the Chinese Canadian population.

Having previous experience working with Italian immigrants in Montreal, Delia Tétreault, with her sisters, took over the direction of the Montreal Chinese Mission in 1913. Over the years, the actions

of Delia Tétreault, widely reported in the newspapers of the time, helped to reduce prejudice against this community. She established infrastructures adapted to their needs (health, education, learning French). *Montreal was not the only region of Canada where the solicitude and zeal of Mother Marie-du-St-Esprit reached out to Chinese immigrants. In 1919, she requested and obtained permission to establish in Quebec City a charitable organization similar to the one that existed in Montreal. Another M.I.C. who had returned from China and who spoke Cantonese devoted her time to visiting Chinese families and the sick in the various districts of the city, as well as to the religious instruction of those who wanted to become Christians<sup>1</sup>.*

The M.I.C. booth at the Montreal Missionary Exhibition in 1930 included many Chinese objects, aimed at introducing the Quebec population to Chinese culture.



Sr Lucille LaSalle, M.I.C., with two children from Malaysia  
Photo: Thérèse Lortie, M.I.C.

The preceding quotation reminds us of the importance of the concrete experience of the Sisters in the mission countries and its impact on the reception of immigrants in Quebec, through the knowledge of their language and culture. Now, the missionary space is strewn with encounters generated by the flow of migrants, from yesterday to today. The history of the mission in Manchuria bears witness to this dynamic.

## Encountering Migrants in Manchuria in the 1920s and 1930s



Convent of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Szepingkai, Mandchuria

In *The Precursor* issues of the 1920s and 1930s, there are several accounts of the flow of migrants into Manchuria as Catholic missions were being formed. In 1928 and 1929, *The Precursor* reported that about one million immigrants settled in the region annually. They came mainly from China, Russia and Korea. In 1931, the Mukden Incident was used as justification for Japan to invade and take control of southern Manchuria. Another migration flow, this time Japanese, marked the following years. The region represented a place of intercultural and interreligious encounters. Most of the people who settled there were *heathen*, while some were Christian, which constituted a basis on which the mission was built. There are accounts of Sisters on mission in Manchuria buying land to settle Christians. The missionary initiatives led to the development of local infrastructure (chapels, hospital, schools, railroads, etc.).

## The Development of a Pastoral Care of Migration

The 1970s and 1980s saw the emergence of a true pastoral ministry of migration in the pages of *The Precursor*. The socio-political context lent itself to this, especially with the episode of the boat people, including those from Vietnam. The commitment of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception to the Vietnamese refugees is well known. As much as the Sisters met the Vietnamese in their country before the 1970's, they were also there to facilitate their arrival in Canada. Once again, the knowledge of the language and culture was instrumental in facilitating their integration.

*The Church is attentive to the issue of migrants. Is man not always on the move towards a Promised Land? What the Pastoral Care of Migration aims to do is to remind us that man is on the move and that the Church must also be on the move, that human mobility must be taken into account in the tasks of evangelization<sup>2</sup>.*

Beyond the prejudices and stereotypes that have always been present concerning immigrants, this missionary history bears witness to a double dynamic: the importance of going to meet the Other, but also of letting others come to us and thus build a common future. Language, culture and dialogue only enrich our society and our communities. 🌀

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<sup>1</sup> Translated excerpt from an article by Sœur Pauline Longtin, « Mère Marie-du-Saint-Esprit et les Immigrants », *Le Précurseur*, mai-juin 1977, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> Translated excerpt from an article by Sœur Véronique C. Boudreau, « Pastorale de migration à Chiloé », *Le Précurseur*, mai-juin 1979, p. 224.

