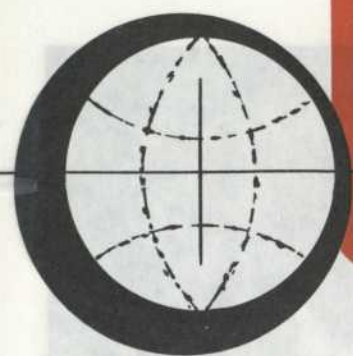




MIC MISSION NEWS

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

A MERRY CHRISTMAS TO YOU ALL

Christmas is here —
an event which shook the world
over nineteen hundred years ago.
It could shake the world again
today if we only paused,
pondered, and believed.
Dear friends of the missions,
we thank you most gratefully
for your generous collaboration
during the past year.
May the miracle of Christmas
remain with you
every day of 1975.

THE
LIGHT
THAT SHINES
FROM THE MANGER
IS BRIGHT ENOUGH TO
LIGHTEN OUR WAY TO THE
END OF OUR DAYS
WITH
JOY
AND WITH PEACE



LET'S BE FRIENDS!

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BANTU

View of the World

by Thérèse Godbout, M.I.C.

Born in Hoey, Sask., June 24, 1924, Thérèse Godbout entered our Congregation in February 1947. She made her final vows in 1952 and left for Malawi (then Nyasaland) in September of the same year. A brother of hers, member of the Canadian Foreign Mission Society, Father Joseph Godbout, left on the very same day for the Philippines. Sister Thérèse and her missionary brother are at present on home leave from their respective missions, a happy coincidence which delighted their parents aged respectively 90 and 80. The family now lives in Grand Falls, N.B. During her twenty years of mission life, Sister taught in primary schools and later specialized in catechetics. She is looking forward to her return to Malawi in February 1975. August 5, 1974, marked the Silver Jubilee of her religious profession. May God bless her apostolate and may "her tribe increase!" The harvest is great, the labourers are all too few.

In the Bantu tradition, each family group seems to have had its own "closed world" made up of three categories: the world of the departed or living-dead; the world of the living; the world of the unborn. These three categories influenced one another. The term living-dead applied to a person who although physically dead remained alive in the memory of those who knew him, as well as in the world of spirits. This group of the living-dead had the strongest influence of all, as its members were the closest to those great ancestors who had given birth to the clan.

Life strength flowed from the first ancestors to their descendants. It was very important that each member do his share in keeping this life stream flowing down to younger generations. Only thus could the family hope to keep alive. Moreover, it was each person's duty to do all he could in order to strengthen the group and protect it against evil forces. If a child's personality seemed warped the family group would try to correct him and improve his character. A child born with a physical defect was done away with as he was considered to be as-



Sister Thérèse chats with two of her little African friends.

sociated with an evil power. Therefore, he could only contribute to the diminishing of the clan's life strength.

Life was a time to strengthen the spirit. When a child was born, his spirit was weak. The various stages of integration, initiation, etc., were channels through which the life strength of a particular community was increased. Children were, so to say, the "buds of society". Their education was the concern not merely of the parents but of many relatives including the living and the departed.

How close is this to the present Bantu view of the world? I really cannot say. There is no doubt that an evolution is taking place in varying degrees. It depends on many factors. But it is slow in most cases. The factor mainly contributing to this state of affairs is that the wisdom of the ancestors has always been considered sacred. What they believed was not to be questioned but adhered to. The greatest sin was to neglect the customs handed down their descendants or to fail to obey their laws. Failing in this was an attack on life itself. Such tradition is bound to be die-hard.

DID YOU KNOW ...

- ... that there are over three hundred thousand Catholics in Taiwan?
- ... that there are 407 parishes of which Taipei alone has 92?
- ... that Taiwan's population is about 15,600,000?
- ... that there are over 800 priests in Taiwan and 1,172 Sisters?
- ... that in 1949 the people's languages were Taiwanese, Hakka or Aborigine, and the educated language was Japanese?
- ... that the educated language is now Mandarin spoken by the majority of the people?
- ... that today, Taiwan has about 650 men and women catechists of whom 70% are working full time?
- ... that there is a Catholic University in Taipei? (Fu Jen University)

"Proclaim the Good News to all creation!"

China Review, June 1974

CANDLELIGHT SERVICE

by Lucille Adam, M.I.C.



