



MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION — BOX 157, LAVAL BRANCH P.O., LAVAL, QUEBEC H7N 4Z4

Week for Christian Unity

The date of the celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is somewhat flexible. Traditionally, the Churches have observed the Octave of Prayer for Christian Unity, January 18-25. In Canada, for the past few years, we have chosen a Sunday-to-Sunday sequence, closest to the traditional date, which for 1974 is January 20-27. However, if weather or other circumstances prohibit participation in a January event, a local planning committee might arrange to celebrate its Week of Prayer at another time, for example, around Pentecost.

Every person feels himself torn between lofty ideals and the blunt awareness of failure to live up to them. Each Christian community should be aware of a strong yearning for unity, and of the fact that too often we ourselves place barriers to this unity.

The theme for the 1974 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity comes from this tension between the ideal that man sees and the real situation that he creates. While in

his prison cell, St. Paul was saddened by news of similar events, the jealousies, quarrels, and divisions in the Church at Philippi.

His remedy? **Look to Jesus, the Lord.** We must allow the example of his humility and obedience to take hold of us, to overcome our tendencies, to rationalize our self-interest and our petty empire-building. Do not all Christians accept this truth? Yes, but we must meet one another in Jesus Christ and show that faith in him is alive among us.

Jesus is Lord! The words are easy to say, but it is more difficult to live them. We need patient dialogue, the willingness to see the good faith of others and to respect their traditions, and most of all, prayer: individually, in our homes and families, in our churches and groups.

St. Paul reminds us that it is God who is working in us, encouraging us to will what is right and to work for his pleasure. It is prayer that opens us to the work of God.

Why send missionaries to Japan?

Because Japan is a progressive, developed country, some believe there is no need for overseas missionaries. However, we should take into consideration that it of-

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Children of Japan so lovable... like their counterparts all around the world!

*With prayerful
thankfulness
for your generous
friendship,
we wish you
all richest blessings
throughout
the
New Year.*

WHY "MIC MISSION NEWS"?

From September 1923 to December 1973 "THE PRECURSOR" faithfully carried the Message far and wide. It has now honourably retired. *MIC MISSION NEWS* intends to carry on, in a modest format, the work of its predecessor. It will keep you informed about what goes on in the various mission fields assigned to our missionary Sisters.

They need the help of your prayers for their works in favour of the poor. Thank you for being such generous friends all along the years. Please continue to favour them with your constant interest.

The Editorial Team

Marriage customs in Totonicapan

Céline Trudeau, M.I.C.



A Wedding in Totonicapan, Guatemala.

Among the Quechua Indians, early marriages are thought to be conducive to happiness. When a boy has set his heart on a certain girl, he asks his father to conduct preliminary investigations in the prospective bride's family, for he wants to make sure that the girl is sweet-tempered and hard-working. If things turn out as desired, the father asks the girl's hand in marriage for his son. He returns twice with the same proposal. According to local custom, the girl must not give a definite answer until the last of the three proposals has been made. On each visit many questions are supposed to be truthfully answered.

Finally the boy himself, accompanied by his parents, visits his intended. More questions are put. Then the parents admonish the young people, urging them to take into serious consideration the difficulties involved in married life.

One or two months may elapse before another visit is made. On this occasion, the boy gives his fiancée a necklace ornamented with bright ribbons. This is equivalent to an engagement ring. From now on, the two may go out together for walks or to a movie.

The wedding takes place six months later. A marriage godfather and godmother play an important role during the Church ceremony. The bride wears the colourful Indian costume except for the white veil which is of foreign origin. After the nuptial blessing, the godfather and godmother link the couple together with a gold chain. A large veil is also thrown over them both to symbolize their union for life.

When the religious ceremony is over, the bridal couple, the godfather and godmother, and the parents gather in a large circle in the back of the church. The bride and bridegroom then ask forgiveness for any trouble they may have given. Next the parents make apologies on their own account. Finally all congratulate the newly wedded pair and proffer good advice.

A modest meal is then offered the guests at the boy's home. Hot chocolate, bread, and liquor are served. Dances are performed to the tune of traditional music, the men dancing on one side, the women on the other. The godfather and godmother next invite the guests to their own home for more refreshments. Late in the evening, the women conduct the newly married couple to their own house, then retire.

Two days later, the pair visit the home of the bride. The latter maintains close relations with her parents, even after her marriage. She will always feel free to return home whenever her husband is absent or if she is separated from him.

