

THE PRECURSOR

March—April 1969 Montreal—Vol. XXVIII—no 8

Photo: R. Ming Fung

A belle of the Sun Moon Lake region.



MARCH MISSIONARY INTENTION:

That the Church's contribution to the development of all nations be acknowledged and accepted by those who live in mission lands.

Hear our prayer, O Lord.

APRIL MISSIONARY INTENTION:

That a sufficient number of missionaries be given adequate formation for apostleship in Latin America.

Hear our prayer, O Lord.

THE PRECURSOR

No 8 — March — April 1969 — Vol. XXVIII

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Sun Moon Lake

With its pleasant meadows, its shimmering lakes, its rolling green hills, and its sixty-four magnificent peaks which punctuate the sky at over 3,000 metres, Taiwan is a land of enchanting beauty.

The island's most popular resort, Sun Moon Lake in the foothills of the Central Mountain Range, lies at an altitude of 2,508 feet above sea level. Extending over an area of 700 hectares, it is about fifteen miles in length. It owes its name to the fact that its northern part appears rounded out, somewhat in the shape of the sun, while its southern surface presents something of a lunar panorama. On its shores one may explore historic temples and a picturesque aborigine village.

Historic temples

Hsien Tsang temple stands on the tiny island of Kuang Hua, emerging from the centre of the lake.

Sister Jeannette Légaré, M.I.C.

Its founder was a Buddhist monk called Hsien Tsang who flourished during the Tang dynasty (A.D. 559-664). This great Chinese scholar, learned in Buddhist lore, travelled as far as India with a view of increasing his knowledge of the Buddha's teachings by a return to the sources. After remaining in India all of eighteen years, he returned to his native land bringing with him 657 volumes of sacred Buddhist writings which he translated, with the approval of the Emperors Tai Chung and Kao Chung, for the benefit of the Chinese people.

During the Sino-Japanese conflict, the mortal remains of Hsien Tsang were transferred from China to Japan, but on December 25, 1955, they were returned to the Republic of China which had them enshrined at Sun Moon Lake. This temple in the middle of the lake is a much frequented place of pilgrimage for devout Buddhists.

People of the soil

Visitors to this part of the island never fail to make a tour of the village of aborigines, situated in the vicinity. Attired in their traditional costumes, the villagers perform tribal dances, sell handicrafts and willingly oblige those who wish to photograph them. Although a good number of aborigines make a living out of such demonstrations, the younger generation tends to seek more lucrative and steadier employment.





These young girls
wearing colourful tribal costumes
performed
folklore dances and songs
in our honour.

Welcome
to our village!





Tattooing
used to be fashionable
among the mountain people.

Sister Jeannette Légaré, M.I.C.,
and one other friends.



The population of this village which at present numbers about 500 represents only a part of the 200,000 aborigines of Taiwan. These former headhunters, driven back into the mountains by the inflow from the Chinese mainland, may usually be subdivided into ten principal tribes: Tayal, Ami, Saisa, Bunum, Thao, Taou, Rukai, Paiwan, Puyama, and Yami. The majority live in remote districts of the great mountain range which bisects Taiwan from north to south.

Their origin, the variety of human types they represent, their customs and mores, are as yet an unsolved riddle for many ethnologists. They are generally believed to be the descendants of emigrant tribes from Indonesia and Malaysia. The majority are farmers, eking out a meagre subsistence from fishing and hunting.

In order to raise their living standards, the government gives appreciable assistance to the tribes as far as education, sanitation, and food are concerned. Aboriginal children now attend school; adults are given opportunity for vocational education. Gradually, the young people are moving down into the lowlands where they are assuming their rightful place in society.

Aboriginal languages offer a bewildering variety. Not only has each tribe its dialect, but people from one village may not understand the language spoken by a neighbouring settlement. Among older people, Japanese has been a sort of linking agent. Since it was compulsory during the Japanese occupation, numerous adults use it more or less fluently. At present the *Kuo-yu* or national language is taught in all the schools.

A hardy, sociable people

The aborigines of Taiwan are, as a rule, peaceable, plucky, and sociable. Through the vicissitudes of passing centuries, they have maintained a passionate attachment to their ancestral rites and customs, and a dignity all their own.

Their dances recall episodes, sad or joyful, from their checkered history. For them, the trees, the streams, the mountains, are filled with spirits at times friendly, occasionally hostile. Tourists are often surprised to find, along the mountain trails, stone markers set up in view of warding off any evil influence exercised by the spirits who might harm passersby, unless duly propitiated.

One strange local custom decrees that a newborn baby must be immersed in a bath of ice-cold water. This is supposed to stimulate his or her senses and to banish impending evil. The child who survives this ordeal will live to be a hardy member of the tribe.

Songs and dances

Folklore dances and songs punctuate aboriginal religious ceremonies which mark the seeding season or the harvest festivities. Social events, betrothals, births, marriages are highlighted by music, songs, and recitations recalling ancient legends or high feats of tribal heroes.

Tattooing and clothing

Tattooing used to be quite fashionable among the mountain tribes. As a rule, boys of 14 were tattooed on the forehead, the chest, or the chin; girls on the cheeks, the chest, and the legs. Modern youths tend to discard this custom.

Aboriginal costumes, always colourful, are intended to indicate divergences of tribes. Nowadays, however, only the older people attach importance to tribal apparel. The young generation favours modern dress.

For the occasional visitor as well as for the Taiwanese, the Sun Moon Lake region, set against a backdrop of scenic grandeur, evokes the beauty of the lost Garden of Paradise.



PEOPLE OF TAIWAN'S MOUNTAINS

In Father Graff's jeep we lately travelled to a remote mountain district up to where the hamlet of Chin Chuan Wufeng stands, perched like an eagle's nest atop rugged slopes.