Our Junior High School students spent three days of orientation at a *Shizen no Ie*, Nature House. One of the various activities offered them was a candlelight service which they appreciated. Slides were given on the life of Christ, Light of the World. Sister Céline, Principal, also gave a talk on the "virtues" of the candle, suggesting that their young hearts should be eager to burn themselves out in the service of others. After the simple ceremony, the students exchanged their thoughts and feelings. I myself was most favourably impressed by the Candlelight Service. Everyone took it seriously. Miss Iwabuchi Akemi, a third year secondary school student, wrote the following essay.

Role of Sisters in Hong Kong Diocese

by Thérèse Leblanc, M.I.C.

In November 1972, Religious Women from ten countries of Asia met in Hong Kong to discuss for a whole week the "Role of Religious Women in Evangelization and Development in Asia", the "Role of Religious Women among the Youth of Asia today", and finally, the "Renewal of Religious Life in the light of Asian Mentality".

The Sisters of the diocese had been prepared for this meeting by local seminars and workshops on all these topics. After a week's meeting, the delegates voted to organize a permanent centre called the "Asian Service Centre" for the information and guidance of all the religious women of Asia on Church problems in their own countries. The Centre is now located in Manila, P.I.

This year, the meeting of Religious Women took place in Manila, Philippines, in early April. Fourteen countries sent delegates to study the problem of "On-Going Formation among the Religious of Asia."

In our Hong Kong Diocese, a group of eight Sisters meet regularly each month to discuss local problems, and how Sisters may be helped in their on-going formation. Last year, our Planning Committee set up a series of Saturday afternoon lectures on Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, all given by experts. At first, meetings were organized with the local leaders of these religions, on an ecumenical basis. Here, for the first time, they came into contact with some of us nuns, both Chinese and foreign. They were very willing to cooperate. Some Buddhist nuns came to talk with us about their beliefs, their way of meditation, their ideals. They were educated and cultured women who spoke earnestly about their own convictions. The Taoists gave us a very philosophical description of the "Way" or Tao, and

how it penetrates into every day life. This brought on discussions by some of their own members on Medieval Theology and Contemporary Theology and their own way. A group of Confucianists also came to explain their understanding of harmony and peace within the group, the family, the nation, and heaven. This at a time when Confucianism is greatly discredited in continental China.

Our latest workshop consisted in studying together new forms of apostolate. For this, a panel of six Sisters prepared talks on the following topics: the nursing apostolate in the home; the spiritual apostolate of Sisters working on Retreat Teams; the apostolate among the factory girls; the educational apostolate among the blind; the minority groups, the poor, the refugees, the adults, etc. Then speakers from the floor shared their experiences with the group. One member of the panel explained how she had organized English classes in the evening for Chinese refugees, the so-called "Freedom Swimmers" from China, mostly university students or graduates. Thanks to these classes she soon won their confidence. They told her how they had been indoctrinated against the Hong Kong School System and Church involvement in this system. They had been told false things about foreigners and missionaries. Now they can see for themselves the facts as they really are.

For the coming year, plans are already being made to organize sessions and seminars, to learn and share with the 800 nuns of Hong Kong. What means should be taken to fulfill the needs of the local Church today? What do the people of God in Hong Kong expect from us? We propose to listen to youth groups, working groups, various other groups, and from then on to act accordingly.