# The Joy of Living the Gospel

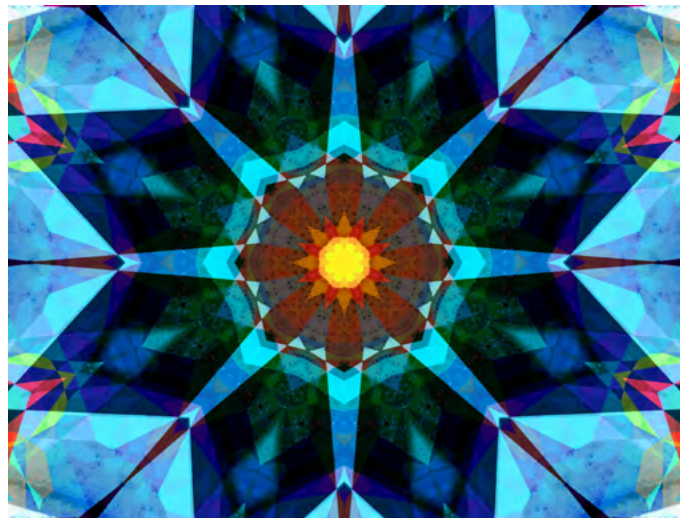


By Nicole Rochon

It is quite a challenge to face, if ever there was one. Especially in today's angry world, cruelly disturbed by wars, violence, massacres of innocents, crimes of all kinds, ecological unconsciousness for our Mother Earth. The gleam of living the joy of the gospel lies smothered under a pile of dung. It is so desperate to the point of losing hope, not to mention faith. In spite of everything, I stop for a moment to pull myself together. I realize that I am not alone in this mess, affected by this frightening reality. As the good weather usually comes after the storm, I would like to believe that this reality will become a source of inspiration for us privileged people, that it will make us get out of our comfortable, safe zones, so that together we can live fraternally with generosity, serenity, harmony and love.

## My life, an Adjusted Kaleidoscope

After reflection, getting back on the path of faith and hope would no doubt help. To question oneself in order to better find oneself would be desirable. The word *faith* for some may seem so ordinary that it has lost all meaning. After all, are we not very imperfect human beings? People of faith who recognize this, it seems to me, make their faith stronger, more alive. By understanding the word of the divine we grasp all its beauty. Somewhere I read that *faith is like a kaleidoscope. A light that continually adjusts to the movements of our life*. As I look back on my history, I have to admit that this is likely what happened.



FAITH IS LIKE A  
KALEIDOSCOPE. A LIGHT  
THAT CONTINUALLY ADJUSTS  
TO THE MOVEMENTS  
OF OUR LIVES.

At a very young age, I was haunted by a dream that never stopped calling to me, a dream that was unattainable in the eyes of many, except for my own. Against all odds, I had to believe in it, no doubt about it. It eventually became a reality. A thread of connection, securely attached to this dream come true, led me to another dream, just as vivid and exhilarating.



It was lying dormant inside of me, waiting for its true realization, last but not least, that of living an experience as a lay missionary in Hong Kong. Whatever one may think or say, flying all over the world for a third of my life was an unforgettable mission-rich career. I spent most of it as a flight attendant, the liaison between the cabin crew and the passengers.

I was accountable to the flight commander and the officers in the cockpit. During each trip, from departure to final destination, the flight had its demands: safety, humanitarian, medical, social, even psychological, and so on. All together, we were committed to bringing the passengers to their destination. Our presence and the care we provided was for them. We were at their service. At briefing time, a crucial stage essential before any departure, I was united with my crew, in my heart, soul and mind. I also made sure to remind them that a happy, pleasant and safe trip depended on each and every one of us. For as long as I can remember, before take-off, I entrusted us to God and asked him to accompany us on our journey. Isn't *mission* where we have both feet on the ground... and in the air? Then, one day, I was called as a *messenger from Heaven*; it resonated with me and I believed it.

## A Dream Realized

The retirement from this career, taken on a whim with love and passion, led the way to Hong Kong. This missionary project, which I had thought about for a long time, was also realized. Back home for good, I accompanied children and adults on a catechetical journey. It is said that faith



## ISN'T MISSION WHERE WE HAVE BOTH FEET ON THE GROUND... AND IN THE AIR?

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can make us climb mountains. Through prayer, interiorization, trust, love of oneself and of others, and through action, faith becomes a force of life. To feel it vibrate within oneself in connection with the Other and others, it is the breath of life. Joy of living, Thanksgiving in all its beauty. *Let us share the words that liberate, let us share the bread of hope. Let us share the salt and the light, and our lives will taste of joy*<sup>1</sup>. ∞

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<sup>1</sup> Translated excerpt from a hymn, "Partageons",  
*Prions en Église*, October 16, 2022.