MALAWI, AFRICA

Tenth anniversary of Marymount

In 1960, the Ministry of Education granted the M.I.C. Sisters a place for a girls' secondary school in Mzuzu. The ground was leveled, and by 1961 Marymount was a complete school consisting of a dormitory, two classrooms, a biology room, staff room, dining hall and kitchen.

The first headmistress, Sister Jacqueline Bastien, M.I.C. guided the school through the first difficult years. The other pioneers were Miss V. Chirwa, Sister Suzanne Rinfret, Sister Hélène Labelle, Sister Doris Twyman and Father de Repentigny who still continues to improve the school grounds. The official opening took place on the 29th January 1963 when sixty pupils entered Forms 1, 2, 3. The first headgirl was Miss Evelyn Ngwira.

Marymount staff consists mainly of M.I.C. Sisters and members of various overseas organizations, including Peace Corps, V.S.O., C.U.S.O. and Lay Mission-Helpers. The second Malawian staff member (1965) was Mr. J.S.C. Kuwenda, a Malawi Young Pioneer instructor. Soche Hill College graduates followed: Miss Alice Myirenda (1967), Miss Happiness Jere (1968) and Miss M. Kamphan-



Three pioneers who made Marymount what it is today: from right to left, Father Marcel de Repentigny, W.F., Sisters Victoria Chirwa, M.I.C., Suzanne Rinfret, M.I.C. and Doris Twyman, M.I.C.

dira (1970). Sister Victoria Chirwa, M.I.C., is now the Deputy Headmistress. A former pupil, Sister Franciska Moyo, R.S., is now on the staff.

On 28th July 1965, His Lordship Bishop Jobidon blessed the new chapel, domestic science block, and assembly hall. In 1967 the hall was extended to twice its former size and in the same year the first double stream began with Form One. The school remains deeply grateful to Brother Van der Boomen who supervised the building construction.

Singing is an important activity at Marymount. It brought our first award in 1963, a shield for first place in a nationwide competition. The "Merry Band" was started in 1967 by Sister Francis Saucier and continues under the direction of Sister Denise Duhamel with about twenty members. Instruments have been donated by the German Ambassador, and the M.I.C. The "Merry Band" is often called upon to participate in civic activities. The first magazine, "The Effort", was produced in 1963 and many issues have followed. It is currently known as "Marymount Calling".

The work of the first ten years continues. Students have the opportunity to develop "the Hand, Mind and Heart". Marymount is not only concerned with developing the mind, but the whole personality as well, so that the young ladies will spend their lives "Working with Joy" for their God and their country, in the Malawi of tomorrow.

by Margaret Chilongo
and Elizabeth Kayira

WHY SEND MISSIONARIES TO JAPAN?

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fers the most fertile ground for the development of new relationships in mission.

The definition of the goals of mission is shaped by factors from two directions. On the one hand, the imperative of God's mission inevitably carries involvement with a global Christian community in a common task. In principle, then, we cannot opt out of this total involvement. On the other hand, God's activity, in which we are partners, is not uniformly dis-

cernible everywhere. Sensitive awareness of the social situation and the human dilemmas in various parts of the world will give us the clues as to where this partnership is going to be significant at this point of history. Without doubt, areas of human need and economic deprivation are such places, especially where the resources of the local Church are equally limited. These areas cannot be neglected nor are they in much danger of being so.

But one ought not to limit ones fruitful partnership in God's activity to such deprived places. A social situation in its revolutionary ferment, in its long-range effects on a large segment of the world's population, in the range and complexity of human need beyond the economic, may cry out for Christian mutual involvement, even though that situation is a relatively developed one. And this is particularly so when the national Church's strength is small, relative to its task.

Japan is a country of immense strategic importance in Asia, with power to influence for good or ill hundreds of millions of people. Here are a quarter of all the university students in Asia, in a state of intellectual and spiritual ferment as they diagnose and seek remedies for the ills of their own and the rest of Asian society. Here the Church is a tiny handful (membership is about 0.2 percent of the population), tremendously conscious of its role but facing a task far beyond its resources. If ever a place qualified as "where the action is", Japan is it. If mission means having a place of significant involvement, this is such a place.

In Japan we have the potential for developing new patterns of mission for the long future. One reason for this is related to the kind of society found in Japan. Presumably, all societies are moving towards the goal of social development. Likewise presumably, the Church everywhere is moving towards self-support, self-government, and self-propagation. In other words, there is a sense in which, in both Japanese society and Japanese Church, we have a preview of what may ultimately be true of other places. Failure to see the possibilities there may bode ill for our capacity to continue our mission in a radically changed world.

Condensed from THE OBSERVER

WHAT IS A SCHOLASTIC?