It was a pleasant surprise for us to find, in this all but inaccessible area, a church large enough to accommodate six hundred Christians. Father S. Yuan, S. J., pastor of the mission, extended a cordial welcome. During the Mass that followed our arrival, the young people sang several



inspiring hymns in Chinese and the assembly of the faithful also made the liturgical responses in the vernacular.

During the afternoon, we visited some Christian families in the neighbourhood. In order to do so we had to cross a bridge of sorts, slung not over a river but across a dizzy precipice.

The only school in the region is situated in Chin Chuan Wufeng. About seventy-five children board in flimsy bamboo huts set up by their parents, close to the parochial centre. These children live too far to be able to commute daily.

The people around here have a very low standard of living. Lumbering is about their only source of revenue. Some eke out a meagre subsistence raising beans, cabbages, ground nuts, and rice on tiered terraces, ingeniously carved out of the mountainside. Bamboo is utilized to fashion rustic furniture, utensils, and tools. Fruit trees have lately been introduced in the region, by the missionaries, with a view to providing a more abundant and wholesome diet.

Perhaps the gravest problem of Chin Chuan Wufeng today is the lack of a resident doctor. Whenever an accident occurs or someone is fatally stricken with



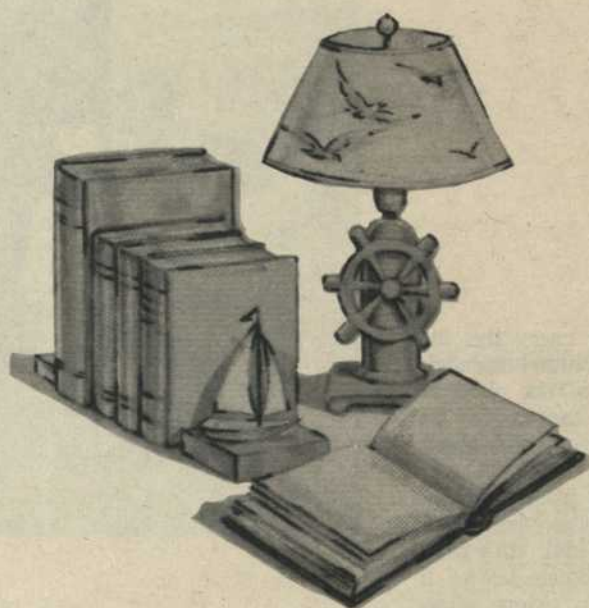
disease, volunteers carry the injured or ailing in a crude hammock over the hills, to the nearest telephone. This can take as long as one hour's walk along slippery mountain trails. A taxi can then be called from a neighbouring town. If the people are too poor to pay a taxi, they may walk for several hours before a hospital is reached. More often than not, the patient is by then beyond medication.

We can hardly blame the mountain people for wanting to keep the sisters in their midst in order to teach their children, the girls more especially, and to care for their sick. To our deep regret, we had to leave our newly-found friends without being able to respond to their earnest pleadings. Who knows? Perhaps later when young missionaries in greater number come to Taiwan, we may be able to build close to the "eagles' nest" a well-equipped medical centre. That is a favourite dream of mine.

Back in Shih Kuang Tse, that same evening, we told the sisters who had kept house, about the fervent mountain Christians we had met. The latter are indebted for the precious gift of faith to the pioneer missionaries who brought them, in the face of great difficulties, the Good News of salvation.

Marie Louise Gosselin, M.I.C.





Jottings from Latin America

Nowadays, numerous commentaries are being circulated with respect to religious life and its role in the post-conciliar Church.

To you who are in doubt, who ponder, and who seek, I dedicate my journal as a tyro missionary.

But, I have no time to read, I hear you exclaim. Do take the time to glance at least over the following jottings which may throw light on certain problems.

Lima, October 4, 1967

The day was filled with mellow autumn radiance and my heart was filled with bitter-sweet happiness. Here I was mission bound at long last! The years of formation had seemed unending while they lasted but, after all, they were few compared to the 30 or 40 years I hope to spend on the missions.

During Holy Mass and the hour of mental prayer, I prayed, "Dear Lord, grant me to become a sign of hope in Latin America. May its people discover through me, the significance of undying Christian hope."

All my dear ones were at table with me on that last supper taken in the homeland. Conversation lagged, for the idea of impending separation haunted every one of us. As the French poet has it, "*Partir, c'est mourir un peu...*" (To leave is to die a little).

At 7:00 p.m., the sisters all assembled in the lobby to bid us godspeed. We passed between their ranks rapidly, and made our way to the door where another group of sisters sang the traditional traveller's hymn to our Lady, *Ave Maris Stella*. Then, the cars sped along the highway that led to Dorval.

At the airport, last farewells were exchanged and off we went to board the plane that would take us over the Andes and far away. In spite of the wrench at parting, joy was uppermost. My dear ones were sad but happy at the same time, for they knew that my lifelong dream had at last come true.

October 5, 1967

Latin America was shrouded in mysterious veils of mist when we taxied down the runway, at the Lima airport. How happy we were to see two of our sisters waiting on the terrace to welcome us to our Promised Land!

October 8, 1967

At 6:00 a.m., I left with a companion for *Barriada 28 de julio* where the conciliar mission was in full swing. The *barriada* consists of rows upon rows of tumbledown shacks of every description where people live in stark poverty. As we made our way to the Centre, tousled heads peered from rickety doorways. In front of us shuffled an emaciated child of five or six, clad in filthy rags. She shivered in the cold humidity of a Lima winter morning.

People here and there began to emerge from their hovels, making their way to the Centre where Mass was to be offered. Barefoot, with only thin ragged garments to protect them against the weather, they looked dispirited and tired of life. Who could blame them? Their standard of living is certainly sub-human. Looking at them as they trudged past, I realized to what an extent I had been privileged. My vocation appeared to me from the point of view of justice. Was it not fair that I who had been given so much on the level of faith, should in turn help these materially and spiritually impoverished people? Fragments of Saint Exupery's book, *Terre des Hommes*, came back to my memory: "To be a man means to feel ashamed, when faced with misery not of one's own making... to feel responsible for the fate of other men... to feel that by laying one's brick, one may contribute in building up the world..."

