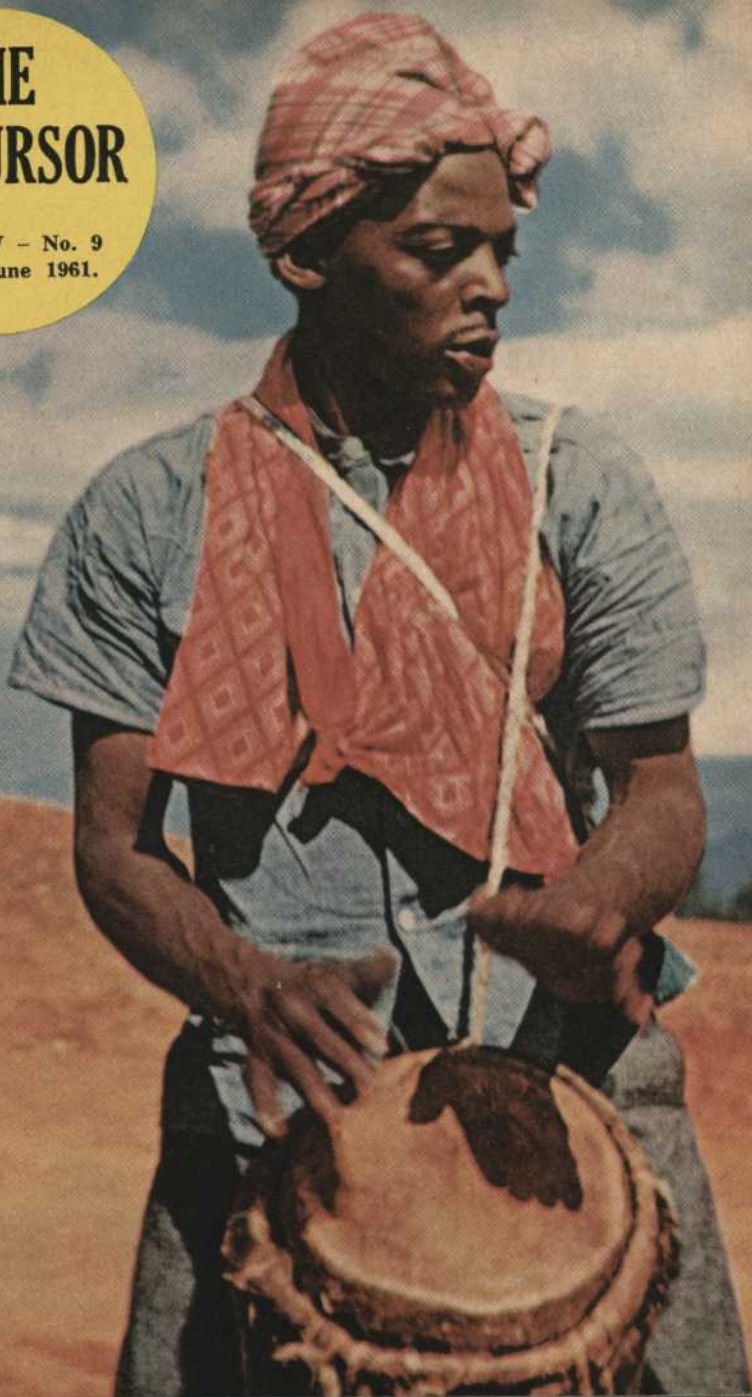


# THE PRECURSOR

Vol. XXIV - No. 9  
May - June 1961.



# The Precursor

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Front-Cover : Beating drums in Haiti.



# MOTHER MARY OF PROVIDENCE

Second Superior General of the Missionary Sisters  
of the Immaculate Conception

## Filial Homage

The Christmas season 1960 at the Motherhouse was expected to be doubly joyous marking as it did the fiftieth anniversary of religious profession of dear Mother Mary of Providence, immediate successor to our revered Mother Foundress as Superior General of the Community.

We were all looking forward to this exceptional occasion on which to offer an affectionate tribute of gratitude to the Mother who, during more than thirty years, had spent herself for the good of our Society by assuming heavy burdens of responsibility first as Assistant, then as Superior General.

But, God's plans often run counter to our plans. While we were preparing

a modest gilt crown of our own fashioning, He was making ready to crown our beloved one with everlasting gladness.

Early on December 20, the sad news reached us that pending a serious heart attack suffered during the previous night, the condition of Mother Mary of Providence had become critical. Towards noon of the same day, she gave up her soul to her Creator in an act of perfect submission to His Will. Almost at the same moment died in Hong Kong one of the missionaries she had trained.<sup>1</sup>

A veil of sadness fell here below upon her religious family scattered all over the world while above those who had gone on before to the eternal

<sup>1</sup> Sister Therese of the Child Jesus (Yvonne Gerin, Coaticook).

wedding feast rejoiced at her coming.

On the tomb of this second Superior General of our Institute who so faithfully upheld the ideals of our admirable Mother Foundress we lay in filial homage this sketch of her religious life.

Mother Mary of Providence (Anna Paquette) was born in Montreal, December 12, 1886. Of a timid retiring nature, she liked nothing better than to pass unnoticed in imitation of Our Lady in whose sodality she enrolled as a very young girl.

During the summer of 1908, she visited, together with a cousin,<sup>1</sup> the little Outremont Convent where Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit had founded her missionary Society six years before. In spite of the poverty of the house, the youthful visitors felt a strong attraction to live the life of its occupants under the aegis of Mary Immaculate. The Foundress granted each an interview and urged that both make a closed retreat.

This they did separately a few days later. Without having previously consulted each other on the subject, Miss Charland and Miss Paquette entered the Outremont Postulate the following August 5. At the ceremony of clothing, February 11, 1909, Miss Paquette exchanged her name for that of Sister Mary of Providence.

The new novice easily adapted herself to conventual life, finding nothing difficult in the practice of religious obedience. The Foundress herself initiated her in the secrets of the life of union with God, and instilled in her soul a profound desire to do His Will at any cost. Thanks to the direction of such a Mistress of the interior life, Sister was fully

prepared when time came to bind herself to the Divine Bridegroom by the vows of religion in January 1911.

Four years had hardly gone by when the seal of suffering was laid upon her young life. She fell ill with tuberculosis of the lungs and was sent to the sanitarium of our Community at Nominigüe with the hope that the bracing air of the Laurentians would speed her recovery.

Months and years elapsed, however, without bringing any notable improvement in her health. In the spring of 1918, Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit visited the sick Sisters at Nominigüe. The Society was at that time sadly in need of subjects who could help shoulder responsibility in the direction of rapidly increasing works of apostolate. According to the Foundress, nearly all the Sisters then had *the defect of being too young!* Doubtless on the spur of a heavenly inspiration, the Foundress one day entered the room where Sister Mary of Providence lay bedridden and declared pointblank, "My child, get up. I need you."

With perfect obedience and unswerving faith in the authority of her Superior, Sister immediately rose and asked permission to kneel. Shortly after this event, she was appointed to be one of the Councillors General and returned to the Outremont Motherhouse on September 14, 1918.

The date was significant. Welcoming her beloved daughter at the door, Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit remarked, "This is a good day for you to arrive, for you also are in a certain sense a triumph of the Cross, of suffering. For three years in the throes of illness, you are now exulting in your cure."

<sup>1</sup> Eugénie Charland (Sister Mary of the Snows).

Did Mother Mary of Providence then guess that the Cross under another shape would continue to shadow her entire life? Perhaps not. But her role was, henceforth, marked by the divine seal of our redemption. With the Foundress she shared the Cross of authority, the vicissitudes, the trials, and the setbacks that fall to the lot of the founders of religious societies. When, at a certain period, the very life of the young missionary Institute seemed threatened, she upheld and comforted her Superior General. Standard-bearer of loyalty to the Foundress, she overrode her natural timidity and showed herself staunchly intrepid in defence of her Mother. Appointed to the post of Assistant General in July 1921, she obtained in the face of great difficulties with which the Society then had to cope, the nomination for life of the Foundress as Superior General. This favour granted by Pope Pius XI was the crowning achievement of Mother Mary of Providence's filial piety and of her perfect devotedness.

When in 1938, after several years of a lingering illness, our revered Foundress grew almost totally incapacitated, a General Chapter was convoked at the request of the Sacred Congregation of Religious to elect a new Superior General. The majority of votes was cast in favour of Sister Mary of Providence. Who better than she could reproduce in her person the spirit and the qualities of the Foundress?

A touching scene took place on the evening of election day in the room of the venerable patient. The newly elected Superior General assured her in her own name and in

that of the Sisters that she would always be their revered and beloved Mother. Then she gaily added, "And I will be your right hand!"

With greater ardour than ever, Mother Mary of Providence dedicated her energies to the expansion of the apostolic work launched by the great Canadian missionary. She worked in the same spirit, with the selfsame zeal for souls and love for Holy Mother Church.

In 1940, she undertook the official visitation of the houses of our Society in Vancouver and in the Far East. She who had so long been confined within the walls of a sickroom travelled for a whole year over land and sea, returning safely home to the Motherhouse by the last ship to leave Hong Kong before World War II.

Upon the death of the Foundress, October 1, 1941, she arranged to have the great and noble heart that beat only for the glory of God and the salvation of souls enshrined in a special oratory at the Motherhouse.

The war years were filled with foreboding, but the valiant Mother serenely continued to translate into action the motto of the Society — to make Mary Immaculate known from pole to pole. A retreat centre was opened in Chicoutimi; Mount Saint Joseph Hospital was built in Vancouver; the Granby Patronage was transformed into a secondary school; seven mission stations were founded in Haiti, five in Cuba, six in Nyasaland, one in Madagascar. After the war, the missions of Japan, of Kowloon, and of the Philippines where work had been forcibly suspended were completely reorganized and adapted to new needs.

At the General Chapter of 1952 when the government of the Society was entrusted to younger Sisters, Mother Mary of Providence laid down the burden of authority as humbly as she had once shouldered it.

During the six months she passed at the Motherhouse before being assigned to a local convent, she gave us sterling examples of humility, fervour in the observance of the Rule, and religious respect towards members of the newly selected General Council. She was afterwards Local Superior of our Saint John's Convent for three years, then when her health gave way, was sent to recuperate at Outremont, the cradle of her religious life, the "memory house" as we like to call it.