From the P.I. Scholasticate

Scholastics come in all sizes, colours, heights, and depths. They are always bouncing around, hurrying to or from one place to another. Hardly a sedate step, at times a slight drag... But, I hear you ask, what on earth is a Scholastic?

Technically speaking, she is a professed Sister of temporary vows, although she resents being described in a cut-and-dried fashion. She's far too ebullient to fit within a square. Indeed, she's often a circle!

You can meet her, early in the day, tripping from the corridor to the classrooms wearing a big smile. Books, notes, pencils, rulers, spill over her arms. Nothing ruffles her. Her best love is the guitar. In fact, the whole Scholasticate has fallen in love with the instrument. Everyone wants to strum. It's the "in" thing, if you know what I mean.

Songs — English or French — especially those she can learn from records, form part of her daily schedule. Her voice may not be that of a prima donna, but she puts her whole heart into it. She's "in" on the Psalms, sung or meditated. A group of Scholastics has even formed a choral ensemble — The Joyful Sisters. Of course, they perform by appointment, and exclusively "à la Manila Symphony Orchestra", minus the orchestra, plus two guitars!

What else does the Scholastic like? Bible services, interesting books, good professors, cheerful novices, etc. She thinks that "the more they get together, the happier they'll be." A beautiful picture is not beautiful for her unless another Scholastic comes along and admires it with her.

But she's no angel. She gets into all kinds of scrapes. Her knees get scratched when she stumbles physically or otherwise. But, she always pops up again. Nothing can dampen her "joie de vivre". And when the busy day is over, she lays her head upon her pillow, sleepily murmuring, "Goodnight, Lord. Thanks for everything and love... See you again tomorrow."

ESPINAR, PERU

NEW MISSION POST OPENS IN YAURI

Agnes Bouchard, M.I.C.

The province of Espinar, in the department of Cuzco, is situated at an altitude varying between twelve thousand and fifteen thousand feet above sea level. I leave you to imagine what kind of weather we enjoy. In the entire area the only vegetation consists in a coarse grass on which sheep and llamas feed. During the winter months (May to October), the climate is dry and cold. Then come spring and summer months punctuated with high winds, heavy rain, and tornadoes.

Yauri, our new mission post, has a population of about seven thousand inhabitants. It is the most important centre in the whole province of Espinar. The greater part of the population is rural and speaks Quechua. Spanish influence was nil in this remote district.

We live as the people live. Houses are rather flimsy affairs with thatched or tin roofs, adobe

walls, and dirt floors. For the time being, we have rented three large rooms in a sort of warehouse. There is an interior courtyard, filled with sunshine, which we share with our neighbours. Sanitary facilities are built outside the house proper.

As a rule, the people wear the traditional handwoven woolen garments in rather sombre colours. Some, however, have adopted modern dress or a mixture of both. Women and children usually go barefoot. The population is poor. As our devoted pastor says, they are all the more grateful when the sun shines for "sunshine is the garment of the poor".

Yauri enjoys the benefits of electricity only from 6:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. Running water has been installed in a small number of courtyards. No house can yet boast of such a luxury. The townspeople

usually draw their water from wells or public fountains or brooks.

Buses and trucks communicate with the outside world three times a week. They are the only available vehicles. Within the district proper, we have to walk or ride a mule. A jeep would certainly come in handy as distances are very great.

Our occupation at present consists in making regular visits to the elementary and secondary schools. But the main work for which we have been called here, by the bishop of the diocese and the local pastor, is the formation of catechists. The latter are badly needed in remote regions where priests are all too few. Until now, students had to travel to Sicuano or Cuzco to be trained. We have organized a weekly course in Yauri. It is regularly attended by twenty catechists. Later on, a more advanced course will be given to the hundred or more catechists scattered over the province. All are eager to pursue their formation. Bible classes are their favourites. Lessons are given in Quechua, although the men have at least a smattering of Spanish.

We are very happy in our little mission and we consider it a privilege to assist in the eminently apostolic task of the formation of catechists.

Blackfoot Indian prayer

O Great Spirit, Creator of all things:
Human beings, trees, grass, berries,
Help us, be kind to us.
Let us be happy on earth.
Let us lead our children
To a good life and old age.
These our people, give them good minds
To love one another.
O Great Spirit,
Be kind to us.
Give these people the favour
To see green trees,
Green grass, flowers and berries.
This next spring.
So we can all meet again.
O Great Spirit
We ask of you.

WHAT ONE PERSON CAN DO

Susan Dusio, 13, was used to being offered drugs outside her high school in Newark, California. She wasn't content with merely refusing.