Confessions over, Father vested for Mass while the faithful crowded so close around him that he had hardly the place to move. Glancing over the jostling assistance, eager to hear the word of God, I realized that I had much to learn from these "poor of Yawheh."

November 5, 1967

...I would love to spend my days visiting the people of this parish who number 30,000. I keenly feel the need of establishing contacts, of listening to them, of assimilating their culture, their civilization; of penetrating their channels of thought, of considering life as they do, of becoming one of them. This implies thorough knowledge of Spanish which I do not possess as yet. I must take up my school books again if I do not want to risk being satisfied with acquiring only the rudiments of the language...

November 10, 1967

Returning home from the *barriada*, this afternoon, I experienced my first temptation to give up my studies of social service in order to go to work right away. I am sure I could do *something*. Why should I spend all of four years studying, while so many crying needs around me require immediate attention?

November 20, 1967

I am just back from a visit to a young woman who lives in a tiny three-room house. She made me sit on her one and only chair while she squatted on a wooden bedstead. Everything was indescribably filthy. Before taking leave, I offered her a rosary. Overjoyed, she begged me to stay a little longer so as to teach her how to use it. From an ancient battered trunk, she brought out a missal in which the more ordinary prayers of the Christian could be found. Because of my scant knowledge of Castilian, I could not grasp all that she was trying to tell me. I understood at least this much — she wanted me to give her the address of a priest who might be able to help her out.

December 24, 1967

Is this really Christmas Eve, I asked myself, as I looked at the spring flowers, the green grass, the shady trees... The Eucharistic Sacrifice was offered at 9:00 p.m., in order to accommodate the faithful. Close to me, sat an Indian mamma in gaudy voluminous skirts with a baby riding pickaback. The familiar carols were sung recalling many pleasant memories of days gone by...

**"To be a man means that... by laying one's
brick, one may contribute in building up the
world."**

Photo: United Nations

Photo: Canadian Pacific

A poor sector
in the
Lima suburbs.

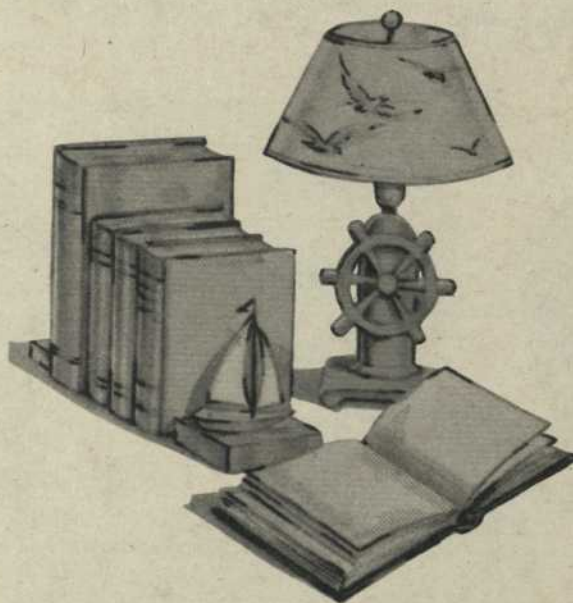


Children
of the barriada
proudly
pose
for their picture.



...As I was on my way back from the market, I was stopped by a group of students. They wanted to show me a Bible bought by one of their companions. The cover was bright red and as they passed it on to me, I was amazed to find the following title in large gilt letters, *Biblia de Mao Tse Tung!* "Are you disciples of Mao?" I asked. They looked at one another in a diffident manner, then asked, "Could we discuss the matter with you sometime?" I invited them to call at the convent on the following day. I really believe that these young people are sincere in their search for truth.

The group came the next day, as promised, and the discussion was soon launched. One of the boys remarked, "The Church indicates what must be done, but nobody does anything. Is violence then the only way of getting justice done?" "Revolution is indeed the only way," I answered, "provided it be the revolution of love. Violence can only lead to chaos. In order to develop a country, each must do his share. What are you, young folk, doing just now for your country? Are you seriously preparing for your future as leaders of your people?" They confided that at the University where they were studying there was lot of Marxist ideology being expounded. We talked for about an hour, then we parted with the promise of meeting again soon.



I must bring this Journal to a close although I would still have so much to write. There are so many things you should really know about... Just now, however, the most important thing for me is to study hard. The courses in social service are really worthwhile. I firmly believe that I am already bearing witness after a fashion. Religious life has a sign value. Latin American civilization has not yet been dried up by the era of techniques. It can still grasp the significance of such a sign value and I believe it does.

Good-Bye!

Agnès Bouchard M.I.C.



STUDENT DOINGS IN HAITI

(Article dedicated to the students of Immaculate Conception Secondary School, Granby.)

Dear friends and students,

A few months ago I left my homeland for Haiti. My contacts with Haitian students have brought me so much happiness that I want to share some of it with my former pupils.

Would you like to meet a few of my new friends? Here are Monica (18) and Violette (20) who will tell you about family life in Haiti.



The Haitian Family

The family in Haiti comprises not only father, mother, and children, but uncles, aunts, grandfathers, and grandmothers. A family of ten children is reckoned as average. Moreover, in each home there is usually one child from some other house employed to do the light chores.

At times, both father and mother help to earn the daily subsistence. The latter may work as a teacher, a nurse, a secretary. More often than not

she is content with being just a good housewife and mother. The education of girls is strictly controlled; that of boys often seems to be neglected.

Farmers usually rise at 4 a.m., while city dwellers are up by 5 a.m. The latter retire towards 10 p.m. but the farmers go to bed much earlier, for they work very hard from dawn to dusk.

As a rule, Haitians eat only one square meal a day. In the morning they take a cup of coffee and a piece of bread; supper is very light. Country



The Caribbean Sea.



Leisure.

The Haitian family.