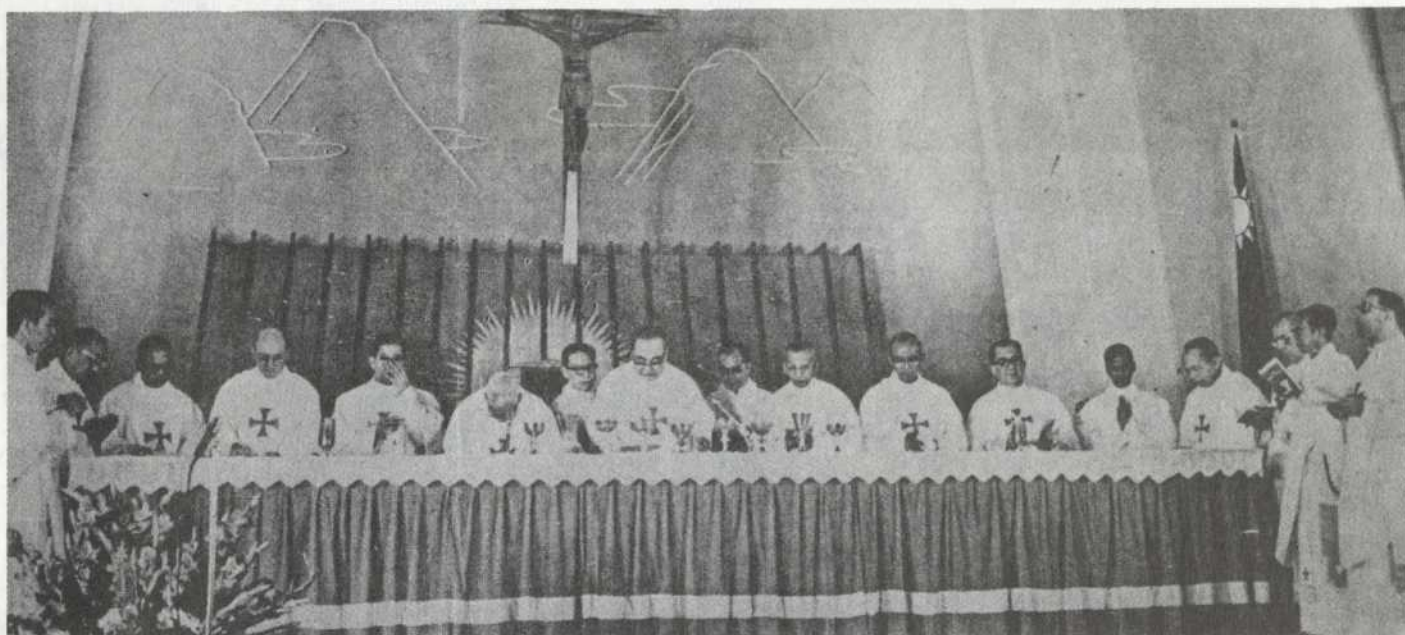
WHAT THE CANDLE TAUGHT ME

by Iwabuchi Akemi
(Secondary 3rd year)

The other day, we had a candlelight service. Our Principal invited us to share our reflections on this subject. At first, I did not really know what to say. Then I remembered that our teacher once remarked "The candle gives light even at its own expense." These words sank deep into my heart.

While I glanced at the flickering candlelight, I started to reflect on my own life. Am I ready to spend myself wholeheartedly in order to make others happy? I have to admit that, until now, I have thought more about my own comfort than about that of others. But, I do want to become less selfish. Like the candle, I want to become a joyful light for others, especially for those who live close to me.

Our school motto is very inspiring: Be cheerful! Be pure! Be strong! Our symbol is light. How can I put this into practice? What is a "strong" light? Thinking this over, I came to the conclusion that if we are all closely united, our small individual light will become a strong beacon light. Even if, taken one by one, we are weak, taken together we can be strong enough to make the world a brighter place. I must be careful to keep the candle of my life shining bright.



An inspiring concelebration Mass opened the Conference.

Federation of Asian Bishops

STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF CHURCH'S ROLE

The first plenary assembly of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conference took place in Taipei early this year. It opened with a concelebrated Mass by more than thirty participating prelates.

Paul Cardinal Yupin, President of the Chinese Bishops' Conference, said in the opening address: "We all share the same divine missionary mandate of bringing to our people the Good News of the Gospel of Christ, which is a message of hope, of freedom, of justice, and universal love.

"From time immemorial, down to the last centuries, the people of Asia were quite satisfied with their civilization, characterized by highly developed religious and moral ideals of personal and social life.

"But a sudden and all-pervading modernization, with conflicting ideologies, waves of new materialism

and atheism have, like devastating winds, shattered this serene possession of cherished spiritual values. The results have been insecurity, imperatives of swift change in the midst of which people struggle to give an adequate answer.

"Do we not read the signs of the times in this general searching for a new meaning to human endeavour, a new way of salvation, of liberation, of promotion of human dignity, of participation in the control of respective national destinies? It is our firm conviction that Christ alone is the full answer to the searching, the longing, the expectation of Asia today."

In a message read by C.K. Yen, Vice President of the Republic of China, at the assembly, President Chiang Kai-shek said: "I am confident that this assembly, composed of all leaders of the Catholic Church in Asia, taking note of the current situation in Asia and keeping in view the ideals of the future of mankind, will be able in its collective wisdom to formulate meritorious plans and projects of the propagation of the faith and in the service of the people, which will enable the Catholic Church to make even greater contribution in China, in Asia, and in the whole world." He added: "This is not only the earnest hope of the Chinese people but, as I believe, the common desire of all Asian peoples".