# *I Saw Faith in Her Eyes*

As a missionary in Haiti for some twenty years, I have had very beautiful experiences of faith, love and hope. According to the theme of this magazine: *Encounter, the joy of the Gospel*, I fondly remember a lady who marked me deeply.

**By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.**

## **A True Story**

In the parish of Trou-du-Nord, the pastor and I, the pastoral agent, wanted to share a beautiful and profound celebration of forgiveness with the people to prepare for the feast of Easter. The liturgical team chose the Gospel episode of the man born blind to reflect together and celebrate reconciliation. How many times are we that blind man on the way of life? We were enthusiastic and each one of us had to reflect on the theme for the next meeting.

As I was leaving the parish church, I noticed an elderly woman sitting by the steps. She was begging with her hand out to passers-by. I stopped to observe her and made my approach.



Photo: <https://azinfostgvcom.files.wordpress.com/2021/10/img-20211002-wa0004.jpg>

I greeted her, *Hello, do you spend all day here?* – No, dear sister, *I come here to earn some money; I am blind and I can't work anymore.* – *Have you always been blind?* – Oh no, she said, *I could see, but it was disease that made me blind. I can't make a living anymore so I come here and people give me some money.* – Oh, it must have been very difficult to accept such a great hardship... – Yes, dear sister, *a great hardship, but little by little I got used to living without my eyes. I manage quite well on my own.* While talking to her, a great idea crossed my mind. *Ti-madame, we are going*



to have a celebration of forgiveness and the theme is the man born blind, would you agree to give us a testimony of your experience as a blind person? She thought about it, hesitated and finally agreed.

## WHEN I HAD MY EYES, I COULDN'T SEE THE PEOPLE AROUND ME.

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### A Testimony of Truth

On the evening of the celebration, she came in all simplicity and spoke from her heart. *When I had my eyes, she said, I couldn't see the people around me, I was too preoccupied with earning a living, helping my family. When I lost my eyes, it was very difficult at first, but now I thank God, because I have time to pay attention to life, people come and tell me their sorrows and joys. I listen to them, I understand them. Life is not easy. I sympathize with them. Having lost my eyes, I have developed my ears; I recognize the footsteps of passers-by, their voices. I hear the laughter of children, I rejoice with them. Life circulates around me like a beautiful melody and I thank the Good Lord for giving me this great joy.*

How beautiful and great she was in her testimony! The church was packed with people and yet you could hear a pin drop. The lady spoke with love and abundance of the good God as she called Him. She spoke with her poor heart in all simplicity and truth.

As for me, I said to myself: today I have encountered the joy of the Gospel, the joy that transforms a life. I was in awe of this poor woman who was physically deprived, but inhabited by the treasure of faith in the risen Christ.

Could we have had a better preparation to live this beautiful and great feast of the Resurrection?

### An Inner Encounter

My meeting with this woman sitting in the church square gave my life a new impetus, increased my faith, changed my view of people. She truly encountered Christ and invited us to see that no one is excluded from the joy of an encounter with the Lord.


What dignity was radiating from this lady, so poor on the outside yet so rich on the inside!

I wish for everyone to have such an encounter that transforms one's look, one's heart... a life.

Venerable Delia Tétreault, our foundress, also had the experience of being filled with grace. She confided: *When I stop to think that the good God loves me divinely in spite of my profound misery, I feel like the happiest creature in the world*<sup>1</sup>. She set out to share with others the good news of the visit of God, who had filled her with grace.

## THERE IS AN INSEPARABLE BOND BETWEEN OUR FAITH AND THE POOR.

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I conclude by quoting from Pope Francis' apostolic exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel: Today and always, the poor are the privileged recipients of the Gospel, and the fact that it is freely preached to them is a sign of the kingdom that Jesus came to establish. We have to state, without mincing words, that there is an inseparable bond between our faith and the poor. May we never abandon them*<sup>2</sup>. 

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<sup>1</sup> Translated excerpt from *À l'écoute de Délia*, Gisèle Villemure, M.I.C., 1997, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> *The Joy of the Gospel*, Ed. Médiapaul, 2013 No. 48, p.3.