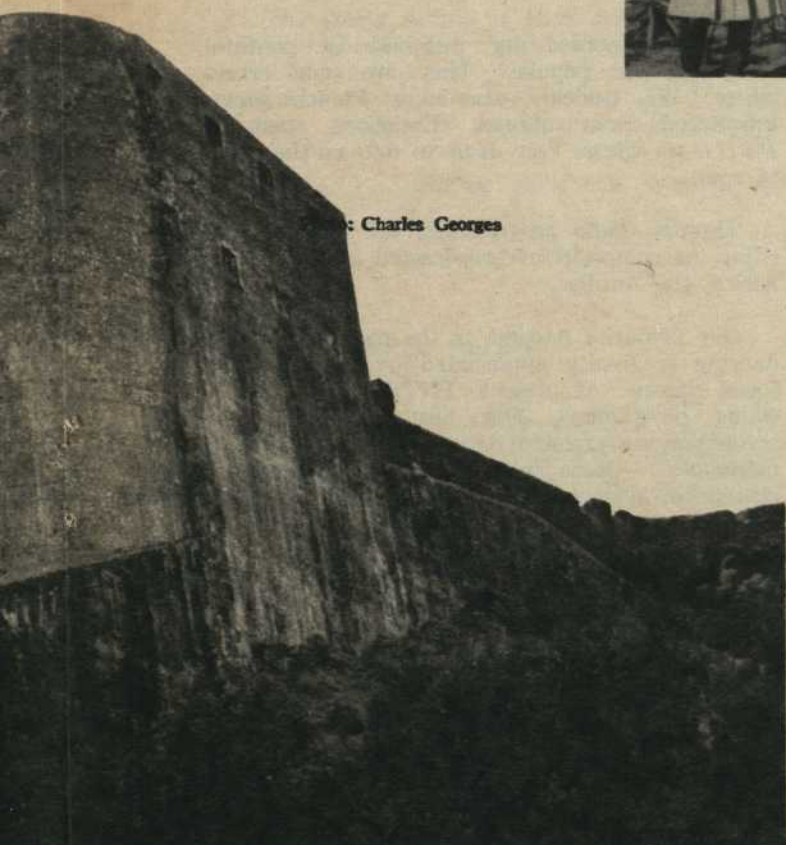


The Citadel.





**Student milieu:
Cap Haitien
Teaching College.**



: Charles Georges



people eat cassava, bread made from the crushed root of the cassava. The favourite national dish is *pois et riz*, pease and rice.

Monica (18) Violette (20).

★ ★ ★

Student Milieu

In order to help students round out their education, several centres have been organized.

After completing the secondary course, the students may attend university faculties of law, medicine, ethnology, normal school, etc.

Schooling is free of charge in Haiti, from kindergarten to university, except in private institutions.

Many young people go abroad to pursue their studies, either at their own cost or thanks to scholarships awarded by the government. But the greater number do not return to their homeland, once their studies have been completed. This is regrettable as Haiti badly needs their collaboration.

Myriam (21) and Rose (24)

★ ★ ★

Leisure

"Leisure" is a magic word for youth the world over. We, Haitian students, also enjoy leisure hours. During the school year, however, we work hard and in spite of occasional entertainment we hardly have the time to feel the joy of living.

When the holidays come around, we eagerly seize the opportunities offered and organize many a pleasant outing.

Sunday is our favourite. The streets are filled with joyful groups that come and go. In the afternoon, many leave for the country to enjoy fresh air and wider horizons. Port au Prince grows very quiet after the departure of families for summer resorts such as Pétionville and Kenscoff.

In the north, there are yearly excursions to the eighth marvel of the world — the citadel. People from all over Haiti take pleasure in visiting this historic site.

City folk enjoy the movies. Every Friday night, there are good films showing. For their part, country folk like to attend cock fights.

Several schools around the Cap Haitien region: Fanelise François, Regina Assumpta, and at times the Teaching College, organize leisure centres for young girls. Such centres cater to every taste; one may learn to knit or to crochet, to perform folk dances or to sing foreign songs, to play ping-pong or football. In all Haitian cities there are sports teams which enjoy competing among themselves. The people as a whole are very fond of sports.

In the capital, volley ball is all the rage. Besides, many young people like to swim. Several schools now have their own swimming pools, like that at Diquini.

Music is the universal language. We Haitians are very fond of expressing our sentiments through melodious channels. We can boast of several orchestras which usually play outdoors, against picturesque landscapes. Young people have set up many musical clubs bearing the modern names of "Shle-Shle", "Super Stars", "Blue Devils", "Fantasies"... Haitian parents are willing to make sacrifices so that their children may learn to play on the piano, the violin, the guitar, etc.

Songs composed by members of youthful orchestras are popular. They are sung everywhere. We, students, also enjoy French songs, introduced from abroad. Emissions such as *Paris et ses vedettes* keep us up to date on the world of song.

Through radio programmes, we also learn to enjoy the compositions broadcasted from America, Africa, the Antilles.

Our favourite pastime is the dance. Folklore dancing is greatly appreciated by people of all social classes. At present, TNTF presents interesting programmes. Our best orchestras also accompany such modern dances as tango, bongalow, meringues... Occasionnally, a good programme of classical or modern ballet is shown in Cap Haïtien.

Joseline (23) and Jeannine (21)

★ ★ ★

The Faith of Youth

Young people in their teens often flaunt their religious indifference. This is true more especially of the boys who enjoy teasing the girls whom they consider as "pious". They nickname the latter *dédée, bigotes, ma mère...* There are exceptions, of course. Between 23 and 30 years of age, these youths usually return to the practice of their faith. Marriage, difficulties, trials help steer them back into the right paths.

Thanks to the good religious and moral education which they benefit by, girls rarely fall into religious indifferentism.

The Council has exerted a beneficial influence over Haitian student youth. Masses are celebrated in the vernacular, homilies are more to the point. We find that priests and religious have grown accessible to the faithful at large. God is presented to us as a father or a friend, not as a stern ruler or judge. This is bringing about a remarkable renewal in our Christian life.