Mild heart attacks led her to be hospitalized at our Pont Viau Hermitage Mary of the Holy Spirit — infirmary set up for the ailing and the aged — towards the end of the year 1958. There it was that close to the beautiful chapel she offered up her ultimate immolation. Like our beloved Foundress she was often heard to say, "Nothing is more perfect than

to do the Will of God... Graces are obtained not by prayer only, but by suffering generously accepted." She lived up to this counsel, always fully submissive, always grateful for the tender care lavished upon her. Her one and only anxiety was lest she give the least trouble to those around her. On the morning of the day when she died, she said to Reverend Mother General who had come to visit her at the Hermitage, "It's not a very good time to be sick, is it? Poor Sisters!" Reverend Mother having remarked that God wanted it so, she murmured, "Oh, yes, the Will of God, the Will of God!" In this act of perfect love she died peacefully, so peacefully indeed that those around her scarcely noticed that she had gone.

Her noble soul sped along the trails of eternity to the Beautiful Gate where, doubtless, Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit awaited her with the words, "Come, my dear child. You have kept my trust and tended well my missionary garden plot. Share with me the glorious reward of the apostles."

## MISSIONARY INTENTIONS

**MAY:** Formation of lay apostles for the missions.

**JUNE:** That Catholic teachers in mission schools may train Christians worthy of the name.

# 50 Years of Closed Retreats

in the Society of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

Some time in 1929, the Messenger Printing Office of Montreal published a volume titled "Closed Retreats in Canada", edited in collaboration by the Reverend Jesuit Fathers. In the supplement, following monographs of various Closed Retreat Houses for men, had been added an article by Reverend J. A. Plamondon, S.J., in which he described the Collective Closed Retreat Movement for women and girls which had similarly developed. In this article, he credited Reverend Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit with having inaugurated feminine Closed Retreats in Canada when on June 26, 1911, she welcomed at our Outremont Convent the first group of 42 young retreatants.

Reverend Father Plamondon did not mention the fact that he himself preached the exercises of this retreat and those of one which followed on July 3, to another group of 35 young girls. These details are revealed in a letter written June 2, 1911, by his confrere Reverend Alphonse Daignault, advisor and mainstay of the Foundress, to the Sisters missioned in Canton:

"You have doubtless heard that Father Plamondon will preach two retreats for girls at the Motherhouse toward the end of this month and at the beginning of July. Already, one hundred requests for admission have been received. I leave you to imagine how such a number may be accommodated. The little Sisters will have to spiritualize themselves after the fashion of angels. But we cannot expect as much of the retreatants and this presents some difficulty..."

The problem was solved by organizing two supplementary retreats also preached by the zealous Jesuit mentioned above. Through the magnificent results obtained in these holy exercises, Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit understood the necessity of establishing the work on a systematic if not a permanent basis. From this time onward, as soon as school let out, the convent was regularly made ready to welcome those who wished to spend a few days making what were then called vocation or decision retreats.

On March 16, 1914, a first group of



Guides from Martinique make a retreat  
at our Outremont Convent

30 married women recruited by Mrs. Mackensie and Mrs. E. B. Richard, also made a retreat under the direction of a well-known preacher, Reverend Louis Lalonde, S.J.

Notwithstanding the comparative comfort of the cramped quarters which was all that our Outremont Convent could then offer its guests, the work prospered until 1920. At this date, the constantly increasing number of Sisters forced the Foundress to suspend Closed Retreats at the Motherhouse for an indefinite period of time. The convent at 314 Saint Catherine Road again took up the tradition in 1939, when the convent had undergone a complete transformation adapting it to this end.

The zeal of the Foundress for this work never abated. In spite of the poverty of her young Institute where everything still had to be done, the ardent woman apostle boldly launched new Closed Retreat Centres for women and girls in several dioceses of the Quebec province: Manreza, at present Bethany, Nominigue (1915); Saint Francis Xavier Centre, Rimouski (1919) later renamed Saint Therese of the Child Jesus Centre (1933-1943); Immaculate Conception House, Joliette (1921); Villa Saint Paul (1921-1948) and The Cenacle (1928) both in Quebec City; Mary Mediatrix House, Granby (1930); Our Lady of Missions House, Chicoutimi (1930); Saint Bernadette House, Saint Johns, P.Q. (1935).

It seems nothing short of a miracle that the Foundress succeeded in organizing so many Closed Retreat Centres within this relatively short period. Everywhere the work was organized under similar conditions of humility, poverty, zeal and bound-

less trust in Divine Providence. Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit wrote toward 1925, to a Superior frantic with worry over the debts contracted for the purchase of a piece of land whereon to build a retreat house, "I can read between the lines of your letter that the debt... is giving you the shivers... My dear daughter, that is not nice of you! Where is your spirit of faith? Is it any more difficult for God to provide money for the payment of big or of little debts? Do not sadden Our Lord and do not sadden me by worrying over the future. As long as we love God, all the rest will be given us over and above. For my part, I am not in the least worried about X... or any other similar enterprises." About to leave the pioneers of the Chicoutimi Convent to their task of organizing retreats, she made the following admirable recommendation, "I am not asking myself whether you will have enough to eat or to live on, for I am sure God will not let you want. The only thing I ask of you is to love one another."

Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit conveyed to her daughters her technique for the organization of the work — a happy blending of humble beginnings, mutual understanding, optimistic effort, and trust in the Providence of God. To the foundation of our retreat houses are linked the names of the eldest of the family: Sister Mary of Loyola, Sister Saint Ignatius, Sister Mary of the Epiphany, Sister Saint Michael the Archangel, Sister of the Nativity of Jesus, Sister Mary of La Salette, Sister Marie Bernard, Sister Mary of the Trinity, Sister Mechtilde of the Blessed Sacrament, Sister Gertrude of the

Sacred Heart and so many others. Nevertheless, the development of collective closed retreats could not have been obtained without the sympathetic interest and the generosity of the people among whom the Sisters were called to work. Above everything else, precious encouragement from the hierarchy contributed to their success. The first pastors of the various dioceses saw in this movement a powerful means for the restoration of the Christian spirit in modern society.



At the inauguration ceremony of the Quebec Cenacle, His Eminence Cardinal R. M. Rouleau declared, "I beseech Mary Immaculate to shower maternal blessings upon this new Cenacle in order that it may fully respond to the end its founders have in view and become for our country a shining beacon leading all Christian souls in the right path."

Since the death of Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit (1941) three other spiritual beacons have been kindled: one under the aegis of Our Lady of the Rosary, at Ste Marie de Beauce (1943); another at Marlboro, Massachusetts, dedicated to Our Lady Queen of Missions (1946); and a third, Our Lady of Good Counsel Hall, Davao, P. I. (1953).

The work of closed retreats crossed the ocean with the missionary daughters of the Canadian Foundress.

In Canton, China from 1937 to 1948, 56 retreats were held. Reverend Father C. Sawade preached the first closed retreat given at Wakamatsu, Japan, July 1939. After the war a few more were organized either in Wakamatsu or in Koriyama. Following the 1911 traditions, this work of apostolate was organized in Kowloon (1951); in Les Cayes, Haiti (1948) and at Cap Haitien (1958); in Kuanhsi, Formosa (1956) and at Shih Kuang Tse also in Formosa (1959).

No better formula can be found to speed up the formation of the Catholic elites the Church stands in such dire need of than the formula of the closed retreat. Our ambition is to provide old and new mission stations with these havens of solitude where the soul may meet its Creator and learn to fulfill its eternal destiny.

### Development of Closed Retreats for Women in Quebec

Recent decades have been marked by the advent of specialized Catholic Action, by an increase in true Marian devotion, and by a striving after unity of thought and action among professional groups. The leaders of the various specialized units JAC, JEC, JIC, JOC feel the need of a more intimate knowledge of Christ the better to radiate His love in their environment. His Eminence, Cardinal M. R. Villeneuve very aptly said of closed retreats that they are the "novitiate of Catholic Action". In 1945, he wrote on this subject, "A good worker turns out good work... I, therefore, make it my duty to urge our priests to encourage their people to make closed retreats."

Traditional decision retreats for

young girls always continued to be given with certain necessary adaptations; retreats for students, graduates, sodalists, shop and office employees, teachers, nurses, fiancées, etc. Besides these retreats of three days, are conducted others of five or even eight days called Marian retreats or retreats to perfect the interior life. For married women, the latest innovation has been a two day matrimonial retreat.

As a matter of course, the development of the movement has necessitated the extension of buildings and the modernization of material equipment. Certain closed retreat centres are ideally situated: Nominigüe, framed in evergreens, overlooking a lovely lake; Outremont,

Closed Retreat Centre at Marlboro, Mass.



Fir trees sentinel the Bethany of Nominigue.



nestling on the green slopes of Mount Royal; the former Beauce Manor, Saint Johns, Chicoutimi lying on the picturesque shores of the majestic rivers Chaudière, Richelieu, and Sag-

uenay. Elsewhere, beside every retreat house a sufficiently large private garden has been provided where retreatants may peacefully retire to commune with the Lord.



Saint Bernadette House faces the tranquil waters of the Richelieu.

### Appreciation

During the past fifty years 13,408 retreats — attended by 356,766 retreatants — have been given in retreat houses conducted by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in the Quebec province.<sup>1</sup> It is, of course, utterly impossible to appreciate the numberless graces bestowed by God during the spiritual exercises.

At times, however, it happens for the greater consolation of those who devote their lives to this hidden work

of apostolate, that retreatants tell of their appreciation. The following are a few testimonials chosen among thousands:

A young woman wrote two years after her marriage, "My closed retreat as a fiancée was the most important item in my trousseau."

Miss X who had decided to make a retreat only because it was the fashionable thing in her social set to do so, brought along two books by André Maurois in case she found

<sup>1</sup> Abroad: 558 retreats, 14,897 retreatants.

herself "bored to death". Fortunately, she did not even have the temptation to open the books, for she met Christ in this selfsame retreat... Today, she is a missionary Sister.

A student jotted down the following remarks on the writing pad placed at her disposal, "When I entered this room so different from my own, I burst out crying without knowing why... Gradually, I felt drawn to kneel before the crucifix and Our Lady's picture. What happiness I later found within its modest walls! I am in love with life, but this retreat has made me grasp its real and profound significance. Never will I regret having made this retreat during which God has granted me so many precious graces... Don't be afraid of silence and solitude. They are the best part of the retreat."

At sixty-five, a sorrowing mother made a closed retreat to obtain the conversion of her son a non-practising Catholic whose wayward life all but broke her loving heart. She asked the preacher, the retreatants, and the Sisters to pray for this intention. To prayer, the heroic mother joined penance passing the three nights of the retreat sleeping on the floor.

After she had returned home, she wrote to the Superior that the grace

solicited had been obtained and that her son was even now making a closed retreat of his own in preparation for his Easter confession and Communion. In her deepfelt humility, she ascribed this remarkable conversion not to her own efforts but to the Sisters' prayers.