# Our Lady of the Atikamekw

*The Pope expressed his concept, his idea of an art that must be, on the one hand, an instrument of evangelization and, on the other hand, an instrument to oppose the culture of rejection. For Pope Francis, art is another instrument that serves a purpose: inclusion<sup>1</sup>.*



Anne-Marie Forest, Oil painting on canvas, 2021.

**By Anne-Marie Forest**

This painting of Mary with indigenous features, was inspired by the tragedy of Joyce Echaquan in 2020. I had been sent since two weeks by Bishop Louis Corriveau for a mission as a pastoral agent in the community of Manawan, when the death of this young woman occurred at the hospital in Joliette. A victim of racism and exclusion that led to her death, she left behind a spouse, 7 children and a community wounded and hurt by injustice and rejection.

During a retreat at a friend's house the following summer, I set to work, letting this image rise in my mind as a prayer of intercession to Mary.

*The role of art, Pope Francis explained, is to put a thorn in the heart, which moves us to contemplation, and contemplation puts us on our path.<sup>2</sup>*

The photo of Carol and Joyce's last child, Carol Junior, guided the portrait of the Christ Child. As in traditional representations of the Madonna and Child, I drew him with his arms open, as an offering and a plea to be held. The face of Mary, inspired at the beginning by the photo of a young native girl, has quietly taken over the work on the canvas the look of questioning of the spectator, as demanding respect and protection for all children



of this Atikamekw Nation. This expression given to the Virgin, I felt it as a call from these two women and sisters now in Jesus, Joyce and Mary.

The Child's feet rest on a book, which is the Bible, since Jesus IS the Word of God. A feather, placed as if to write, also makes the link with the symbol of the Great Spirit in the culture of the First Nations.

THE LORD CONTINUES  
TO OPEN MY EYES TO THE  
PAIN OF THESE PEOPLE,  
BUT ABOVE ALL TO  
THEIR FAITH AND THEIR  
ADMIRABLE VALUES.

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*The first master of inculturation is Christ who, by becoming incarnate, has, in a way, united himself to every person, to every generation, to every culture. The incarnation of Jesus was also a cultural incarnation. As the son of Mary, he grew up in the town of Nazareth, he became a man in the full sense of the word. Jesus identified himself with his nation, its customs, its language, its history, its hopes. He worked with his hands like Joseph, thought with a human intelligence, loved with a human heart, suffered a human death for the salvation of every human being and every culture<sup>3</sup>.*

The painting is done in an atmosphere of prayer and silence. It is in this contemplation that a direction, an inner vision leads me and to which I try to correspond. This is done with the very concrete means that are the materials, that is to say a drawing with charcoal beforehand, followed by lines painted with Indian ink, pigments crushed with oil on my palette, binders and brushes...

It is a long process, almost laborious, but which, step by step, leads me to the realization of the work. It is a process where the result is not given in advance, but which becomes clearer from one day to the next, like the old Polaroid photos which were revealed after a time of waiting. Or again, according to the healing of the blind man by Jesus in Saint Mark, chapter 8: *The man looked up and said, "I see the people; they look like trees, and I see them walking." Then Jesus laid his hands on the man's eyes again, and he began to see normally, and was healed, and could see everything clearly.* The Lord continues to open my eyes to the pain of these people, but above all to their faith and their admirable values.

Installed in St-Jean-De-Brébeuf Church in Manawan, this work was well received and the title was given by a member of the Pastoral Committee, Manon Ottawa: Our Lady of the Atikamekw. The Committee then asked Mgr Louis to write a prayer. I leave it to your meditation:

*Our Lady of the Atikamekw,  
you were among the apostles  
when the Great Spirit poured out his fire  
and a great wind rose over the world.*

*Implore for us the Father of your Son, Jesus,  
that he may send us the same breath  
that brings consolation in sorrow,  
healing in pain,  
peace and serenity in the midst of fear  
and the strength to continue building  
a just and fraternal world.*

*Our Lady of Atikamekw,  
pray for us<sup>4</sup>.*



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<sup>1</sup> Zénith. 2017. Tiziana Lupi, Art and Pope Francis.

<sup>2</sup> September 1, 2022, The first edition of the "Summit Vitae".