Vocations to the priesthood or to religious life are rare, but this does not necessarily reflect a lack of generosity on our part. Material, spiritual, and social factors also play their role.

The young people of Haiti have no love for celibacy lived in the world. They refuse to consider it as a vocation. Few are those who remain celibates out of the desire to serve the Church or society. As a rule, young girls want to marry.

Adeline (19) and Marlène (21)

★ ★ ★

Looking to the Future

Haitian youth looks forward to a better organized, more dynamic life which will respond to their aspirations.

The majority of young students want to enter a liberal profession. They dream of bringing their studies to completion by an extended trip abroad, in order to get acquainted with divers civilizations.

Those who adopt manual trades would like to perfect their methods, more especially those who engage in agriculture. Our local farming implements such as the *machele* and the hoe are crude, and their use entails great fatigue.

Another field which could stand improvement is that of handcrafts such as basket-making, pottery, weaving... This sort of work should be more rationally planned and distributed.

But the most wonderful of our projects for the future consists in the creation of happy comfortable homes filled with beautiful, healthy children whom we could surround with tender love and care.

Jocelyne (20) and Marie (20)

★ ★ ★

You will probably say that Haitian students are in no way different from the students of America and you are right.

Would you like to correspond with one or other of these girls? If so, all you have to do is to write and tell me. I will gladly send you an address, for these girls are my pupils whom I have learned to cherish and admire.

*Louise Gauvin, M.I.C.
Professional Teaching College
Cap Haitien, HAITI,
Antilles.*



MYSTERY WORD

by Mr. Jean-Claude Langlois

- ◆ *By assembling the non-encircled letters (horizontally only), you will find the hidden word, after you have inserted all the words BUT ONE, written above the square. The letters which make up the hidden word are in chronological order.*
- ◆ *For greater facility, first insert the longest words.*
- ◆ *As soon as you discover a word, encircle the letters of this word in the square and cross the word out from the list above the square.*
- ◆ *The only words useful for the square are those matching in theme the hidden word.*
- ◆ *As soon as you have used up all the words BUT ONE from the list above the square, there will remain only the letters for the hidden word.*
- ◆ *Any word accompanied by the asterisk (★) is doubled in the square.*

YOU MAY DISCOVER THE HIDDEN WORD

*by encircling the letters of the words either
HORIZONTALLY, from left to right, or from right to left;
VERTICALLY, up—down, or down—up;
DIAGONALLY, from left to right, or from right to left.*

N.B. A given letter can be used for several words depending on their direction, except for the hidden word.

"VOCATION"

LOOK FOR

MYSTERY WORD

THE MYSTERY WORD
IS INCLUDED
IN THE LIST BELOW

When all the words will be used to encircle the letters below, except one, the remaining letters will form the mystery word.

A
answer
B
bond
C
celibacy
charity
choice
chosen
claim

clergy
congregation
H
decision
demand
departure
difference
discovery
dream

E
elected
F
fervour
fidelity
G
generosity
gift
H
hope

L
lay
liberty
love
M
marriage
motive
O
order

P
plan
pledge
project
R
reflexion
religious
resolution
S
scheme

service
sign
T
test
V
vocation
voice
W
way
witness

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
1	E	S	R	N	O	I	T	A	G	E	R	G	N	O	C
2	C	I	E	E	Y	G	R	E	L	C	T	S	E	T	C
3	N	G	L	L	W	P	L	A	N	E	S	O	H	C	R
4	E	N	I	G	I	S	E	C	I	O	H	C	S	E	U
5	R	O	G	I	E	B	N	M	E	E	Y	S	D	J	O
6	E	I	I	F	C	N	E	A	V	T	E	R	E	O	V
7	F	T	O	T	L	L	E	R	I	N	O	I	M	R	R
8	F	A	U	D	E	P	A	R	T	U	R	E	A	P	E
9	I	C	S	Y	A	W	A	I	O	Y	H	B	N	E	F
10	D	O	L	A	Y	H	W	A	M	S	E	O	D	G	L
11	E	V	O	I	C	E	A	G	C	A	I	V	P	D	E
12	L	N	O	I	S	I	C	E	D	Y	E	T	O	E	X
13	I	B	O	N	D	I	S	C	O	V	E	R	Y	L	I
14	T	S	C	H	E	M	E	L	E	C	T	E	D	P	O
15	V	E	C	I	V	D	E	S	O	I	U	T	I	O	N

In its Decree *Ad Gentes* the Council throws light upon the problem of the missionary vocation. During the last decade, more particularly, the need has been felt for a doctrinal deepening which might help dispel confusion and misunderstanding regarding this problem.

The entire Church being missionary by definition, why stress the fact that there exists, nonetheless, a specifically missionary vocation? Are not all Christians bound to spread the faith? Besides, since completely dechristianized areas are found in our own Christian centres, why be concerned about the mission field afar? Finally, since the renewal of the apostolic spirit in our dioceses has sparked in our young people the desire to spend at least a few years in the service of the missions, why continue to urge on youth a perpetual involvement outside of diocesan boundaries?

Objections such as these have undoubtedly raised prejudice against the missions. Even the encyclical *Fidei Donum*, published in 1957, was hampered in its application by such undercurrents due to which the Church found itself unable to produce the desired impact on missionary activity in Africa. This disturbing state of mind was exposed during the Council, notably in the debates of November 1964 as well as in those of October 1965, debates which served to clarify the issue. Numerous interventions then took place of which we here note the most significant passages.

Mgr. Geise declared in the name of the Indonesian hierarchy: "Some among the Fathers have asserted that missionary activity may be identified with the simple fact of teaching the Gospel... Our group is unanimous in rejecting such an opinion as erroneous; it should not figure in the schema." For his part, Mgr. De Grijze, Superior General of the Congregation of Scheut, affirmed: "It is one thing to work in the homeland or in Christian or dechristianized milieux; it is another to work in the mission fields afar, among non-Christians. The missionary vocation is characterized by its object, i.e., the evangelization and the implantation of the Church."