When she picked the problem of drug abuse for her special report in history class, things began to happen.

Seeking help from public and private groups, Susan set in motion a week-long schedule of speakers at the 640-student school, complete with exhibits and movies pointing out the destructive nature of drug-taking.

A school official said: "She had help, of course, but Susan carried the ball from the very beginning and virtually handled the thing by herself. It wouldn't have happened without her."

Susan put it more modestly: "It's important that kids get the right information on drugs... I think some of them have a different point of view about drugs now. I hope so."

Without you, certain good things may never happen.

CHRISTOPHER NOTES

Bits out of mission life

MADAGASCAR

Marie Rose is 90 years old. She lives alone in a more or less dilapidated house on the outskirts of the town. Having lately heard that she had not been able to go to church for a long time, I offered to take Holy Communion to her. Now she receives her Saviour every day. How happy and grateful she is! A group of pupils lugging a guitar often accompany me to sing hymns of thanksgiving. My dear old friend prays practically all the time. She wants me to be close to her when her time comes and I hope to be. She is surely one of the Lord's favourites.

On the World Day for lepers, we visited a leper colony situated at about forty miles from Tana. Instead of being hospitalized in lazarettos, Malagasy lepers are usually left in their own environment. Only those who are contagious, live in centres adapted to their needs. About 5,300 lepers have been identified so far throughout the Island.

We received a friendly welcome from all the villagers who crowded around us, asking if we had brought them sweets. It was an oversight on our part not to have done so. But we learned our lesson. Pictures, games, candies, mere nothings are eagerly accepted by these poor afflicted people. Although there is no fear of contagion, they have few visitors. It will take years to overcome ingrained prejudices against lepers.

ZAMBIA, AFRICA

Sister Victoria Chirwa, M.I.C., wrote to a friend after her final commitment, August 5, 1973, "My soul is calm, peaceful, and joyful. Give thanks to the Lord with me."

The solemn Mass on August 5, began at 9:30 p.m. Sister Victoria, all in white, went to the chancel to read the epistle. She remained there to make her final commitment and to receive the ring from the hands of Sister Germaine Pérusse, M.I.C. provincial. A mixed choir sang beautifully in Cinyanja. The ladies present wore the Zambian costume: wide colorful skirts and turbans of matching colours.

At the Offertory, the parents and each category of Christians offered gifts to Sister Victoria. A fraternal celebration presided by the Bishop was afterwards held at the Sister's house. The Chirwa family occupied places of

honour. MIC Sisters from all over Malawi, Rosarian Sisters, and students rode in a mini bus with Sister Gisèle Leduc, M.I.C., as driver.

Mr. and Mrs. Chirwa briefly related the extraordinary vocation of their daughter, the only Catholic in the family. Sister Fernande Roy, provincial of the White Sisters, recalled Victoria's days as an elementary school pupil, adding how happy she felt to have witnessed her final commitment. Then Sister Jacqueline Bastien, M.I.C., spoke about Sister's work at the beginning of Marymount Girls' Secondary School. Today, after many difficulties, courageously overcome, Sister Victoria assumes the task of Head Mistress at Marymount.

HONDURAS

At present, I am teaching catechetics in public schools. On weekends, my time is taken up giving courses preparatory to marriage and visiting one or other of the eight barrios dependent on Choluteca. The pastor, a Cuban priest, is very happy to have at least one Sister on his parish council.

A group of wealthy ladies have opened Centro Maya, a boutique where they sell local art objects to tourists. They asked me to collaborate and I obliged with oil paintings of Choluteca landscapes which they appreciated. Now, they are eager to help me out in my works for the poor among whom I live. Recently, a workshop has been opened where the latter can earn at least part of their living. The ladies from Centro Maya have set it up with profits made in their boutique. There are eighteen sewing machines. About sixty persons might find employment here if only we had one or two teachers to plan the work and teach sewing and handicrafts.

Much to my regret, I cannot accept the direction of the workshop because I already have my hands full. However, I have organized prayer meetings for these workers and the ladies of Centro Maya who are eager to share in parochial apostolate. They have undertaken to wipe out illiteracy from at least one of the barrios. All in all, they are very good friends of mine.

I need the help of your prayers in order to work efficiently with these two groups — the poorest and the wealthiest in Choluteca. This is a splendid occasion to bring about closer and

friendlier relations between classes of people.

Marie Desneiges Brault, M.I.C.