<sup>3</sup> Hervé CARRIER, « Évangile et inculturation » (1999).

<sup>4</sup> Bishop Louis Corriveau, June 6, 2022.



# THE JOYS OF THE MISSION

Quebec missionaries share with pleasure their experience in a foreign country and communicate the many joys they have experienced during their apostolate. The discovery of a new country, a new culture, innovative ways of practicing Catholicism contribute to this joy. But it is above all cohabitation with the local population and the bonds of solidarity woven with them that mark their joyful memories.



**By Maurice Demers**

The people with whom I spoke about their journey and their experience in Latin America expressed their pleasure at having discovered the popular culture of their place of apostolate. For example, Carmen Bélanger, Augustine Sister, shared with me her adaptation to Paraguay: *It is very easy to adapt to them. They are a joyful people. They were happy to receive us. [...] They often have reasons to celebrate, they enjoy life. There is a lot of dancing, a lot of costumes, a lot of color<sup>1</sup>.* Sister Suzanne Robert, from the Daughters of Charity

community, told me a similar story about her experience in Brazil. She explains: *I am always happy when I hear the music and see people having fun and being happy. [...] When you plan a party, some people don't have much to give, but they are always ready to go and help with the preparation... and then they have the perseverance. [...] And then, on a religious level, when we have religious feasts, it is very animated; there are celebrations lasting an hour and a half to two hours for Christmas or for other feasts, but people are not tired, we are there happy together.*

Photo: M.I.C. – Sister Murielle Dubé, M.I.C., animating in Bolivia



The joys of the apostolate were often conveyed through music and religious celebrations with local colors. I have already spoken in this magazine about the importance of music for the apostolate in Peru for Charlemagne Ouellette, then of the Society of Foreign Missions, or for Oblate Guy Boulanger, in his early days in Chile. It is a vehicle for establishing links with the population and discussing the Gospels. Moreover, the way of approaching religious practice has charmed several people sent on mission.

Constance Vaudrin, a former Sister of Hope, confided to me that she participated *in the small base communities because in the places where I was, the reading of the Gospel was done in the houses on the dirt. So, in the houses, standing, with children running, having chickens around, and sometimes maybe a little piggy. Yet there was biblical reflection. We read the gospel and we talked about our lives. That was a discovery for me. We must not forget to talk about it because I saw the gospel message in a different way.* Many religious men and women who have worked in Latin America have liked this humble and incarnate way of practicing religion.

In a context marked by military dictatorships, some of them confided to me that they found a certain pleasure in carrying out acts of resistance (judged as subversive by the military). The most obvious case is certainly that of Claude Lacaille of the Society of Foreign Missions.

Working in Chile during the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet, he organized acts of resistance with the popular church at a time when any challenge to the regime was forbidden. But since religious ceremonies were tolerated, he organized processions where people shared their experiences. He shared with me that he said, *We're going to [climb the mountain] with the People's Church, and then we'll create stations. Then the mothers who lost children, the wives of those executed or prisoners, will speak. It is the women's turn to speak.* It is obviously a gesture that allowed the population to share their traumatic experiences.

He continued his explanation: *So we left, there were 500 of us, escorted by two buses of special forces, who could see us holding signs. We had the Magnificat on the signs. «My soul exalts the Lord.» It was accepted... «He dethrones the mighty.» This was not accepted... «He sends the rich away empty-handed.» That didn't pass. «There, captain, it says such and such a thing. Do you let that pass? Is that politics?» With the walkie-talkies, it was exhausting. We were having fun.* In solidarity with the people in their suffering, we took pleasure in sharing the Gospels' message of hope. Thus, the joys of the apostolate were multiple for the missionaries. ☺

<sup>1</sup> All interviews were conducted by Maurice Demers between 2016 and 2018 as part of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) funded project "Human Rights Activism in Latin America during the Cold War as Told by Catholic Missionaries in Canada."

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# What a Joy to Meet You

Sisters, Brothers, always be joyful in the Lord; I repeat: be joyful<sup>1</sup>. Paul writes this letter from his prison in Rome. While one would expect to find him distressed and worried, Paul gives thanks to God and beams with joy.

By Elmire Allary, Marie-Josèphe Simard and Flore Savignac, M.I.C.