According to Cardinal Bea, the first and principal amendment of the schema on the Missions



A meeting may spark a beginning.

Last October, Pope Paul VI gave the mission crucifix to 500 missionaries. Among these were 34 lay apostles (5 married couples).



THE MISSIONARY VOCATION



MGR. J. LECUONA, M.E.B.

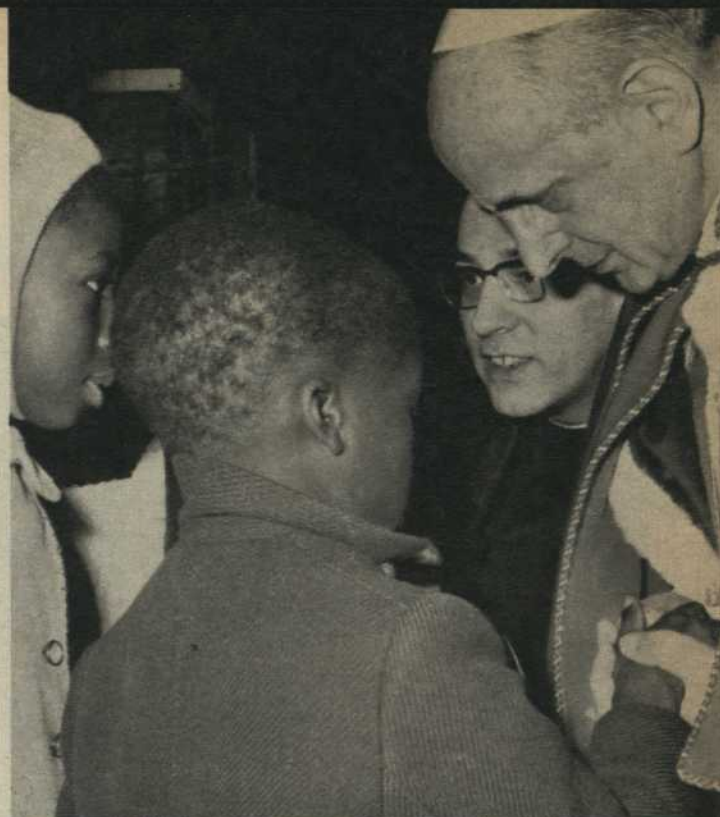
should doubtless "consist in clarifying the specific aim of missionary activity, in such a way that it will be more easily grasped and appreciated by the men of our times".

Finally, Cardinal Alfrink, primate of Holland, after the presentation of statistics proving how the number of missionaries had been recently decreasing, went on to say: "It seems evident that this decrease cannot be compensated by sending diocesan priests, desirous of giving assistance during only a few years to the new Churches situated in mission territories... How will the Church put into effect the Lord's precept if the number of missionaries does not increase? By missionaries, I mean priests who, through a particular vocation, dedicate their entire lives to this task by a total consecration."

Special vocation

The Decree *Ad Gentes* stressed on several occasions the essentially missionary character of the Church. By her very nature she is bound to spread the faith (general missionary vocation). "The obligation to spread the faith rests with all the disciples of Christ." Nevertheless, "our Saviour Christ Jesus, always calls among His own, those whom He wants to call... in order to send them to teach all nations" (particular vocation). Such vocations although particular are by no means extraordinary, rare, exceptional. For the Lord cannot fail to provide for this constant necessity of the Church. It is in this sense that the word *always* should be interpreted: "*Christus Dominus semper vocat.*"

That God unceasingly provides for the principal work of the Church by a particular call of labourers, is abundantly proved by Pontifical directions addressed to the bishops in recent times. Already, Benedict XV insisted that the bishops should foster "among the clergy and within diocesan seminaries the dispositions to the apostolate evinced by certain members of the clergy". In this document, the Pope had just referred to the necessity of an adequate formation "for those whom God called to the missions". And Pius XI added, "If there are, in any of your dioceses, youths, clerics, or priests convinced that God is



The Holy Father greets a group of Senegalese children.

calling them to this eminent apostolate, encourage them and lend them your assistance". Addressing himself to the religious Superiors of Portugal, Pius XII reminded them that "no one can enter the difficult and arduous paths of the apostolate (missionary) unless called by a special grace of God". This same Pope manifested his profound satisfaction in witnessing "the present increase, to the great consolation of the Church, of the number of those called by celestial inspiration to the eminent function of spreading the Glad Tidings throughout the world". Shortly afterwards, Pope Pius XII exalted the missionary vocation: "He who is called, by celestial inspiration, to teach the evangelical truths and the Christian virtues to the people of distant lands accomplish an important and even sublime ministry".

The particular character of a vocation is determined by the function it is called upon to assume or the state of life towards which a person is drawn. "It is God who has given to some the grace to be priests, to others to be prophets or evangelists." Among the various tasks included in the great salvific mission of the Church continuing that of Christ Himself, missionary acti-



Photos: Fides

The whole world
is the Church's
mission field.



Pope Paul VI gives
the mission crucifix
to 500 missionaries
from all climes and
races.

vity is marked by special and definite characteristics. Its proper aim is "the evangelization, and the implantation of the Church among peoples or groups where, as yet, it has not taken root, (*Ad Gentes*, No 6). This entails certain qualities, a special and adequate adaptation not required to the same extent for other apostolic activities. The Holy Spirit who distributes His gifts as He pleases, in view of the common good, inspires this vocation to those whom He destines to this particular work. That the missionary vocation is distinct from the priestly vocation has been recognized by the Council itself, since it urges the bishops "to favour missionary vocations as far as they can". Let us now examine the question more closely.