In January 1959, Reverend J. Ledit, S.J., gave at the Quebec Cenacle the first mixed retreat for Laval University students — 25 young men and 36 girls. A retreatant summarized his impressions thus: "Dear friend about to read this page, listen to the prayers and exhortations of your confreres who appreciate the spiritual adventure they have just lived..."

We came from all over. At first we were uncertain about the benefits to be derived from a retreat. For my part, feeling more or less ridiculous, I carefully hid my project from my family. But, I soon realized that there was nothing ridiculous about the whole affair. I discovered here the wellspring of joy and of love. I felt Christ to be near, oh so near to me... I understood that one must search for Him with the eyes of faith. Such is my happiness that words cannot explain it. Christ and I have had a rendez-vous where we came to know each other. My retreat may be resumed in one short word — joy!"

### Are Closed Retreats Necessary?

More than ever before! Confronted with the thoughtlessness of his own generation the prophet Jeremias complained, "With desolation is all the land made desolate because there is none that considereth in his heart." What would he say of the people of today who no longer have the time

to pause and think, engulfed as they are by a deluge of sounds and figures?

He would doubtless proclaim the urgent necessity for all Christians to make a yearly pilgrimage to these oases of silence and meditation — the Closed Retreat Centres.

by Sister ALFRED MARIE, M.I.C.



KATETE, NYASALAND

In the parable of the Saviour, it is related how the seed that fell "where the soil was good... yielded a harvest, some a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold", Matt. 13, 8. We hope and pray that the seed sown broadcast during Vocation Week in Katete will also bear abundant fruit.

This event took place between July 17 and July 24. The organizer of the movement was Mr. Bernardo Rungu, a senior seminarian well known throughout the locality.

Northern Nyasaland is certainly not lacking in souls open to the call

## VOCATION WEEK IN KATETE

by Sister MARIE CORINNE, M.I.C.

Rollande Langevin, Quebec.

of a higher life; nevertheless, many a religious or priestly vocation becomes lost in the shoals of pagan customs. The roots of Christianity are not yet deep enough to provide for a sufficient number of autochthonous priests and religious.

During Vocation Week, the earnest organizer personally visited all the bush schools as well as those of the central mission, revealing to the youth of his country the sublime beauty of priesthood and of the religious life. At our Immaculate Conception Boarding School, Mr. Rungu first spoke to the assembled pupils, then presided a panel on a vocation quiz programme at the request of

Standard 6 pupils. During the whole afternoon, he answered in a precise and tactful manner the questions which the seniors put to him on various delicate matters such as the following: "Must our parents be obeyed when they refuse to let us follow the call to religious life?"

"What is to be done when our parents insist on having us marry because they are reluctant to lose the dowry paid to them by the groom in cows or pounds?"

"Is it a sin to go out with friends who try to dissuade us from following our vocation to religious life?"

For her part, Sister Superior<sup>1</sup> accompanied by an African religious,

<sup>1</sup> Sister Mary of Fatima (Marguerite Lezault, des Cedres).

**Hope and pride of the young Church of Northern Nyasaland**  
— the seminarian Bernardo Rungu (who will be the first Atumbuka priest) Sister Maria Rosaria, and a postulant of the African Society of Rosarian Sisters.





Teaching Home Economics in Katete, Sister Marie Corinne says,  
"The religious vocation may be caught baking biscuits!"

Sister Magdalena, made the rounds of several remote villages with a supply of charts and pictures explaining the various steps in the formation of Catholic Sisterhoods. Far better than any photograph, Sister Magdalena was a living demonstration of the fact that African girls are just as well adapted as the girls of any other country to embrace a higher life.

Towards the close of Vocation Week, the student youth of Katete and neighbourhood took part in a

final rally. Some of them walked between twenty to thirty miles in order to be present at these religious manifestations. Even the poorest of the poor bush schools sent representatives.

"Is the religious vocation superior to the married state?" Such was the theme of the debate held by the Standard 6 pupils on Saturday evening. Opponents marshalled their arguments so well that it was difficult for the auditors to determine which side had won. Finally, the

What are Sabina's feelings while a novice  
of the Rosarian Sisters dresses her foot?  
Admiration? Surprise?  
Desire to become a Sister Nurse?



last girl to take the floor spoke in such a persuasive way in favour of the religious vocation that she carried the day. Much clapping of hands greeted her victory. There were a few hecklers among the assistants, but the majority approved.

The boys then presented a few sketches to stress the importance of the role played in the Church by priests, teaching brothers, religious in general. A film on the subject was shown. In the audience, numerous were those who were seeing their first "movies". What was not their surprise to see represented on the screen persons with whom they were acquainted — the Rosarian Sisters

and Reverend Father Kamera, an African priest once a curate at Katete and now stationed at Kaseye! After the singing of a hymn to Our Lady, all returned home satisfied with this manifestation, the first of its kind in our mission.

On the following day, the pupils put on an impromptu play in the purest bush style. Instead of the customary quarrel between man and wife regarding the *sima* that was burnt in cooking and the comical sequel of a dispute before the chief, a young girl cleverly impersonated the role of an aspirant to the religious life facing family opposition to her project. At first, the girl's case



"Brownies of America, Khristina shares your ideal — to serve cheerfully."

was made to seem hopeless. The parents had to consult the grandparents who in turn had to consult the uncles, the aunts, and all the village ancients. But, so brave and generous and constant was the girl that she at last triumphed over all difficulties, winning her family's approval. The audience watched spell-bound as the pupils played their role with rare perfection. To them all, it seemed incredible that an African girl without in the least showing disrespect to her elders could gain acceptance for her opinions. In the afternoon after thanking Mr. Bernardo Rungu, the devoted organizer, the students of neighbouring bush schools returned to their respective villages.

The response of the central mission pupils was most heartening. Even the youngsters were fired with the desire to do something for God and for the salvation of souls. Eight-year-old Gervasio Banda and six-year-old Tereza told Sister Superior of their decision to become the one a priest, the other a sister — without delay. "Are your parents willing?" she queried. The pair nodded solemnly. Encouraging them to persevere in their good resolution, she gave each a holy picture. They danced away jubilantly showing what they thought was a "certificate" to everyone they met. Sister Magdalena dashed their hopes to the ground with the remark, "You've still far to go, dearies, before that happens." In high dudgeon, Gervasio parried, "You think I don't know what a priest is? Well, I do know. A priest is a young man who offers himself to God to work at saving other people's souls, there!"

Shortly after Vocation Week a sad event occurred which seemed to confirm Mr. Rungu's words, "We have the duty of following our vocation through once we have heard the call."

Asteriya, a young teacher at our Katete Boarding School, had joined the Community of the Rosarian Sisters as postulant. Her parents at first willingly consented to the vocation of their daughter. During the course of the year, however, regretting the consent they had given, they asked that she return home. Not wishing to rouse their anger by a refusal, Asteriya chose to give up her long cherished ideal and took up again her teacher's post at the Mission.

A few months later when she fell sick with a touch of the "flu", Sister Margaret of Jesus<sup>1</sup>, the Nurse in charge, advised her to keep to her bed for a week. She decided to spend this period of forced rest at her home village, in the vicinity of the central mission of Katete. Unfortunately, her relatives wishing to hasten her cure administered dangerous African remedies in too strong doses. Hearing that the young girl's condition was alarming, Sister Superior set out to visit her and bring her to our Katete hospital for treatment. In spite of every good care she daily grew weaker. In a desperate attempt to save the patient, the Sister Nurse prepared to take her to the Mzimba Hospital at a distance of forty miles from Katete. Before leaving, the girl asked Reverend L. Croussette, W.F., to hear her confession and to give her the Last Sacraments.

A month slipped past without any improvement in her health. On Sunday July 24, closing day of Vocation Week, the doctor informed us that there was no hope of saving her and a few days afterwards, on August 1, we received the following laconic message, "Asteriya dying. Wants to go back to Katete."

Reverend Father Croussette immediately drove Sister Superior and Sister Margaret of Jesus to Mzimba.

Asteriya was overjoyed to see them and begged to be taken home to Katete at once.

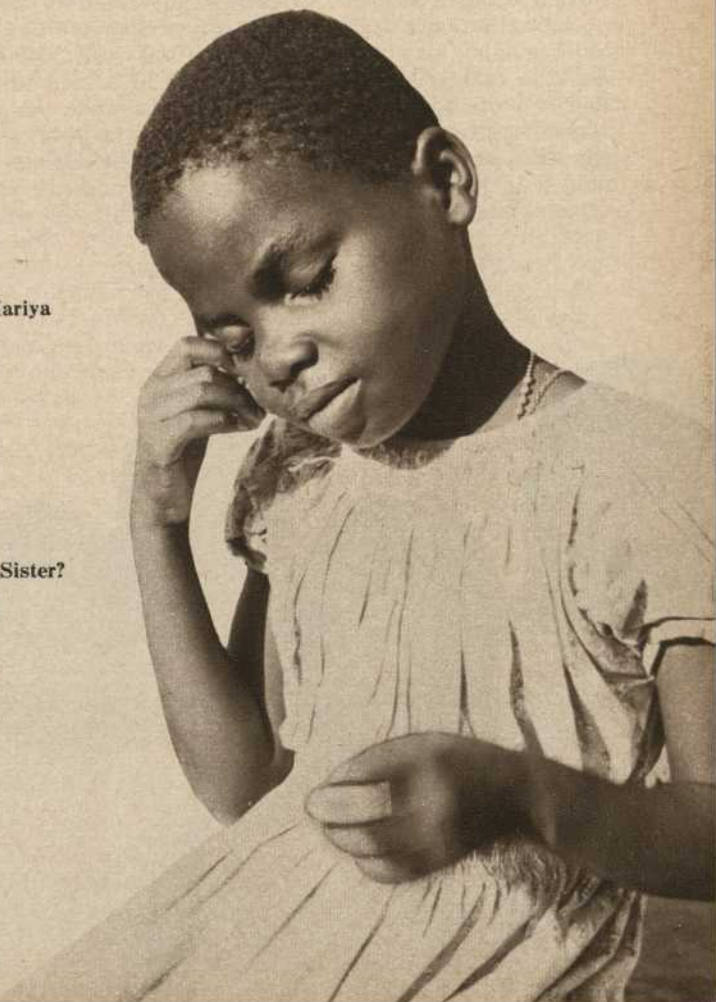
She died at the mission hospital that same evening after several hours of terrible suffering.

The news of her death cast a pall of gloom over Katete where she was universally loved. Some Christians were heard to remark that it is not good to take back an offering that has once been made to God.

Eight-year-old Mariya

wonders...

Should she be a Sister?