KORIYAMA, JAPAN

A three-day celebration, recently held in Koriyama, highlighted the 40th anniversary of the opening of the kindergarten. The first group of five Sisters arrived here in 1930. Their activities then consisted in learning the language and giving lessons in French and English. They lived in a small Japanese house. One of the five wrote home, "Here we practise poverty in earnest. We sit and sleep on the floor Japanese fashion. As furniture we have a few chairs, a charcoal brazier, a mosquito net, a small table..."

In 1933, the Sisters moved into larger quarters and the first kindergarten classes were opened with government approval. The pupils numbered 43. Progress during the following years was slow. By 1940 there was an attendance of only 100. Then war broke out, annihilating the efforts of the past decade. Classes were closed and the military occupied the premises. All the Sisters were repatriated in 1943.

After peace was restored, a group of Sisters returned only to find the house badly dilapidated. Food was scarce, and there was no heating during the winter months. The uphill climb was arduous.

Today the school is a thriving concern with its 800 pupils divided between kindergarten, elementary, and secondary sections. The 40th anniversary celebration extolled what had been done in the past, stressed what was being done at present, and expressed bright hopes for the future. Two of the pioneering Sisters, still active within the school, were present. Special honourable mentions were awarded both for their long and faithful service.

Our Bolivian friends have a fine taste for music.



What's in a name?

Among many African people, the name given the child has deep significance. In some tribes, the father gives the baby a name that reflects something of his own feelings at its birth. In others, the grandmother, aunt, or clan chief names the child.

A child in Malawi is given its name several weeks after birth. The belief is that named too soon after coming into the world he may die; named too late, he may become deaf or stupid and so never be able to hear his own name. For her first child, the young mother appoints someone in the family of her husband as name giver. With regard to the other children, the parents appoint someone in the wife's family or a friend.

As part of the name-giving ceremony, the young mother takes her first child along with gifts of flour, fowl, beads, to the person appointed to choose the name. From that time on, this person will have a certain right over the child. He or she should be immediately informed if the namesake should become sick.

Among the Angoni tribe, it is the grandfather's privilege to choose the name of the first child if it is a boy. The grandmother gives the first girl her name. A maternal uncle or aunt chooses the name of the second child, the father or the mother that of the third.

There is a great variety of names. Some are traditional and derived from animals, plants, parts of the body, objects, actions... Others relate to events or situations at the moment of birth. According to an African, "names are given to honour God's will, for it is he who has willed that the birth occur at that particular time or place."

Children in Malawi are often given meaningful names. For instance, a firstborn, who always brings much happiness to the parents, is given the name "Joy" — *Kondwani* if a boy, *Chimwemwe* if a girl. Parents feel great pride in the birth of their children. Accordingly, they may call at least one of them "Our own flesh" — *Nyamazawo*. When the birth has been a difficult one, the baby will be called "Problem" — *Suzgo*.

The name of the clan chief must not be given to a baby except by the chief himself. A man who becomes chief, is given the name of the chief who died.

When boys and girls have grown up, they are allowed to change their name. In such a case, however, they must first offer the gift of a chicken to the person who gave them their first name. Weddings are also popular occasions for changing names.

Africans are often reluctant to disclose their names. Foreigners who ask someone's name may be made to feel they have been rude. The name means much more to them than it does to us. It is considered part of a person's personality, involving a certain proportion of reverential and superstitious fear. Women more particularly are reluctant to reveal their names.

Gisèle LEDUC, M.I.C.

The latest fashion is women's concern everywhere...



BREAD

THE GINGERBREAD HOUSE

Fredericton, N.B.

Be gentle when you touch bread,
Let it not be uncared for or unwanted.
So often bread is taken for granted,
There is such beauty in bread...
Beauty in sun and soil,
Beauty of patient toil.
Wind and rain have caressed it.
Christ often blessed it.
Be gentle when you touch bread.

MIC MISSION NEWS

is a bimonthly publication.

Series 1 — Vol. 1 — No. 1
January-February 1974

Box 157, Laval Branch P.O.
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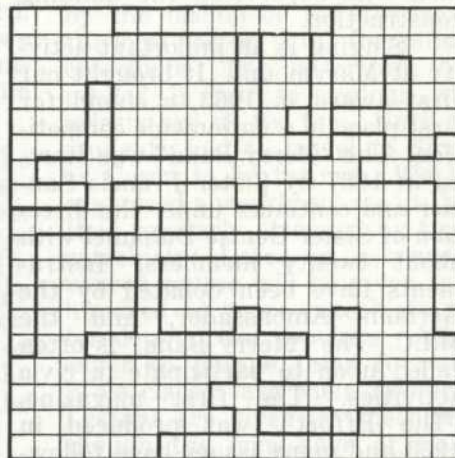
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SOLUTION

