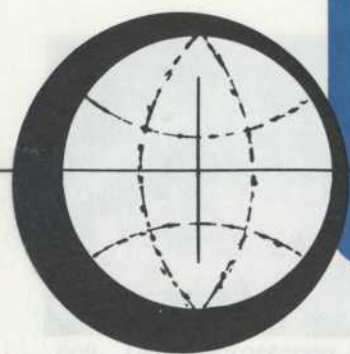




Women of the Third World

by Gisèle Villemure, M.I.C.



Fetching water from the pond.

The general Assembly of the U.N. has proclaimed 1975 as International Women's Year. During this year special emphasis will be placed on women living in the Third World. Not only the Church but international bodies such as UNESCO and ACDI are deeply concerned with their fate. While the Church emphasizes evangelization, she does not neglect the important aspect of development. In this latter area, however, she relies on organizations whose budget enables them to promote technical development.

Who are these women of the Third World? The great unknown who play an important but obscure role within the family, the tribe, the nation. For centuries they have silently accepted their inferior status, their technical incompetence. They are those whose promotion we must foster, for they are the hope of the future.

From their earliest years, committed to unrelenting toil in the fields or in the home, these women have been deprived of even elementary schooling. This for instance explains the large number of illiterate African women. In order to remedy this state of

things, international bodies of social welfare sponsor schools in home economics, hygiene, child welfare, primary and secondary education, etc.

In several parts of Africa, thanks to the help of various organizations, missionary Sisters have set up numerous educational centres for women. From these schools have emerged competent African women teachers. Secondary and primary schools are now well attended by girl students. Home Economic Centres offer young women the means of becoming capable wives and mothers. African women appreciate education for themselves and for their children. This, they know, will ensure their future.

Everywhere in the Third World, women are being awakened to their potentialities. They long for emancipation. Gifted with qualities of mind and heart, they feel the desire to acquire an intellectual culture enabling them to serve their country in a more efficient manner. They are helped and encouraged in their hopes for a brighter future by those other

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Ballet for Mary

by Janet Delisle, M.I.C.



Recently, seventeen orphan-ages of the Fukushima Prefecture took part in a recreational programme at the City Hall, in Koriyama. Orphans, as well as crippled and otherwise handicapped children were delighted to be in the limelight for the first time in their lives.

The children of our Maria En Orphanage insisted on performing a ballet in honour of our Lady. A few months ago, a ballet teacher had offered to give lessons, free of charge, to our youngsters. She thought this might be a good way to train them in patience and in other qualities required of a ballet dancer.

One of the orphans was chosen to represent our Lady, while sixteen others danced to the accompaniment of an Ave Maria. The curtain opened on the solitary figure of Mary standing on a high pedestal on the huge stage. A tot of five tiptoed in, holding a lighted candle which she placed at the foot of our Lady. It was funny to see her trying so very hard to balance on her toes. She was a little awkward but so sweet.

Then the girls in two groups, wearing long blue and white gowns, performed a slow and graceful dance for about five minutes. Waves of applause greeted their performance. Everybody now knows at least something about our Lady thanks to our orphans from Maria En.

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women of the Third World — the missionary Sisters. Are these women in search of adventure? Do distant countries hold a certain exotic appeal for them? Their image, projected by the mass media, is only too often a travesty of their real role in Third World areas.

In order to appreciate their calling, one must see them at work. Theirs is a life of total disinterestedness. They can have only one motivation — promoting evangelization and development by their daily service to the destitute. With the modest means at their disposal, they minister to the needs of the sick, the young, the aged, the poor, the catechists. Without supernatural motives to boost their courage, they could never face day after day, the harsh realities of life in the sectors in which they serve. There is nothing romantic about their tasks.

During 1975, International Women's Year, what will be done for these women entirely devoted to service in the Third World?

They have accepted to live out their lives in countries whose climate, language, customs, are often totally different from what they have known. They endure heat, cold, fatigue, hunger, privations of all sorts. But, joy stems for them from their sense of solidarity with peoples struggling to emerge from an inferior status. Theirs is an anonymous task. They march "to the sound of unheard music". Even more than faith, these consecrated women in the Third World need love, a gratuitous love of others, accepting them as they are in the humdrum details of everyday life.



Laundromat Guatemalan style.



The missionary Sister is also a woman of the Third world.

They know that they cannot change this world in mutation, but their answer is to love those who desperately need to be loved and understood.