# News from Peru

Pucallpa, October 22, 1960

Dear friends of the missions,

When I was a student, a teacher in composition once suggested that a good beginning for a letter would be, "As it is raining today I have decided to write to you". At the time I did not particularly appreciate the suggestion, but I have since come to think that it did have its merits; as it is raining today I have made up

my mind to write to you all, dear readers of *The Precursor*. I really took the resolution to do so at 2.30 a. m., when a terrific down-pour woke me with a start. Would the tin roof resist the onslaught? Was the Deluge something like this? I wondered. A thunder storm is certainly an efficacious reminder of



God's almighty power. I rose to shut the flood out of my room, then climbed back into bed with my rosary twined around my wrist. However, the clatter of rain and wind and thunder kept me wide awake.

My thoughts wandered to our many pupils who live in flimsy shacks with shaggy thatch roofs, veritable sieves when it rains. How were the poor things faring? Then I remembered that I had not as yet written to you about my new adopted country. This is how in the middle of the night the tropical rain suggested I should write.

Two years ago, while missioned in Cuba, I was told that His Excellency Bishop Gustave Prévost, P.M.E., expelled from his Chinese mission by the Communists, had been assigned to the Pucallpa Vicariate, in Peru. I remember how the mention of serpents, denizens of the Peruvian jungle, nipped in the bud any desire I might have had to be missioned to Pucallpa. I even remarked to my companions, "If ever you should hear that I have been assigned to Peru, you may tell yourself 'There goes a Sister who is making a big sacrifice!' The mere thought of the jungle animals and serpents makes me shiver."

But, when I eventually did receive my assignment to Pucallpa, my pet aversion vanished as if by magic. (I am now more convinced than ever that grace does exist, grace with a capital G to help us perform the duties of our state!)

From the outset, this unknown land has held strange fascination for me despite the affection I still bear to Cuba my first mission, Cuba, the beautiful, the sunny *carinosa* isle ringed by the Caribbean Sea.

As soon as I reached the Lima airport, it was love at first sight. And yet, Peru is a temperamental, fantastic country almost terrifying in its regal comeliness. Going over the episodes of my Lima — Pucallpa trip you will be able to judge for yourself the complexity of this land and some of its vital problems.

We remained for a few days at Lima "City of the Kings", one of the most fascinating cities in the world and Peru's chief commercial, financial, and industrial centre. It is a "rainless" city. Years may go by without the least shower refreshing its landscape. Here we admired the oldest university in the western hemisphere, San Marcos, founded May 21, 1551. In the twin-towered cathedral, Pizarro, Spanish conqueror of Peru, lies buried.

When all the formalities had been gone through, Sister Clare of Providence<sup>1</sup> and I<sup>2</sup> boarded a bimotor of the Faucette Company with Pucallpa, our very first outpost in Inca land, as destination.

The plane shook itself into life and in a few minutes we were aloft, the jumble of the proud city gradually dissolving beneath our wing-tips. It was 7.15 a.m. We had hardly had time to settle down, when breakfast was served; it had to be quickly dispatched before the plane gained altitude.

<sup>1</sup> Claire Desrochers, Saint Charles of Mandeville.

<sup>2</sup> Sister Saint Nemese, (Claire Garceau, Trois Rivières, P.Q.)

Peru, culturally the oldest of the South American nations, is made up of three great divisions so different one from another that they are at times referred to as three separate countries. Each possesses well defined geographic and human characteristics which stand more or less in the way of national unity.

First comes the *Costa*, a narrow strip 1,400 miles long lying on the Pacific coast untouched by rains but streaked by mountain rivers flowing through fertile banks to the sea. We flew over the *Costa* during a bare quarter of an hour before we entered the second region called the *Sierra*. When we rose to an altitude of 18,000 feet slender oxygen tubes were placed at our disposal. Made out of rubber these tubes were clamped to the cabin walls.

While admiring the magnificent peaks of the Andes, which run the full length of the country, I felt awed by their rugged, sombre grandeur. Here on tablelands and high plateaus two thirds of the nation live. Quechua and Aymara Indians struggle to exist in this barren world which knows only two seasons — cold and rainy. Although the majority are nominal Catholics they have really very scant knowledge of what their religion is about. A great number mix Christian and pagan practices, believe in spirits, and are faithful clients of witch doctors. Can they be blamed when priests are so few to minister to their spiritual needs? Glancing below, I espied a tiny village set in a deep ravine. It did me good to glimpse some sign of human habitation in this wilderness.

I don't know if all travellers have the same reactions, but ever since my first air trip in 1944, aboard a plane of the Colonial Airlines flying between New York and Montreal, I unconsciously consider the possibility that engine trouble might develop somewhere along the way. Of course, if an accident had to happen it would not matter much whether it took place between New York and Montreal or in the heart of the Andes; the most important thing would surely be to be prepared for the great Voyage from which there is no returning. Nevertheless, in the first case one could entertain at least the ghost of a hope that the stricken plane might land in a field, but in the second case illusion could hardly be possible.

After a half hour of flight over the mountains, oxygen tubes were dispensed with and the passengers relaxed. Beneath us the mountains continued to unroll now garbed in lush vegetation. In their clefts, nestled small towns and villages.

We were entering the third great Peruvian zone, on the east side of the Andes, the *Selva* which consists of tropical lowlands where the Amazon has some of its main headwaters. This mighty river is navigable for 2,300 miles. The chief centre of the jungle area is Iquitos, inland port for the Atlantic via Brazil. Our Pucallpa mission is situated in this region.

At this point, my imagination again ran wild. It would have been terrible enough I reflected if our plane had smashed into some jagged Andean peaks. But even so, perhaps

some human eye might have discovered our wreck and prayed for us... Now, if we fell into the green ocean of trees and shrubs spread below like a giant net, nobody could detect our presence in the jungle except animals and serpents!

As if in answer to my unvoiced fears, the plane just then began to fly lower and lower as if for a landing. Our wings nearly brushed the tops of trees. I gasped. Before I had time to realize what was taking place, however, I felt a few bumps and there we were, gently gliding down a runway! American Protestants, I later learned, have built here a large airstrip almost hidden by the surrounding jungle.

After another twenty minutes in the air, we alighted in Pucallpa. It had taken us over two hours to cross the formidable Andean barriers.

In Lima we had shivered with the damp cold. Here we perspired under the fierce tropical sunshine of the *Selva*. It seemed like a dream to experience such a change of climate within a few short hours.

We had really and truly crossed three different Perus! Had we traveled overland, it would have taken us anything from four to thirty days to reach our mission according to the condition of the roads. It is far easier now to fly over mountains than to pass around them. This is one of the

reasons why the *Selva* remains isolated from the rest of the country.

I will not go into any other details, for my letter is already getting "out of bounds". If you are interested in having more information on Peru, let me know and I will write again regarding its complex problems which have become my own.

I presume to say that you ought to be interested. What a fortunate land Canada is from geographic, educational, and even political points of view and how fortunate you are in living there! I am firmly convinced that upon Canadians devolves the providential mission of holding out a friendly hand to peoples less favoured and to succour them spiritually as well as materially.

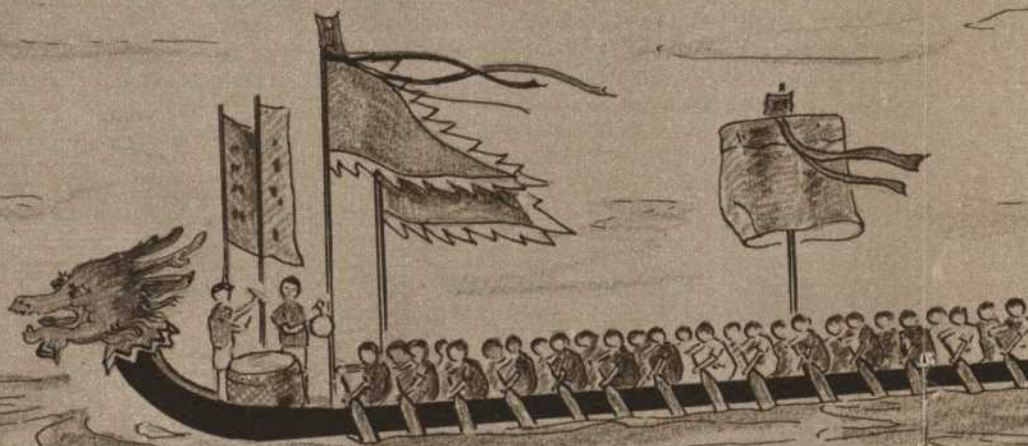
I will write again, then, if you are interested in hearing about our pupils whom I love very dearly, who love me, and whom you also will learn to love. Together we will form a great united family which will prove the most powerful antidote against fratricidal struggles, social injustice, and totalitarian regimes, the modern enslavers of humanity.

Take it for granted then that I will write if you wish me to. Until I hear from you. Here is my address:

Sister Saint Nemese, M.I.C.

Hermanas Misioneras de la  
Inmaculada Concepcion  
Pucallpa, Peru

# DRAGON BOAT



# OAT FESTIVAL

by Sister JOSEPH ARTHUR<sup>1</sup>, M.I.C.



The 5th day of the 5th moon is considered to be an unlucky day according to ancient Chinese lore. To chase the evil spirits away, it is the custom to mix red phosphorous with the wine sipped at dinner. This beverage is, moreover, reputed as a preservative in time of epidemics.

In the central and the southern provinces, the festival of the dragon boats is held in memory of Waat Yuen a mandarin who laid down his life out of loyalty to his country around the year 450 B. C.

For a long time this faithful minister of state had spent himself in the service of his king who greatly loved and admired him. Jealous of his growing prestige, however, the two sons of the ruler brought false accusations against him, forcing their weak parent to banish him from his court. Before his departure, Waat Yuen called on a certain philosopher in order to learn from him how best he could bear his trial and disgrace. The sage gave him the following advice, "Nothing here below brings us entire satisfaction. Our intelligence is powerless to grasp everything and a number of problems remain unsolved, for our *gwai hak* spirit knows but little regarding the mystery of life. Is it any wonder then that your heart should feel the bitterness of disillusion?"

Instead of receiving the consolation

<sup>1</sup> Laura Therien, Saint Leonard d'Aston.

he had craved Waat Yuen was now plunged into the depths of despondency. In this mood he slowly made his way to the banks of the river Bok Loh Gong which flowed in the neighbourhood. With his long hair floating in the wind, he sang a melancholy ode to the running waters. All at once, a small boat shot out of a cove and stopped before him. "Noble mandarin, what are you doing here?" Peering through the fog, Waat Yuen was surprised to recognize in the fisherman who thus addressed him none other than Ging Sieou, one of his former colleagues at the royal court who had fallen in disgrace and been exiled several years back. Together they spoke of old times and Ging Sieou comforted his friend. "The world is in such a corrupt state that a sage should be happy to have done with its vanities. Better live with the fishes than with false men."