P roper characteristics of missionary vocation

The text of the decree *Ad Gentes* merely points out the elements which constitute the missionary vocation: call of God, personal cooperation of the candidate, intervention of the Hierarchy. However, by studying the Decree *Optatum Totius* concerning priestly formation, one can easily pinpoint the intentions of the Council regarding the matter. Although the analogy between the missionary vocation and the priestly vocation is evident, the former supposes a call to a specific ministry. Missionary activity is so closely linked to the salvific mission of the Church that the Pope unhesitatingly designates it as an "eminent work", an "important and sublime ministry", a "paramount duty". It is with the mission as with the priesthood. God calls and chooses from among those blessed with the common priesthood, those whom He wishes to endow with the ministerial priesthood. Likewise, God chooses from among the faithful called to collaborate in missionary sends and work, those whom He calls and chooses in order to preach the Gospel.

With regard to vocation, the Decrees *Optatum Totius* and *Ad Gentes* endeavour to reach a doctrinal synthesis transcending and correcting certain excessive tendencies of the preceding period. Thus has been established a vigorous equilibrium between divine initiative, the aptitudes and good intentions of the candidate, and the call of the Hierarchy.

THE MISSIONARY



Japan

Malawi

Bolivia



VOCATION



Philippines

Madagascar



Undoubtedly, the Council did not intend to define the missionary vocation in an explicit fashion. It described it as an ideal. However, more or less precise explanations have been provided in the works of the Conciliar Commission for the missions. In these documents precisions are given with regard to "those who are called missionaries, although this term may be claimed by all Christians"...

To be a missionary, five conditions are required: one must

- 1) have been chosen, set apart, *segregatus*;
- 2) have been sent by legitimate authority;
- 3) have left his own Christian community for the missions;
- 4) have lived in distant lands, for a long time, not necessarily meant in a geographical sense, but in a certain spiritual sense;
- 5) have preached the Gospel as a missionary, that is as one sent.

These five conditions may be present in priests, religious, or the laity. However, one must keep in mind the observation made during the Council, "Although anyone may baptize those who believe, it belongs to the priest alone to complete through the Eucharistic Sacrifice the edification of the Body of Christ" (Lumen Gentium).

The call of God

Every missionary vocation has its origin in a particular design of God, for it belongs to the Lord to call those "whom He wishes, to follow Him and to preach to the nations". It has already been pointed out in this article that this affirmation of the Council is not new; it is clearly consigned within Pontifical documents, and its basis is found in the Bible. Let us listen to the voice of Jesus, "Pray the Lord of the harvest to send labourers into His harvest". Saint Paul asks, "How can they preach if they are not first sent?" Therefore, the designation and the sending of those who preach the Gospel and plant the Church among new peoples depends upon divine initiative, upon the very choice of God Himself.

Does the missionary vocation, as such, bind in conscience? The answer to this question may be found in Father Zalba's book *La vocation misionera*. Having examined the various aspects of the question, Father concludes that the missionary vocation



does not bind under pain of sin. Refusing to respond to the call of God does not entail separation from Him. It is not a sinful action, a moral wrong. Such a refusal, however, constitutes a positive imperfection. It keeps the soul from receiving divine graces in their full abundance, i.e., those which exceed the ordinary course of salvation.

Being called and sent by the Hierarchy

Within the Church, there exists a particular presence of Christ in His regular representatives i.e., in ordained pastors. Christ governs and guides the Church through their instrumentality, and through them ensures the regular exercise of the various ministries as well as of the divers functions established in view of the growth and development of His Mystical Body. It belongs to the Hierarchy to determine the conditions required of candidates for such and such a ministry, to recognize and accept those truly called by God, to appreciate their aptitudes and their rightful motives, to call and to designate them to definite functions.

This is not saying that, of itself, the call of the Hierarchy creates and constitutes the vocation.

Vocation is the fruit of divine grace. The call of Hierarchy, however, allows this vocation to manifest itself. It helps it attain fulfillment and sanctions it before the Church, rendering it a public service of Christendom. It must also be noted that vocation is not invested with divine characteristics only after the call of the Hierarchy. However this may be, the call of the Church must be considered as the expression of the call of God. So much so, that there can be no genuine and entire missionary vocation without the countersign of the Hierarchy.

In this connection, we might do well to recall in what manner was designated Judas' successor in the college of the apostles. Saint Peter, head of the apostolic college, exposed the question and determined the conditions to be met by the candidate: "So, one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when he was taken up from us — one of these men must become a witness to his resurrection. And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, 'Lord, who knowest the hearts of all men, show which one of these two thou hast chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside, to go to his own place.'"

The missionary vocation is not merely a question of generosity. One may be very generous towards the Lord and yet not feel called to the missionary apostolate, either because bereft of the required aptitudes or because one has not been accepted or called by the Hierarchy. Here the question of the Apostle takes on its full meaning, "How can anyone preach who has not been sent?" But, to be a missionary does not merely consist in preaching the Gospel according to personal opinions. The missionary evangelizes only insofar as he is the envoy of the Church.

Those whom the Hierarchy judges apt to the apostolate may be called or sent, whether they are autochthons or foreigners, priests, religious, or laymen. No 20 of the Decree expressly mentions the sending of autochthon priests by the Hierarchy of the young Churches: "It is fitting that the young Churches should participate as soon as possible in the universal missionary work of the Church. Let them send their own missionaries to proclaim the Gospel all over the world." Objections have been made to this on the grounds that certain priests might thereby be tempted to leave their own homeland for countries with a higher standard of living. To this the Commission replied that the text was applicable solely to "authentic missionary vocations, duly tried by ecclesiastical authorities".

As far as laymen are concerned, the Council recommends that the pastors welcome them in an affectionate manner and take particular care of those who dedicate themselves, definitely or temporarily, to the service of apostolic associations and activities, especially with regard to the missionary communities of the young Churches. This concerns autochthons for "they also must spread the faith among those with whom they live or have professional connections... always in close collaboration with the episcopate".