Condensed from "China Post"

Bits out of mission life

CHRISTMAS IN MANY LANDS

PHILIPPINES

Federico, our gardener, was asked to prepare an outdoor Christmas Crib. On the spot chosen, he found that a rose bush had produced a beautiful red rose. With utmost ingenuity, he built the Crib around it, in such a way as not to disturb the flower. Perhaps he had read St. Exupery's *Little Prince* where it says, "It is the rose that matters." At any rate, when Federico put the finishing touch to the outdoor Nativity scene, we found that the rose was in the most conspicuous place, right in front of the Child Jesus' figure, ready to pour out its flower life in fragrant homage.

Mamie Martel, M.I.C.

BOLIVIA

For the Indians of Potosi, Christmas is one of the most popular festivals of the year — *Fiesta del Nino Salvador* — as it is called. In nearly every house, a tiny Crib is set up with a figure of the Christ Child surrounded by our Lady, Saint Joseph, and the three kings: Melchior riding an Arab steed, Gaspar a mule, Balthazar an elephant.

Inside the parish church the Crib is decked with greenery and flowers. Toys and presents of many kinds are piled all around. Tin boxes filled with green wheat shoots are deposited in front of the Crib. These rustic boxes are called *triguitos de nino*, the Christ Child wheat which symbolizes the people's faith.

Long before Christmas Eve, people who live at some distance are convened. As much as possible the family must be complete to march in procession to Midnight Mass. Each carries its own figure of the Christ Child lying on a small quilt which is put as close as possible to the church Crib. After Mass, the Indians file up to the front to have their respective Crib blessed by the celebrant.

The homebound procession is a merry affair, musicians accompanying it all the way. Traditional Christmas treats are served in the home and all sing in chorus, "this is a good night to rejoice in, not to sleep in." After all have taken refreshments, folk dances are performed. Holding hands, couples dance before the Crib singing the *villanicos* or Christmas carols accompanied by man-

dolins and flutes. The pounding of feet shakes the house to its foundations. Another dance, special to Christmas, is accompanied by the clapping of hands. Women throw a large kerchief round the neck of partners and lead them dancing, to the Crib. There they pray silently for a few moments, while senior members of the family light candles.

Throughout the octave, children parade on the streets playing gay tunes on their primitive *pajarillos*, a sort of musical instrument consisting of a tin box with two small pipes filled with water.

These traditional rejoicings reflect the naive faith of Bolivian Indians, especially in the region of Potosi.

Céline Trudeau, M.I.C.

BRAZIL

In most of the small towns in Brazil, the villagers prepare the manger in the local church. Beside it they set a long table covered with a carefully starched white cloth. Each villager brings the best products harvested during the preceeding months. It warms the cockles of one's heart to witness the generosity of these people. The table is laden with the ripest fruit, the whitest flour, the tenderest fowl, the choicest wine, the largest bunches of grapes.

All these are offered as gifts to the Christ Child, and afterwards distributed to the needy persons of the parish. The latter come to the table and take whatever they need. In exchange they leave a few coins as their own gift to the Infant Saviour. No market price is ever attached to any of the items. The coins which are left on the table are in turn given to other poor people.

Friar's Fields

MADAGASCAR

In our widely scattered mission areas, priests are too few to visit regularly the 42 villages where there are groups of Christians. Each village boasts of its modest chapel. But Mass is said there only on exceptional occasions. For all the great Church festivals the people trudge long distances to the central Mission.

Groups of villagers arrive early on December 23. Some spend the night

lying on the church floor to make sure they will have a place on the great day.

The immediate preparation consists in a programme of mimes and songs recalling the great mystery of the Incarnation. Each village does its share on Christmas Eve, to relive that wondrous event which occurred thousands of years ago. Even Muslims, Protestants, and non-Christians crowd around the cathedral, eager and curious, peering through wide open doors and windows.

After the last Mass has been celebrated, the Christians gather in the parish hall to offer their wishes to their *Ray amandreny*, spiritual fathers and mothers. Then, they tie up their bundles and strike the homeward trail.

Odila Plante, M.I.C.