Meantime the whole country was perturbed, for the king had fallen a prey to a sudden and mortal disease. Feeling that he was about to die, he said to one of his officials, "Tomorrow I will die... But beforehand you must find Waat Yuen and give him this letter."

The official hastened on the royal errand. When he came to the banks of the river Bok Loh Gong, he saw a fisherman loitering near. "My good man," he pleaded, "Can you tell me where Waat Yuen may be found?"

"Too late! Waat Yuen drowned himself at a thousand feet from this spot. It is impossible to find his body, for today is the 5th of the 5th when a strong wind always blows. At such times the Jue Gwai Mat, gods of the wind, emerge from the depths and woe betide those who are

caught in their toils! But, perhaps I may be able to help you, after all... At the neighbouring village there is a boat in which five dragons are kept. Let's chop off their heads and tails and fix them to five boats. From the village pagoda we will borrow five drums and five gongs with which the fifty boatmen we will hire will make a hullabaloo. This will arouse the curiosity of the wind gods who will doubtless jump out to see what is going on. The sight of the monsters will frighten them away. Let's get going".

Following the old fisherman's plan, the little procession of dragon boats glided down the river. The Gwai Mat jumped out of the waves as the fisherman had said, but frightened out of their wits they soon sank back into their watery dwellings. On and on the boats were propelled until the bank was reached. Alas and alack! Nothing could be found of Waat Yuen except a small waxen tablet on which he had written a funeral lament as his last will.

The following year, a new ruler came to the throne. Disguised as a fisherman, he sailed in a dragon boat the placid waters of Bok Loh Gong in memory of the dead hero.

That is why every year when the 5th day of the 5th moon comes around, the Chinese in gala attire assemble on the banks of lakes and rivers and there, while awaiting the parade of the dragon boats, sing folk songs, play on the flute, and make merry.

The dragon boats measure about one hundred feet in length and are just broad enough to seat two men abreast. They are rapidly paddled to the sound of a drum and gongs

placed in the centre. Cut out in the shape of open-mouthed dragons, the sides are painted in gaudy hues of red and gold. The movements of the crew and of the musicians must be perfectly coordinated, else the craft capsizes.

In the evening, lanterns are strung on poles giving the boats a fairy-like appearance. For hours, nothing is heard but the clang of the gongs and the rumble of the deep-toned drums in the numerous boats.

Beautiful as they still are, these pageants it seems are but a pale reflection of those held over a hundred years ago. At that time, a sort of master of ceremonies apparrelled in white used to stand at the prow of the craft holding in his right hand a

gorgeous banner whose undulations guided the movements of the crew. His left hand emerging from a flowing sleeve beat a rhythmic measure as for the gracious gestures of a ceremonial dance.

During these annual festivities many accidents occurred, for the light dragon boats often proved dangerous especially when propelled by men gone wild with enthusiasm. A superstitious belief, moreover, prevented onlookers from rescuing the victims. Accidents were at times even provoked on the pretext of offering sacrifices to Gwai Mat, god of wind. Modern China has banned this dangerous sport but continues to hold the colourful regatta of the dragon boats.

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## African Students Protest

**FRIBOURG** (AIF) Offended by the racial discrimination to which they had been subjected by their Soviet hosts, a group of African students of Moscow University have lately dealt the fable of Communist friendship for young African and Asian nations a telling blow. They declared upon their arrival at Frankfurt, "We have had enough of the Russians." These three students — 28 year-old Mr. Theophilus Okonkwo from Nigeria, 27 year-old Mr. Andrew R. Amar from Uganda, and 28 year-old Mr. Michael Ayin from Togo — sent out an open letter addressed to all African governments and to the General Secretary of the United Nations denouncing the racial discrimination and the mistreatment they had met with during their stay in Russia. At a press conference, they declared that they and many other African students were leaving Moscow because they would not put up with the constant pressure exerted by the Communist Party.

They went on to say, "Other reasons for leaving were the threats, the restriction upon our freedom, and the brutalities we were made to endure. African and Asian students have awakened to the fact that they are being used by Communists as agents of Soviet political power. Last year, 150 students left and dozens of others are at present preparing to leave because deeply disappointed." (Fides, 5, 11, 60)



## Independence Celebration

A few months ago the Malagasy Republic joyfully celebrated its newly-acquired independence. Solemn and colourful ceremonies were held on this occasion in the capital of Tananarivo as well as in the remotest towns and villages. Morondava commemorated the event by religious and popular festivals with, among other attractions, folk dancing, boat, automobile, and bicycle racing, football games, and a Franco-Malagasy ball.

The highlight of the celebration was the christening of Independence Park sanctioned according to ancient

traditional customs by the ritual immolation of a fat *zebu* (humped ox).

After the unveiling of a memorial stele, the animal, lying on its side with its limbs securely bound, was hauled to the spot where the sacrifice was to take place. A bottle of liquor, a brazier with glowing coals, and some incense were laid on a mat. Groups of women squatted on the bare ground close to the ox while their men folk stood at a short distance. To the pulsing of drums and the rhythmic clapping of hands, they sang a folksong where invocations to the Deity alternated with

prayers to the ancestors. Heavenly blessings were called down on the new republic, its President, its people, and special supplications went up imploring the preservation of independence forever.

Incense was then sprinkled on the live coals, and two sharp knives to be used in the ritual were placed beside the brazier. The chief poured a glass of liquor and presented it to the municipal officials present. He himself drank a mouthful from the bottle which he then passed on to the women who after touching their lips to it one after another, presented it to the men who finally drank what was left.

The victim's head was turned to the east and it was beaten lightly with a stick while a lengthy harangue

was delivered. At last, came the solemn rite of sacrifice. The animal's carotid being severed, one of the men cupped his hands to receive the spurting blood which he then poured about the base of the memorial monument.

Immediately afterwards, the *zebu* was chopped up. Chunks of meat were grilled over the coals and distributed to the people who ate them while singing and capering about.

Although many of the age-old Malagasy customs tend to wear off especially among the Sakalava, they, nevertheless, occasionally reappear in important circumstances and that even in regions where Christianity is flourishing. In the neighbourhood of Tananarivo, manifestations such as the one just described take place

The oxen is hauled to the spot where rises the memorial stele.



nearly every month before the tombs of the kings or of famous personages.

For the Malagasy who thus remain firmly attached to the primitive religion of their forebears, the dead who have reached the happy land continue to be in need of material things. Their sentiments of hate or

of love, their desire to be revenged of their enemies endure. Animals, more particularly the traditional *zebu*, are therefore sacrificed in their honour to remind them of the joys that were theirs while on earth and to set their troubled spirit at rest.

by Sister MARIE HELENE, M.I.C.

(Rose Helene Turgeon, Saint Anselm.)



The  
animal's  
head  
was  
turned  
to the  
east.

# Adaptability of Missionary Sister Nurses

by Sister Eustelle of the Eucharist <sup>1</sup>, M.I.C.

Sr Saint-Sylvere  
(Deschapelles, Haiti)



*Lecture given at a meeting of Entraide Missionnaire, September 20, 1960.*

With regard to adaptability, Reverend Pierre Charles, S.J. once remarked, "It comprises the whole science of the missions... <sup>2</sup> all methods must lead to it if they want to endure". <sup>3</sup> To adapt oneself means to welcome others and "to do so it is not enough to hold out one's arms to them; one must run forward to meet real persons with their customs, their traditions, their hopes, their dreams". <sup>4</sup> Speaking elsewhere of the missionary method, the eminent Jesuit went on to say that such a method must be

in conformity with the nature of the Church. "The Church is a mother... When to the entire world her motherly features will have been revealed, then will missionary problems cease to exist. The first thing the missionary sent by the Church must do then, is to reveal her motherly features." <sup>5</sup>

These texts show that the role of Sister Nurses on the Missions is a role of patient charity presupposing a profound spirit of adaptation.

After thirteen years spent working in the mission dispensaries of Man-

<sup>1</sup> Eustelle Samson, Lauzon, Quebec.

churia and ten more years in those of Haiti, I feel convinced that adaptability signifies all but absolute detachment from personal ideas and customs and adoption of those peculiar to the country where we are missioned.

A Sister Nurse who would leave Canada with the resolution of applying in mission territories the current techniques of our modern hospitals would simply be inviting discouragement and disillusion. Quarters, auxiliary personnel, available instruments being inadequate she could not hope to organize even a modest type of hospital by our Montreal standards. On the missions, one must be ready to do without the convenient and at times the necessary. This calls for bountiful reserves of selfdenial, inventiveness, initiative, patience, and good humour.

The Charpentier Dispensary where I work is one of the better equipped of the region. We have running water, electricity thanks to a Delco, and a good laboratory. Besides, Charpentier being next door to Les Cayes, I can easily send the more difficult cases to the doctor. Indeed, from a medical and material point of view we of Charpentier are better off than our companions on the Coast or in the bush districts of Central British Africa. A number of our Sister Nurses in Northern Nyasaland have to work in thatch-roofed huts with dirt floors devoid of electricity, running water, and laboratory. In these districts, doctors make their rounds at rare intervals only. No wonder that Reverend Mother General often cautions those of her daughters pre-

paring for their future role of teachers or of nurses, "Learn to utilize all available modern inventions in Canada, yes, but don't become attached to them. In mission lands afar you will often have to do without them."

In compliance with suggestions made by the Committee of Hygiene and Medicine, I will now sketch a typical day at Charpentier Dispensary, stressing the high points of our adaptation. As early as 7.30 a.m., we must be in station, for a queue of at least sixty patients is already waiting outside. This is the hour when at the Motherhouse, the Mass finishes. You can, therefore, see that the schedule of our spiritual exercises has been adjusted to meet the requirements of Haitian customs. People here rise early and take a siesta during the stifling noon hours. The majority of our patients being country people, are up with dawn in order to do their travelling on burros' back or shank's mare before the sun gets too hot. From 7.30 to 11.30 a.m., we serve the patients in their needs.

I am fortunate in having as companion a Sister who being a laboratory technician can perform tests and analyses thereby facilitating diagnosis. Four Haitian girls trained as assistant nurses also help us with our work. A deep spirit of adaptability is needed in dealing with these fine auxiliaries whose temperament, mentality, and way of life are very different from our own. Care must be taken not to require anything beyond their capacity. We must be ready to repeat the same things over and over quietly and gently, and avoid going into

too many details. Should the work done leave something to be desired, we must first of all appreciate the good points, casually adding technical advice to obtain more perfection the next time. The auxiliaries will work to full output only if they feel they are loved and trusted. This Christian mutual understanding lightens the burden of the day and the heat in a wonderful manner.