Aptitudes and rightfull motivation of candidates

When God destines anyone to the missionary apostolate, He normally manifests His choice to the Hierarchy through dispositions which render such a person apt to this involvement. "Those are marked for a special vocation who possess

certain natural endowments which render them apt to assume the missionary vocation." Aptitudes and rightful motivation can only be the result of harmony between God's providential action on the one hand and, on the other hand, of the generous cooperation of the candidate. As a matter of fact, the missionary formation and spirituality advocated by the Council implies a combination of natural and supernatural conditions as well as superabundant divine grace. Whoever is called to the missionary life must, moreover, make a continuous effort of fidelity. Eventually, he whose vocation is profoundly rooted becomes aware of a design of God upon him and feels interiorly urged to carry it out. Such is not always necessarily the case. It may happen that the call and the sending out by the Hierarchy takes the candidate by surprise. The case of Father Gonet, S.J., who felt "an instinctive dread of being sent to the China missions" and who was nonetheless sent to that very country, is infrequent. It more often happens that someone who offers himself to do God's will, without directly having the missions in mind, finds himself sent by his superiors and reaps such remarkable success that his action appears in perfect harmony with the divine plans.

Thus, for example, how can we know whether Saint Francis Xavier felt interior attraction or repugnance upon being assigned to India? He probably possessed the interior dispositions which he required of the students in the Sorbonne: "You are about to study rhetoric; many things will change if you study in the perspective willed by God, according to the talents He has endowed you with, using them as spiritual exercises so as to understand and to test in your soul the workings of divine Will rather than your own inclinations. Let your prayer be, 'O Lord! What do you want me to do? Send me wherever You will, even to distant India if need be.'" On the other hand, it often happens that certain candidates who ardently desire to leave for the mission field afar are kept from doing so by their superiors who find themselves compelled to direct their energies elsewhere because they are not really apt for such a life.

What should be inferred from all this? That only a missionary vocation recognized as such by the Hierarchy, i.e., the Church, can be said to be genuine.

(to be continued)

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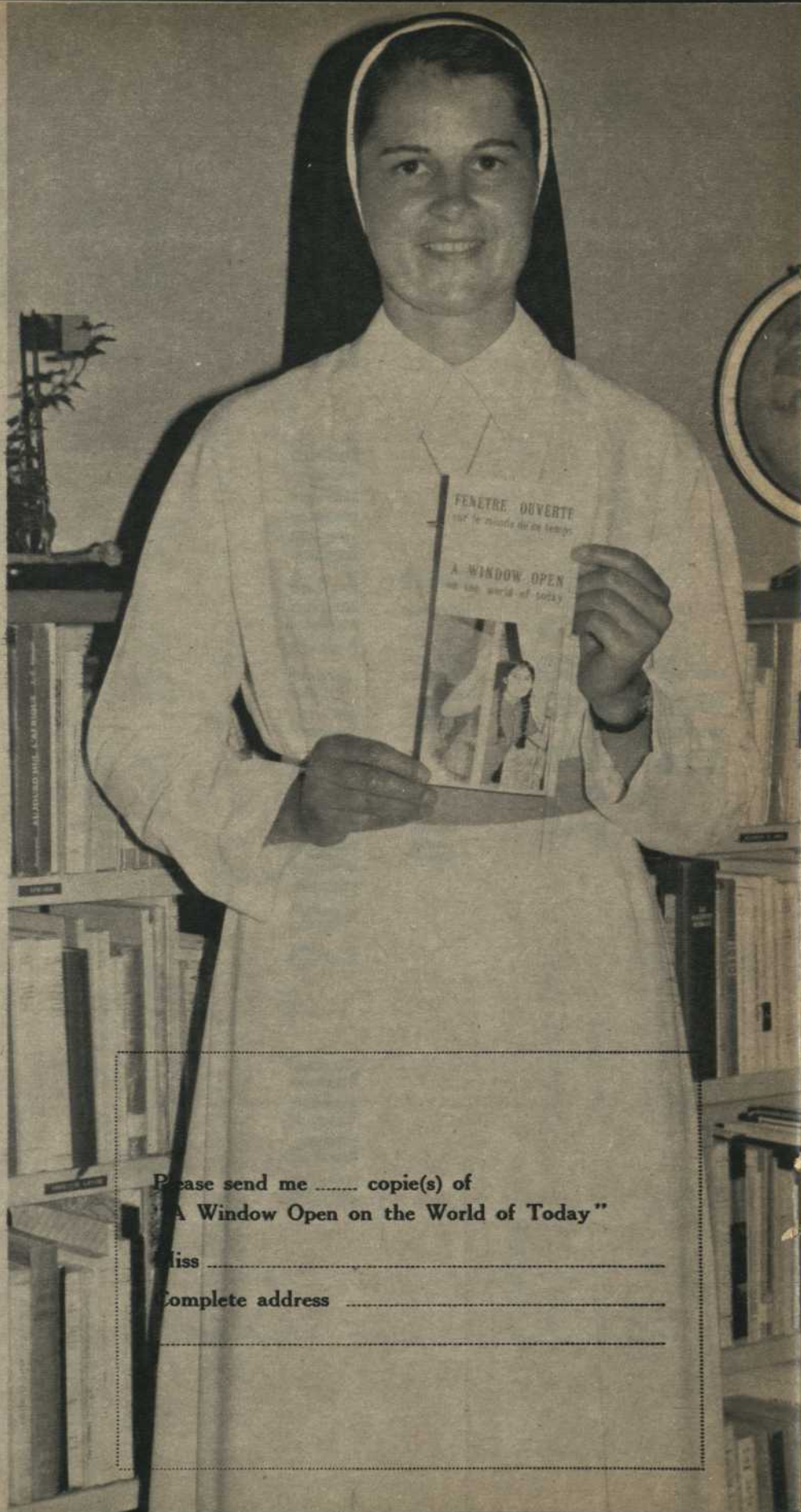
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"...they left their nets and followed Him."

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