AFRICA

Thanks to a generous Canadian benefactor, the catechists in training and their families had a merry Christmas in Chikungu. The group was made up of 22 adults and 33 children between the ages of three months and twelve years. After the religious celebration in our little church, all gathered in the parish hall for the distribution of gifts. The men each received a brand new shirt, the women a skirt and blouse, the children appropriate clothing. Gift wrapping was not as elaborate an affair as in Canada. We used newspaper sheets which formed part of the gifts. Cigarette paper being rare in the region, smokers appreciate having newspaper to roll their tobacco in. They find it better than using sheathes of dried corn. A few bed spreads went to the most needy. There were sweets for all present. The rest of the day was spent dancing and singing in the best African tradition.

Gemma Ouellet, M.I.C.

MEXICO

Some games have a way of going back to Christmas for their inception. As a child you have probably been blind-folded, whirled around three times, and given a tail to pin on a donkey cut-out... This game is an outgrowth of an old Mexican custom of securing Christmas gifts in a paper bag, and attaching it to the centre of the ceiling. Each child is blindfolded, turned around three times, and given a long stick with which to break or down the bag. And so from one December to another, the spirit of Christmas lingers on. It finds expression in homely little acts, in great scientific achievement, in recreation, and in deeds of kindness.

DAVAO, PHILIPPINES

ROSALIA'S ORDEAL

by Hélène Fontaine, M.I.C.



Rosalia at the hospital

It had all happened as in a nightmare. In the remote village of Mantanao, southern Davao, a family of nine, father, mother, and five children, plus two guests, were peacefully asleep. Suddenly, the silence of the night was shattered by savage yells and bursts of gunfire. The door of the Sabat family crashed open and armed rebels first attacked the father who was dazedly trying to protect his wife and children. He was gunned down. The mother was shot dead as she tried to make good her escape with her four girls and little boy, all more or less seriously injured. Half crazed with terror, nine-year-old Rosalia fled after her sisters and brother who had succeeded in reaching the precarious safety of the woods. But one of the robbers shot at her as she ran, badly wounding her left leg. She collapsed, blood flowing from her wound. Stifling cries of pain, she watched as the band raised neighbouring families, set fire to buildings, then made off with twelve carabao.

This was the sad story Rosalia told us when we first visited her, upon the request of Father Rodriguez, our pastor, at the Davao Regional Hospital. Apparently she had not lost consciousness throughout her ordeal. She remembered seeing army jeepneys roar into the area, several hours later. Most of the population had run away. After burying the dead, the soldiers loaded the wounded on their vehicles, Rosalia among them. Imagine her plight after a three hour drive over bumpy roads... Her case was so serious that the Dignos authorities had her immediately sent to Davao Regional Hospital. She had lost blood and badly needed transfusions. By then, the pain was all but unbearable, and so was the stench from her wound. This had all happened in September.

At this time, it was not possible to know for sure whether, besides her sisters and brother who had found

shelter at the Dignos Mayor's lodgings, she had close relatives still living. In the second week of October, we learned that the surgeon intended to amputate, infection having set in. He inquired whether I knew anyone who could sign as responsible for the child. The only relatives we had been able to uncover until then were two cousins who had also suffered at the hands of the Matanao rebels, but they were unwilling to sign. Appalled at the thought of this nine-year-old losing a limb, I asked the surgeon if there was no other way. He replied that if I could find another doctor who would be willing to try medication or grafts, he was not opposed. But, at the hospital where she was at present, there was nothing else he could do for her. Equipment and personnel were sadly lacking.

That evening I called the San Pedro Hospital, conducted by the Dominican Sisters, telling them about this charity case. I knew they had an orthopedic surgeon on their staff who performed wonders in this field. The Sisters agreed to accept the child. A few days later she was transferred with the assent of the Davao Hospital authorities. The X Rays showed how the leg had been so badly shattered that a piece of bone from the tibia was missing. Because of the infection, it would not be easy to make a graft, Doctor Zozimo Hermac told me, but he was willing to try.

Rosalia underwent surgery on October 22. It took several weeks of attentive care before she was able to even sit in a wheel chair. In November, kind Doctor Hermac whose services had been free of charge, allowed us to take her to our Child Jesus Foster Home on the condition that she would not be allowed to stand on her leg. Only in May of this year was the last of three casts discarded.

She is now a healthy, active child. Thanks to a lot of research I was finally able to locate her closest living relatives. But this is another story. Watch the next issue of "MIC Mission News" if you are interested.



Taking
her first steps

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