The patients are treated one after the other in the order in which they arrived. At work ahead of us, the secretary has jotted down on individual cards names and addresses. From the reception room they pass one by one into the consultation room. After examining the patient and asking him questions, the Sister Nurse makes her diagnosis, then notes on the patients' card the in-

At the Charpentier Dispensary, Haiti, Sisters Eustelle of the Eucharist and Marie Laura welcome a patient.



jections or other appropriate medication to be given. Prescriptions are filled by an auxiliary nurse. In the southern part of Haiti just as in Manchuria the people show great faith in injections, imagining that no illness can be successfully treated without this, to them, magical means. Taking this into account gains the people's confidence... opens a door for the apostolate... Consultations are of course held in the language or dialect of the region. I would like to emphasize here the necessity for the Sister Nurse of mastering the mother tongue of the people she has come to help. How can she bring relief to a patient if she does not understand him? How can she pour the balm of consolation on his moral wounds or teach him to bear his trials with Christian fortitude if she cannot speak to him?

Benedict XV encouraged missionaries "to learn in a thorough manner the language of the populations whom they are to evangelize. They should not rest satisfied with a more or less rapid knowledge of the conversation but should learn to speak the language correctly, convinced that nothing is better calculated to draw popular sympathy. They must be everything to everyone whether literate or illiterate" <sup>6</sup>.

Addressing himself to the members of missionary Orders or Societies Pius XI in turn insisted on "the necessity of studying the language or the languages of the territory to which they (the young missionaries) are to be sent..." <sup>7</sup>

In *Evangelii Præcones* Pius XII

also stressed this point, "they (the missionaries) must know various languages, especially those they will need..." <sup>8</sup>

When working with our autochthonous auxiliaries or in front of our patients, we take care always to use the local language even when speaking to a companion of our own nationality. We consider this a delicate point of adaptability.

And now a few remarks regarding the role of adaptation in the use of native medicine. For instance, a child is brought to us suffering from a high temperature, a splitting headache, vomiting. His symptoms point to a bad attack of malaria, a disease very common in Haiti, more particularly in the south. While the technician makes the routine tests on the case, I try to find out if any remedies have been administered. "We had her drink some *derrière dos* tea," states the anxious father.

"Good! You may give her some more with the medicine I am going to prepare."

*Derrière dos* tea consists of a brew of certain tree leaves having a slightly bitter taste; it is widely used by the country folk as a mild febrifuge. Two important principles in running a mission dispensary are: reject only those local customs which do not fit in with hygiene and asepsis; tolerate all harmless customs such as *derrière dos* tea or again poultices concocted out of tree leaves... Never show any contempt for such simple remedies. In order to win the confidence of her patients the Sister in

Haitian Mamma cuddles Baby  
wrestling with a bout of malaria.



charge of our Limbe Hospital tells me she allows the use of the poultices mentioned above, "They do mess up our hospital bed clothes," she adds with a rueful smile.

On the other hand, one should not hesitate to ban any harmful treatment. Many of our patients suffer from large syphilitic or tuberculous ulcers. They get their share of tender loving care in a room set aside for the dressing of their sores, but before they go home we caution them against undoing the dressings in order to apply mud packs, spider webs, grass poultices, or similar local remedies. On a torrid day, dressing these ill-smelling sores for hours on end requires supernatural adaptability in the spirit of the Gospel, but when one sees the suffering Christ in these unfortunates, the hundredth in the line is treated with as much affectionate gentleness as the first.

Regarding superstitious objects worn as talismans, we follow the advice of His Excellency Bishop Remy Augustin, Auxiliary of Port au Prince. In a lecture delivered to a committee of missionary Sister Nurses, the Bishop, himself a Haitian, urged that such objects be taken away from the patients and replaced by a medal or a rosary. These superstitious objects usually consist in a piece of string with two glass beads knotted together around the wrist, a small key suspended from the neck, small bags enclosing special prayers also worn necklace-wise. Babies are often made to wear red shirts, this colour being supposed to soothe the spirit of dead ancestors. The little red shirt if

taken away must be replaced by some other garment. Naturally, we make good the opportunity of explaining that such superstitions are powerless to bring about any good, and we encourage the patients to have recourse to Our Blessed Mother or the Saints. Haiti being a Catholic country, the people cherish a tender devotion towards *Maman la Vierge* even though their religious ignorance is often appalling.

Some of our Sisters missioned in Africa have remarked that Bishop Augustin's suggestion, acceptable in a Catholic country, would not be so in non-Christian regions where medals or rosaries might merely be considered as just another sort of amulets. Moreover, in our Nyasaland and Rhodesian missions, a medal suspended from the neck is the distinctive badge of catechumens while a rosary worn in like manner is that of the baptized Christians. Neither medals nor rosary beads are ever given to non-Christians. The Sisters in charge of dispensaries try to persuade their patients to give up superstitious remedies. Some do follow their advice for a while, but take up superstitious remedies practices again if a cure does not promptly follow foreign medication.

In Africa as well as in Haiti, our dispensaries are opened only during the forenoon. Nevertheless, adaptability demands that exceptions be made to this rule in favour of emergencies, of patients who have come from a great distance, of newcomers who know nothing about regulations and would feel offended if told to come back some other time. The rule



At Nkata Bay Dispensary, Nyasaland "KAMWANA KAKWALA, Baby is sick," says this young Tonga Mamma to the Nurse, Sister Saint Bonaventure (Hedwidge Lapierre, Saint Marie de Beauce).



of holding consultations during the morning hours only is a good and wise rule; otherwise, the dispensary and its personnel would be besieged from early morning until late at night.

During the afternoon hours the Sister Nurse is free to make the necessary house calls, to keep files in order, to perform her spiritual exercises without any of the sad conflicts — such as depicted in Hollywood films — between charity towards neighbour and the duties of the religious state of life.

Kathryn Hulme sets the problem in her novel, "The Nun's Story". The heroine, Sister Luke, a mission-

ary Sister Nurse stationed in a Congo hospital, cuts short her spiritual exercises because she is sadly overworked. I have no intention of discussing the particular problem of this Sister Nurse who probably did not have a genuine religious vocation in the first place, and who appears never to have understood complete dedication of self in accordance with the Will of God manifested through the Rule and the Superiors representing Him. The problems: nurse versus religious, difficult agreement between Martha and Mary, dilemma Motherhouse horarium and works of apostolate find a solution in Pope Pius XII's address to Sister Nurses (April 24, 1957): "In order that your religious life may not be endangered by your work of assistance in favour of the sick, you must be on your guard against everything that is in opposition to the spirit of absolute and permanent consecration to God.

Be careful not to become so flustered and worried that you no longer have time to seek the Lord, to listen to Him, to inquire what His desires may be, to render Him an account of what you have done.

Beware of what could draw you away too often from Community life. Even if this life implies renunciations, it is an efficacious protection for your interior life and a great act of charity."

Although we have urged you not to accept anything which might harm the genuine religious spirit, We remind you here that certain schedules or customs may render less efficient

and less easy your role of caring for the sick. In this the Superiors must show wisdom and vigilance. You must be religious and at the same time you must take care of the sick." <sup>10</sup>

Also to be taken to heart by Sister Nurses in the mission field is the following advice regarding the necessity of efficient professional training: "It does not suffice in this work that they (the Sister Nurses) be religious — even perfect religious. They must also possess essential technical knowledge of new methods of healing, of new equipment to be used, of new medicine to be administered." <sup>11</sup>

In the name of my companions at work in the dispensaries of Africa and Haiti, I presume to suggest that

special postgraduate courses in obstetrics and slight surgery be given to future missionary Sister Nurses before they leave. Such courses certified by medical certificates will provide them with precious practical experience and greatly facilitate their task as medical missionaries.

I will close this modest essay by a quotation from a lecture given Missionary Sister Nurses by His Excellency Bishop Maury, Apostolic Delegate to Dakar: "Among the sick, some will meet the Church for the first time when they meet the Sister Nurse so that when they return home they will remember it as represented by this same Sister. For them the Church is what she showed it to be." <sup>12</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Msgr. L. Malenfant, *La Vocation Missionnaire*, p. 92

<sup>3</sup> Reverend P. Charles, *Etudes Missiologiques*, ch. 3, p. 115

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 156, 157

<sup>6</sup> *Maximum Illud*, in *Le Siège Apostolique et les Missions*.

<sup>7</sup> Decree *Lo sviluppo*, *ibid.*, p. 68

<sup>8</sup> *Le Siège Apostolique et les Missions*, p. 11 II, p. 205

<sup>9</sup> Address at First Italian Congress of Sister Nurses, G. Courtois, "The States of Perfection," p. 339

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 341

<sup>12</sup> *Problème de la Religieuse aujourd'hui, Rôle de la Religieuse dans l'Eglise*, pp. 140, 141

# LAW OF THE LORD BUDDHA IN JAPAN

by Sister MARY OF THE REDEMPTION<sup>1</sup>,  
M.I.C.