Sisters Marie-Josèphe Simard and Elmire Allary, M.I.C. – Photo: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

This beautiful feeling that is joy is not just a small extra in our existence. Frédéric Lenoir describes it very well. *The lover in the presence of the loved one, the player in the moment of victory, the artist in front of his creation, the researcher in the moment of discovery feel an emotion deeper than pleasure, more concrete than happiness, an emotion which carries the entire being and which becomes, through a thousand facets, the supreme desirable. Joy carries a power that shakes us up, invades us, makes us taste fulfilment*<sup>2</sup>.

In his Apostolic Exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis emphasizes that for Christians, announcing the Gospel means sharing joy, pointing to a beautiful horizon, offering a desirable banquet<sup>3</sup>. *What a joy to meet you!* This is the cry of these three M.I.C.

consecrated women who agreed to share their experience with us.

**With the Word *Hello*, a Beautiful Meeting Begins, Writes Sister Elmire Allary from the Mother House in Laval**

In the parking lot of a clinic, my companion and I are waiting for a car to return. Near us, an elderly person in a wheelchair, holding a telephone, is also waiting for a ride. We ask him to make a call for us. With pleasure, he answers our request. Then a conversation begins: his profession, his accident, the acceptance of his current condition, him, his wife, his children, his grandchildren, all accompanied by photos.

In this dialogue, we learn that he has worked in and around Toronto. He knows my companion's place of origin well. It was a happy encounter that brought about a deep joy on both sides, the joy of simply living life every day. The Gospel in everyday life. We returned home all happy, and our friend certainly felt the same. On the way back, I inwardly revisit this small and insignificant fact. To begin, an effort: a gesture of simplicity, trusting the other and asking for a service. What a result: simplicity, communion, joy on both sides. It's very simple to live the Gospel every day. Thank you, Lord.



## Let us Listen to Sister Marie-Josèphe Simard of the Laval Provincial House

I have had so many beautiful encounters, let me tell you this one: the smile of the children.

In Hinche, Haiti, we started a piggery project with the youth. Later we needed someone more experienced to take care of the piggery. We hired a man who was a widower and father of 5 boys. The boys had never been to school.

After a meeting with this employee, I suggested that he send his children to school. I asked for help. It was really a team effort: paying the fees and school materials, buying fabric for the uniforms and having them made, etc. We still had to buy the shoes. But the father told us that the boys had shoes.

LET NO ONE COME  
TO YOU WHO DOES NOT  
LEAVE JOYFUL; JOY IS THE  
BEST THANKS WE CAN  
GIVE TO GOD.

On the morning of the first day of school, the boys came to greet me. They were cheerful in their uniforms. Their eyes were shining and a smile was on their faces. Yet they were wearing old, torn shoes, shoes that should be thrown away.

What I remember from that moment was the contrast between their joy of attending school for the first time and wearing a uniform and, on the other hand, the old torn shoes they were wearing.

The joy of starting school was greater than the humiliation of putting on their old slippers. I leave you with the words of Delia Tétreault: *Let no one come to you*



From left to right: Sisters Monique Fortier, Flore Savignac, Blanche Cloutier and Doris Twyman, M.I.C. –Photo: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

*who does not leave joyful; joy is the best thanks we can give to God.*

## The Contagious Joy of Sister Flore Savignac

As a student at the Teacher Training College and then as a teacher, Sister Flore had an encounter that confirmed her choice: *The joy of responding to Christ's call as a consecrated woman in the M.I.C. From the beginning of my adventure as a consecrated woman, I was filled with profound joy. The joy of knowing that I was loved by the Lord and the certainty that He wanted me in the MIC. This certainty filled me and still fills me with joy.*

The joy of the Gospel that fills the life of the community of disciples is a missionary joy<sup>1</sup>. Joy grows when it is transmitted. It cannot be ordered like pleasure and it cannot be built like happiness. Let us rediscover this deep joy of being loved and saved by God and let us become bearers of this joy around us. Yes, let us always be in the joy of the Lord. 🌿

<sup>1</sup> Philippians 4:4-13.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.psychologue.net/articles/la-puissance-de-la-joie-de-frederic-lenoir>.