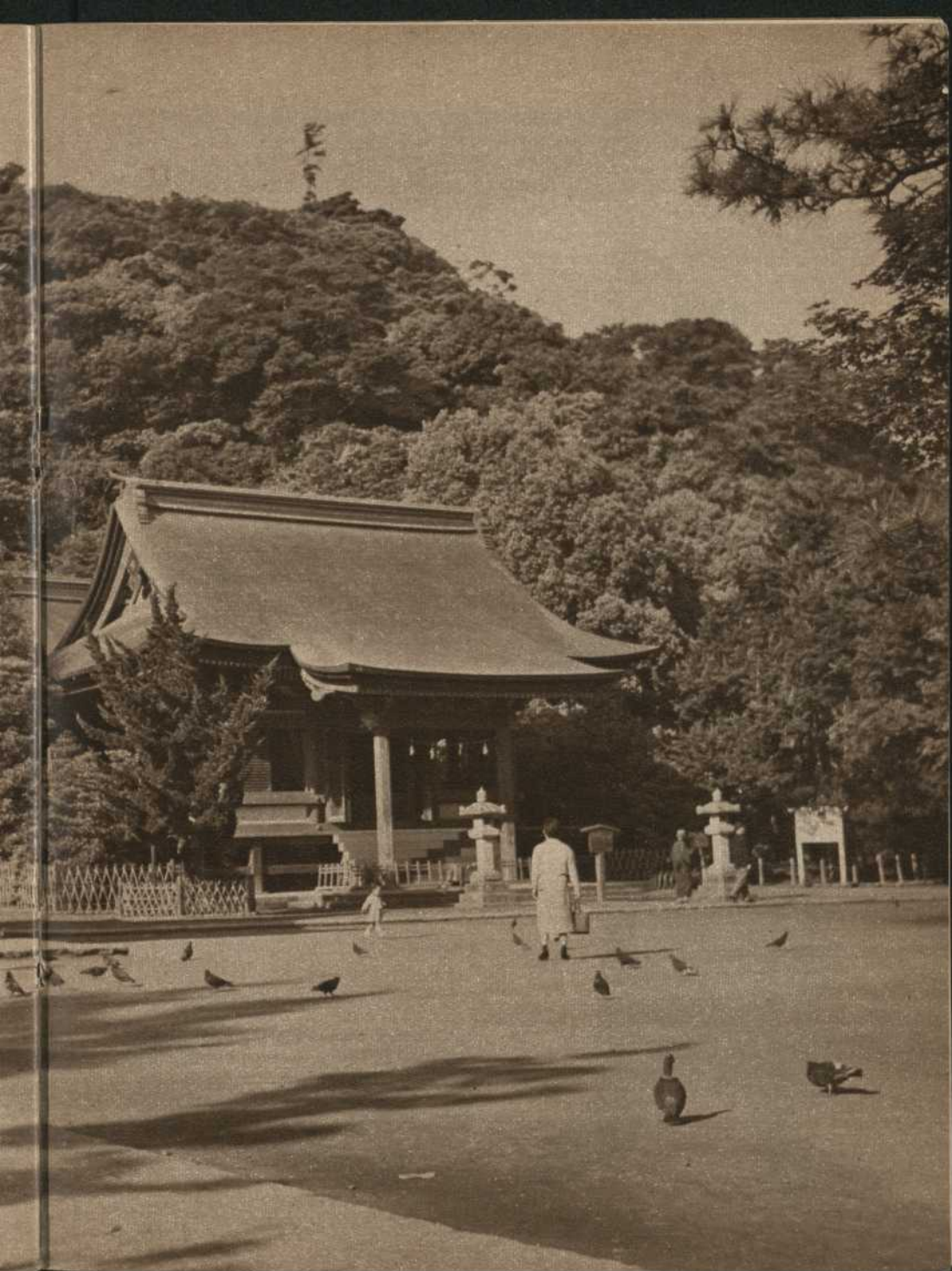
## Origin of Buddhism

Some twenty-five centuries hence, there lived in India a handsome prince who possessed all that men consider conducive to happiness — youth, wealth, culture, regal prestige. His name has come down to posterity as Siddhartha Gautama. His father, ruler of a petty kingdom on the borders of Nepal, saw to it that this son and heir of his was trained in all the arts and skills befitting his exalted position and, at the same time, remained sheltered from even the knowledge of life's harsh realities. Being a high-spirited youth, however, Siddhartha chafed at such an artificial mode of existence and yearned for an escape into the real.

With Channa, his charioteer, as sole companion, he one day ventured outside the paternal estate. The first jolt to his sensibilities occurred when he met an old, feeble beggar. He inquired who this might be, only to hear Channa reply, "Master, decrepitude is the toll age exacts of these weighed down by years." A little farther on, he came across a sick person moaning in great pain. Deeply disturbed, the



KAMAKURA



prince turned questioningly to his retainer who explained, "Sickness and sorrow bypass no human being." Presently, an even more distressing scene was witnessed. A mournful procession went by, carrying a corpse to the burning ghat. Siddhartha shud-



dered as Channa solemnly declared, "Death stalks all men, even royal princes."

That night on his silken couch, the prince tossed restlessly while three grim spectres — decrepitude, sickness, and death — mocked and taunted him. Was there no way out? As he mulled over the problem, there crystallized in his mind a high and noble resolve: he would find a way to deliverance and help others to find it.

Shortly afterwards, he turned away from his carefree life, exchanged his position of prince for that of a mendicant monk, and began his great renunciation. In time, he discovered that this was not the right path. Leaving the Brahmins, his first teachers, he determined to search for an original and practical means of explaining human suffering and bringing about its suppression.

After six years of prayer and meditation, inward certainty of vision was granted him during a trance — like sleep under a fig tree near Buddh Gaya, in present day Patna. He had become Buddha, the man who knows, the enlightened one.

In a deer park, at the gates of Benares, he preached his first sermon, thus setting in motion "the wheel of his teaching". There and then he promulgated the Four Truths: (1) suffering is universal; (2) suffering is caused by selfish and grasping desire; (3) suppression of desire leads to suppression of suffering; (4) suppression of desire is effected by following the Noble Eightfold Path: right belief, right aims, right speech, right action, right living, right endeavour, right thinking, right meditation.

Followers having flocked to Buddha for spiritual guidance he laid the

foundations of an order of monks. Ten rules he bade them follow, the first five being included in the right behaviour of the Eightfold Path — do not steal, kill, lie, be impure, or drink spirituous liquors; the other five being regulated monastic discipline — do not eat solid food after noon; do not partake in worldly amusements; do not wear costly apparel; do not sleep on a broad or sumptuous couch; do not accept money. To the many people who could not embrace the total renunciation of monks, the Master enjoined to keep at least the first five rules, to fulfill their duty towards society, to support the monasteries. Thus might they hope in their next life to become monks and attain *Nirvana* the state of passionless repose, the end of the cycles of transmigration to be reached only after every craving was rooted out, every passion stilled forever.

With the passing of centuries, as Buddhism filtered through other lands, it developed into two chief groups or schools: the southern group known as *Hinayana* or Little Vehicle, nontheistic and dominantly monastic, stressed individual salvation to be attained by personal efforts; the northern group, *Mahayana* or Great Vehicle, theistic, aimed at universal salvation. It was under this latter form with its altruistic outlook that Buddhism was introduced into the Land of the Rising Sun.

### Buddhism in Japan

Towards the middle of the sixth century A.D., a small group of Korean monks landed in southern Japan. Undismayed by the insolent raillery of feudal lords and the violent hostility of the priestly clan, they succeeded in

reaching the court of Emperor Kimmei to whom they presented gifts sent by Suong Myong, their king — a golden image of Buddha, some scrolls of his writings, and other sacred objects.

During several decades, the Buddhists kept discreetly in the background, although they by no means remained idle. By a strange, ironical twist of fate it came to pass that Buddha's cult of gentleness owed its expansion in Japan chiefly to the bitter jealousy of political rivals. In opposition to their deadly foes the Mononobe, loyal adherents of Shinto, the Soga encouraged and protected the new faith. The ambitious Soga, however, later found to be aspiring to the imperial throne itself were crushed under Kamatari, leader of another powerful clan, towards the middle of the sixth century.

The real founder of Japanese Buddhism was the regent Shotoku Taishi (593-621). Under his impulse a number of Korean monks, scholars, and artists came to Japan. Temples were erected and monasteries were built where the bonzes taught the doctrine of *Mahayana*, Greater Vehicle.

He justified his zeal for the new Way as follows: *Shinto* is the way of the gods and the first they have followed — it regards the past; *Judo* is the way of Confucius and of the right middle course — it regards the present; *Butsudo* is the way of Buddha leading to future life — it regards the way in which one must die to attain a happy eternity. Through this formula Shotoku may be said to have defined beforehand the eclecticism of the Japanese: they have always honoured their *kami* out of a patriotic feeling and of deepfelt respect for the

traditions of the ancients; from Confucianism they have borrowed a code of individual and social morality; to Buddhism they have turned to obtain a happy rebirth in the Pure Land.

Buddhist monks opposed to the cheerless cult of Shinto and its plain wooden shrines, colourful ritual, and gorgeous temples. Whereas Shinto priests neither taught nor preached, they regarded as part of their vocation to spread culture and knowledge. The more important monasteries or temples organized their own *terakoya*, sort of parochial school, where erudite monks taught the arts and the knowledge of India and China. The general education system in Japan was first designed by the bonzes.

By the second decade of the seventh century, there were in Japan 46 Buddhist temples, 818 priests, and 569 nuns. In 674 A. D., Emperor Temmu ordered that every Japanese house should henceforth have its own Buddhist family shrine or *butsudan*. So rapidly did the new cult progress that by 692 A. D., the 46 temples and monasteries had increased by 554. Towards the close of the same century, the famous monk, Kukai, better known as Kobo Daishi, (774-825 A. D.) diplomatically indentified the myriad *kami* of Shinto as avatars of Buddhist deities. Even Nippon's shining Mother goddess, *Amaterasu*, was but a brilliant reincarnation of Buddha, he declared. The Buddhist concept of *bosatsu*, beings having only one more transmigration to effect before becoming Buddhas, was applied to certain *kami*, Buddha and future Buddhas were grouped into «trinities», the most famous of which was Amida Butsu, Lord of

the Western Paradise, Buddha Shakyamuni, the human historical Buddha, Kwannon Bostsu (goddess of mercy) Buddha of the future. *Nirvana* instead of being the bare, unattractive land-of-no-desire, was depicted as a kingdom of pure delight filled with jewels, fountains, flowers, and singing birds.

A new brand of Buddhism the *Jodo*, Pure Land Movement, was inaugurated in the latter part of the twelfth century by the monk Honen a man of great personal charm and a lover of peace whose influence was considerable. According to him and to his immediate follower Shinran, belief not philosophic enlightenment was a requisite for arriving at *Nirvana*. He, moreover, decreed good works to be quite unnecessary. The most meaningful act of faith consisted in invoking the Lord of the Western Paradise under the sacred formula *Namu Amida Butsu* (adoration to the Buddha of boundless light).

Honen appeared at a troublous period of Japanese history. Thirty years of civil war between the powerful clans of Minamoto and Taira had left the populations wretched and despondent. In this suffocating atmosphere of battle and oppression, the great monk's message came as a refreshing celestial breeze. Everywhere he preached that Buddha Amida wished to facilitate redemption even to women whose only hope until then had been to be reborn as men in some subsequent transmigration. "Rejoice ye peasants, labourers, servitors, women, all... Eternal life is yours for the asking! You have but to repeat the blessed invocation, *Namu Amida Butsu*, and all your sins are washed away. For my part I pray it

60,000 times daily to obtain universal salvation." His disciple Shinran went further still in simplifying salvation. He declared that it was sufficient to pronounce only once in a lifetime the *Nembutsu*, invocation to Buddha, with extreme fervour in order to be reborn in the Pure Land.

More than ever, the lower classes turned to Buddhism for religious and intellectual expression. The bonzes celebrated services for the dead, organized festivals and pilgrimages, provided amulets and talismans for every occasion. Within their pantheon, Shinto, Hindu, and Chinese divinities fraternized: Kwannon, the merciful goddess, all kindness and benevolence; Benten, the beautiful heavenly princess whose attributes were wisdom and longevity; Binzuru, the compassionate god of medicine healing the sick who trustingly rubbed their ailing limbs against his statue, and hosts of others. Best beloved was Jizo, the Hindu god of earth, transformed by the Japanese into the protector of travellers and babies. According to Buddhist tradition, children could enter paradise only after crossing the *sai no kawara* (stony river of souls). Compelled to build small dikes with the pebbles of the river, they were constantly harassed by *Shozuka no baba*, the cruel witch, who bade her imps topple laboriously erected mounds. Fortunately, Jizo had but to appear and under his protection the little ones were led safely across the fatal river. If ever, while visiting Japan, you notice mounds of pebbles laid before the countless roadside statues of Jizo, you will understand that they have been placed there as petitions by bereaved mothers.

But if the teachings of Honen and of his followers brought consolation to the common people, the military classes for the most part spurned them as so much sentimental drivel. The severe standards of the Zen sect introduced into Japan by the monk Eisai in 1191, offered the brave *samurai* a more dynamic and invigorating doctrine teaching as it did that instead of relying on faith alone man should work out his salvation by austere discipline, by meditation and rigid self-control. Thus would be reached ultimate reality — the Buddha — within his own soul. The great Zen monasteries, academies of learning and centres of creative art, dominated the cultural life of feudal Japan.

The history of intellectual progress in Japan is the history of Buddhism. As Christianity was for Europe a source of inspiration more especially in the fields of art and literature, so was the Law of Buddha for Japan. It remained powerless, however, to clear in the soul of the nation the appalling confusion regarding man's final goal. Where could its numerous sects, its labyrinthine ways lead if not deeper into the Valley of the Shadow? People kept on yearning after a truer, clearer vision of the "land of pure felicity", the golden vision that St. Francis Xavier was to bring them nearly one thousand years after the introduction of Buddhism in their islands. The soul of Nippon thrilled then as never it had thrilled at the teachings of Shinto or Buddhism. Whereas no one had ever sacrificed his life for love of *Kami* or *Buddha*, countless thousands spilled their life blood to the last drop of loyalty to Christ, the Lord of Heaven.



# On Mother's Day

Dear Mother,

Whenever Mother's Day comes around, the words of the old song reecho within our hearts:

Oh! God bless you and keep you,  
Mother machree.

Yes, may He bless you, beloved confidante, advisor, mother, and may He keep you for many, long and happy years to our grateful affection.

You have really made us what we are today, fashioning each soul according to your own high and noble ideals. In the soul garden's you tended so lovingly and so well, God could not fail to cast the seeds of vocation to the religious life.

From earliest childhood you taught us to live in close intimacy with Our Lord, to bring to Him, to Our Blessed Mother, and to the saints, our little daily joys and annoyances. You showed us the beauty of a life lived to the hilt for God. I like to recall how every evening from September to June, you were always on hand to help us with our lessons and homework.

The week-ends, the holidays, what pleasant memories they bring! With expert hands you packed our picnic lunches or the trunks for trips around our beautiful province and beyond! Before starting on these outings you went around the house straightening chairs, arranging curtains, making sure everything was in the pink of order. And when Father's voice boomed, "Well, Mother, will you ever be ready?" out you popped into the hall cheeks flushed, head cocked a little to one side, looking each one of us over with pride and love in your eyes.

Picnics and trips were always yours to plan down to the least detail. True, Father offered to lend a hand but in spite of his goodwill he was more often a hindrance than a help except when he sat his 190 pounds on trunks that refused to snap shut! He also had a knack for making a certain brand of cookies according to a recipe that he held top secret. Sometimes he would make a great fuss about preparing sandwiches and mixing salads assuring us all the while somewhat aggrievedly that he enjoyed eating them more than making them.

After the joyous departures came the even more joyous homecomings. The car was stocked with pretty shells, curiously-shaped pebbles, and what-nots which we strewed all over the place. You then took the occasion to have us put into practice the old proverb "A place for each thing and each thing in its place".

From you we learned to knit and to sew. Patiently, you initiated us into the secrets of housekeeping. Of course, we all were immensely proud of your accomplishments as a housekeeper. You were and always will be our beau ideal of a wife and mother who found all her earthly happiness in devoting herself to her family.



*And so it was that unawares you prepared us for the missionary life we have since embraced. God bless you for your firm and wise guidance!*

*When we broached the subject of our vocation, although you keenly felt the sacrifice of separation, you did all in your power to smooth difficulties, true in this to your philosophy of life, "The art of being happy consists in doing exactly what we are called to do."*

*And now your two daughters proudly wear the blue and white liveries of Our Lady. On this blessed day so filled with memories they pray God to shower upon you blessings of all sorts in return for your boundless kindness. May He grant our beloved country many mothers like you.*

*Your two daughters who love you "always more than yesterday and much less than tomorrow".*

*Sister Lucille and Sister Carmen, Novices*

# Our Dear Departed

His Exc. Msgr. A. Martin, Bishop of **Matanzas, Cuba**; Msgr. William-J. Conway P.A., V.G., **Edmundston, N.B.**, Rector of the Cathedral; Reverend Edward F. Garesche, S.J., **United States**; Reverend Brother André Paquette, C.S.V., **Joliette**, brother of our late Mother Marie de la Providence; our dear Sisters Saint Anaclet (Elodie Boisvert, **Sherbrooke**), Saint Leo (Irene Nadeau, **Bedford**) and Therese of the Child Jesus (Yvonne Gerin, **Coaticook**) sister of our Sisters Magdalen of the Cross, Mary of the Cenacle, Marie Auguste, Marie Leonise and Marie Emma; Mr. J. B. Maillet, **Saint Louis, N. B.**, foster father of our Sister Marie of the Redemption; Mr. Ernest Julien, **Montreal**, father of our Sister Eulalie de Jésus; Mrs. Joseph Lebel, **Saint Andre of Kamouraska**, mother of our Sister Bernadette Soubirous; Mrs. Louis Pageau, **Montreal**, mother of our Sister Jean Louis; Mrs. Samuel Demers, **Laprairie**, mother of our Sister Saint Francis of Borgia; Mr. Aurele Normand, **Saint Jean Port Joli**, father of our Sister Saint Antoinette; Mrs. Philippe Dumas, **Saint Eloi of Temiscouata**, mother of our Sister Saint Valerie; Mr. Olivier Dériger, **Montreal**, father of our Sister Paul of Jesus; Mr. J. G. Labreche, **Pointe Gatineau**, father of our Sister John of Galilee; Mr. Edouard Juneau, **Saint Catherine of Portneuf**, father of our Sister Rose Magdalen; Mr. Elie Bourbeau, **Beaudry, Abitibi**, brother of our Sister Mary of the Blessed Sacrament; Miss Louise Belainsky, **Saint Basil le Grand**, sister of our Sisters Saint Benoit and Saint Scholastica; Mrs. Joseph Landriault, **Cheneville**, sister of our Sister Mary of the Annunciation; Mr. Jules Lavallée, **Lauzon**, brother of our Sister Marie Auxiliatrice; Mr. Robert Ricard, **Saint Laurent, Montreal**, brother of our Sister Saint Yves; Mr. Lucien Cantin, **Quebec**, brother of our Sister Marie Ruth; Mrs. Leo Letendre, **Saint Hyacinthe**, sister of our Sisters Saint Aime and Margaret of the Infant Jesus; Mr. Bruno Lemay, **Saint Hyacinthe**, brother of our Sister Saint Albine; Miss Lucille Dubois, **Saint Ferdinand d'Halifax**, sister of our Sister Saint Odilon; Mr. Rosario Blanchet, **Lambton**, brother of our Sister Marie Leopold; Miss Anna de Grandpré, **Pawtucket, R.I.**, sister of our Sister Saint Lucille; Mrs. Bouvier, **Worcester, Mass.**, sister of our Sister Joseph of the Holy Family; Mrs. Albert Labelle, **Saint Agathe**, sister of our Sister Cécile de Milan; M. J.-Alfred Laforest, **Riviere du Loup**, brother of our Sister Magdalen of Jesus; Mr. George Buisnières, **Quebec**, brother of our Sister Marguerite Bourgeoys; Mrs. J. D. Guillemette, **Saint Hyacinthe**, grand-mother of our Sister Saint Camille; Mrs. Thomas Imbeault, **Pointe aux Bouleaux**, grandmother of our Sister Marie Léa; Mrs. Alfred Tessier, **Saint Elisabeth of Joliette**, grandmother of our Sister Gérard Majella; Mrs. Esdras Jutras, **Montreal**; Mrs. Florence Casey, **Montreal**; Mr. J. Clodomir Aubert, **Pont Viau**; Mr. Anthime Lamontagne, **Saint Lambert**; Mr. Fortunat Monette, **Saint Philippe de Laprairie**; Mrs. Hormisdas Gratton, **Saint Therese de Blainville**; Mrs. Joseph Allard, **Saint Elizabeth**; Mrs. Emile Laporte, **Our Lady of Lourdes**; Mrs. Alfred Beaupré, **Saint Beatrix**; Mrs. Valerie Poulin, **Richmond**; Mrs. Lucien Gervais, Mrs. Emile Cote, **Saint Hyacinthe**; Mrs. Joseph Bureau, **Saint Louis de Courville**; Mrs. Ulric Legault, **Ile Perrot**; Mr. Louis Philippe L'Ecuyer, **Hull**; Mrs. Auguste Morin, Mrs. Daniel McMahon, **Quebec**; Mrs. Napoleon L'Ecuyer, **Saint Alban**; Mrs. Arthur Nadeau, **Saint Frederic**; Mrs. Arthur Perreault, **Saint Marie**; Mrs. Ludger Ouellet, **Saint Andre of Kamouraska**; Mr. Joseph Perron, **Saint Prime**; Dr. Gustave Gauthier, **Chicoutimi**; Mrs. Paul Bourdeau, **Embrun, Ont.**; Mr. Charles Edouard Roy, **Trois-Pistoles**; Mrs. Addie Belisle, **Aldenville, Mass.**; Miss Melina Vaillancourt, **Quebec**; Mrs. Esther Quesnel, **Saint Aubin sur Mer, Seine Maritime, France**; Mr. Roma Mitchell, **Montreal**; Mrs. Joseph Eugene Boutet, **Beaupoirt**; Mrs. Johnny Veillette, **Quebec**; Mr. Anthime Laurin, **Chasy, N. Y.**; Mrs. Arthur I. Bergeron, **Marlboro, Mass.**; Mrs. Josephine Roy, **Newton, Mass.**; Mrs. Arsene Bossé, **Salem, Mass.**; Mrs. Leon Laplante, **Melocheville**.

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