<sup>3</sup> (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 13). – <sup>4</sup> (*Evangelii Gaudium*, 21).



# Meeting

Alexandra and Diane's Godmother – Photo: Diane Fafard

**By Diane Fafard**

Meeting... It is done at the same height.

When you meet a child, he starts to feel comfortable as soon as you squat down at his level. That's when he begins to approach to trade the little things he likes. He has confidence because he senses the intention of the interlocutor to be close by, available to experience a real exchange. Every moment of reciprocal openness, even with a being who is only passing by, is an opportunity for communion; I am here before you and I do not think of leaving. You interest me, I recognize your Mystery.

I think of the old man who has taken up residence in the entrance of my bank's automatic teller machine. Plunged into the reading of a novel that fascinates him, it takes only a *Hello!* from me for him to immediately begin the story of what he has discovered in these pages. He wants to leave something behind. He

has touched me, I suddenly want to do good for this being that I did not know until now. I will not see him again in the following weeks, but he will have taken a little of me with him. Lord, you are on your way with me, for I have met you at least once.

The first meeting in a classroom at the beginning of the year will be that of two students who will find, in each other, a welcoming look. I'm as scared as you are, I guess. Tomorrow I will already feel better in this new school because I will have someone to find. You have given me importance. A real meeting gives you a feeling of satisfaction and makes you grow.

My daughter Alexandra will tell me with emotion what her new friend Lyanie confided in her: *I am so shy but with you I feel that I can be myself and that gives me the courage to go towards others.* What a beautiful declaration of friendship! Meeting people



sometimes becomes friendship. We want to live up to the confidence that the other person has in us.

Jesus took as his apostles people from all walks of life who were attracted by his Mystery. A true encounter occurred because each of them felt chosen. I feel recognition from the one who looks at me and listens to me. I do not exist for nothing. My foundational encounter with Jesus occurred when a pastoral care leader at my high school brought us to the small prayer room. Screened and strewn with cushions, everything inspired contemplation. During her prayer, she introduced us to a God of closeness: Jesus says to you, *You are unique, you are valuable to me and I love you*. I, who until then had thought of God as an all-powerful, punishing, authoritarian father, had value. He was in fact a brother, a friend. The one who humbly gets close and supports me.

Whatever the religious denomination, humans see themselves in each other through values that are often very similar. Prayers can so strangely be recited together. Once I was visiting a Muslim mother: with the Koran on her lap, we compared our respective prayers and I was amazed to see so few differences. Once the astonishment was over, we prayed together with mutual benevolence. Two distinct spiritualities but animated by faith, justice and universal love. Believers certainly, but above all citizens, parents with the will to support their peers, to share concerns and dreams as well. Later, we left each other with a promise: I will pray to my God for you. I saw so much beauty in this intention! This acceptance of each other, this respect.

We had literally just celebrated an improbable but authentic encounter. 🙏



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# Mary in the Spotlight

**By Adrienne Guay, M.I.C.**

Often a move, a new location, can create a new life. This is what is happening to the statue of the Virgin Mary who has always had a place of honour in front of the main entrance of our former mother house in Outremont.

Today, Fr. Alfredo Ramanandraibe, CSSp, parish priest of Our Lady of the Snows, Montreal, who had always dreamed of a small grotto for his parish, has inherited the statue, a historical fact for us as it revives our origins. In fact, at the beginning of our community, our foundress, Venerable Delia Tétreault, used to walk from Outremont to this parish to attend Mass. Father Alfredo had long dreamed of erecting a grotto to the Virgin Mary so that the parishioners and the many passers-by could come and pray there. This church is one, in Montreal, that remains open during the day.

From Outremont to Côte-des-Neiges, the presence of this statue of the Virgin Mary will offer passers-by the possibility of a prayer or a simple greeting. Indeed, according to a great tradition in the Catholic Church, a statue is erected to recall the life of a saint and to incite us to ask for his intercession with God.

A small grotto was erected by Mr. Nicolas, an engineer, near the entrance of the church. It is tiny because the city did not allow more, because of the Côtes-des-Neiges subway located under the church and the presbytery. There would be danger of collapse under the weight of the stones.

On Sunday, September 11, 2022, the grotto was blessed by Fr. Alfredo, accompanied by his confreres Fr. Serge and Fr. Daniel. The ceremony took place in the presence of the parishioners and some M.I.C. A celebration that took the color of this multicultural assembly, to the joy of Sr. Adrienne, M.I.C. who is one of the regular participants of this parish.

If passing by, a small greeting or a prayer to the Virgin Mary will ensure that you benefit from her graces, as she always remains attentive to all her children. 🌊



Blessing of the grotto  
Photos: Adrienne Guay, M.I.C.



# Meet the M.I.C. Scholastics in Montreal



**Luisa Ruas Cruz, SCHO, M.I.C.**

My religious and missionary vocation is for me a gift and a task. To speak of my vocation is to be a witness to God's infinite love for me. A love that I do not deserve, that comes with patience and without judgment, a free love. I have always wondered why God chose me, I consider myself a difficult person with many faults.

With time, I realized that God called me because I was the one who needed his love. A love that was able to fill the void and heal my wounds, a love that put me on my feet in front of life, a love that invites me to love

and to walk without stopping. I am a happy woman because I have found a Love that fills everything, a Love that loves me not for what I do, but for what I am deeply. This is the love of my good God, how can I not share the joy of feeling that I am his beloved daughter, his disciple?

**GOD CALLED ME  
BECAUSE I WAS THE ONE  
WHO NEEDED HIS LOVE.**

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I am a consecrated woman, joyful and I live with joy his gospel which is the good news of the love of my God. As a consecrated woman, I believe that joy is the visible sign of God's love. I consider my vocation a precious gift and also a task in my life because all that I receive from my God I am invited to give generously and with joy, to make my consecrated and missionary life a free gift, an unconditional yes like Mary and Delia, two women full of joy, full of the presence of the love of God.

When I look at my own experience of God's free love, I can say that vocation is lived every day with love, my yes is renewed every day, and I want to transmit with my life how much God loves us, I want to witness with my life that God continues to give himself every day, that he does not forget any of his sheep and that he is always ready to embrace the prodigal son, because our God is the God of all encounters.

## Vocation, Like Life, Is a Gift from God

I had the honour of being educated in human and Christian values. This was the starting point of my dream of religious life even though I knew very little about it (I was 7-8 years old). In addition to that, my paternal grandfather and my parents had the desire to have a religious sister in the family.

Since I was a child and in order to consolidate my faith, I was part of the Eucharistic Youth Movement which helped me to prepare myself to receive the sacraments of the Eucharist and Confirmation. In this group, we practiced prayer, almsgiving, charity and active participation in the Church. These experiences nourished my desire to follow Christ and to collaborate in his mission. The Sacrament of Confirmation when I was 15 years old awakened my desire. Every time we read, *You will receive power when the Holy*



*Spirit comes upon you; you will then be my witnesses to the ends of the earth*, this text invited me to pray more by asking Jesus the question: How is this going to be realized through me?

I LOVE THE SIMPLE AND  
OPEN RELATIONSHIPS WITH  
PEOPLE WHO MAKE THE  
LOVE AND JOY OF CHRIST  
VISIBLE TO ME.

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A year later, I joined the M.I.C. I am happy to live this following of Christ which helps me to grow humanly, spiritually and intellectually so that I can respond to his call. These years have allowed me to discover the Founder and the history of the Institute, as well as the mission in which every baptized person is called to participate. During these years and wherever I have been, I have had the joy of teaching catechesis to youth, adults and children in our schools and parishes. Their interest in knowing Jesus Christ is a source of joy and comfort in my journey. I love the simple and open relationships with people who make the love and joy of Christ visible to me.

Today, I am in renewal at the International Scholasticate where I am living an intergenerational and intercultural experience in my training for missionary religious life. I am happy to have offered my life to the Lord. I thank Him for His faithfulness in spite of the difficulties encountered throughout these years. I have tasted the joy of giving through my encounters with God and in my various commitments. My desire is to always go forward to be a bearer of the joy of the Gospel in the service of my brothers and sisters according to the will of God's heart and the breath of the Holy Spirit. 🌸





# "ALWAYS BE JOYFUL"

**1 Thessalonians 5:16**