What then, can we do for these women dedicated to evangelization and development? We can of course, under colour of charity, send them financial assistance. But if our donation is not accompanied by warm comprehension and tender sympathy, it will remain cold and impersonal. The question is still open. During 1975 what are we going to do for the promotion of women in the Third World?

KATETE, Malawi

Honoring our Lady in Malawi

by Marie Marthe Terrien, M.I.C.

For the last three years the Blessed Virgin has been honoured in a very particular way in our Katete Parish as well as in the out-stations.

Every evening during the months of May and October parishioners assemble in a home to recite the Rosary. The Legionaries of Mary assume the responsibility of this organization and, at their weekly meetings, determine in which homes the devotions will be held each day. Set up in the most conspicuous place of the house, the statue is beautifully adorned with flowers. Our Christians consider it a great honour to be chosen to welcome our Lady.

The gatherings generally take place after the five o'clock Mass in the afternoon. By then, most of the people have finished their

daily chores. Assistance varies from twenty-five to fifty persons. Children, adults, teachers, Rosarian Sisters, M.I.C. Sisters, and most of the time one of the parish priests attends. All join in the prayers. A group begins the Rosary, then the mysteries are recited, sung, explained, or illustrated.

Day after day, youngsters may be seen standing around, staring at the assembly. Little by little, they join in answering the prayers, and by the end of the month they have learned them all. The local Tumbuka language is used in these prayer gatherings.

It is really touching to see our dear Africans united in prayer every day during two whole months. They are the ones who insist on having these Marian



Sister Marie Marthe Terrien recites prayers during a praesidium of the Legion of Mary.

devotions when May and October draw near.

They deeply love the Blessed Virgin and are always proud to prove their veneration for her.



Sister Marguerite Legault and the author with a group of Legionaries.

Davao Fatima Centre

by Madeleine Alarie, M.I.C.



Sister Madeleine Alarie wants to uplift living standards in the Fatima district.

Like other slum areas, the Fatima district in Davao City is plagued with problems of poverty, disease, illiteracy, and lawlessness. Most of the residents live in overcrowded, unsanitary shacks made of log cores, veneer, or other flimsy materials. The lighting system is inadequate and environmental conditions are deplorable.

Means of livelihood are varied. Some residents engage in jeepney driving; others hawk water, fish, fruits, vegetables, buy and sell empty bottles and old magazines. Still others work in bars, cabarets, and night clubs. Certain groups hang around gambling dens. The Muslims who live along the seashore are fishermen.

In May 1969, a group of religious and community people from the Fatima district, headed by Father Marcel Lavoie, parish priest, and myself, decided to do something to uplift the living standard of the residents. A Centre was planned which would improve the conditions of life of the needy. At the same time, this Centre would foster brotherhood and love among the people, irrespective of religious and political views.

Fatima residents readily approved the project and helped put up the first building. On April 12, 1970, the Fatima Community Centre was inaugurated. It comprised

a medical clinic, an adult and community education unit, basic leadership training classes, seminar and self help courses. In October of the same year, sewing classes for young girls were added, and in March 1971, a dental clinic was opened. The Centre inaugurated a course in electronics and in electricity, and hotel-restaurant service training for out-of-school boys, in July and August 1973 respectively.

The motivation force behind the foundation of the Fatima Community Centre is the fostering of Christian brotherhood. Genuine Christian charity means helping people help themselves. Thus the Centre is founded on the principles of self-help. It is designed to stimulate community independence, accelerate development of self-reliance, and alert residents to their capability for improving their standard of living. Instead of imposing desirable changes upon them, we aim at fostering the desire to make such changes of their own volition. The Fatima Centre is, therefore, mainly concerned with the release, not the relief of the manpower and the natural potentials of residents in the area. Today, the people are proud of their achievements. Although poor, they willingly give what financial help they can for the upkeep of an institution which means so much to their self-respect.

HONG KONG

Visiting Families

by Thérèse Bellerose, M.I.C.

Since the beginning of May 1973, I have launched a new project of my own — visiting the families of our senior students, outside of my teaching hours. I have made wonderful discoveries exploring this world unknown to me so far. My first aim was to establish closer contacts and to spread the Good News among those who have not yet been privileged to hear it.

What results have been achieved? This is difficult to assess since I am working on the "invisible". But, every day I wonder anew at the courage and sincerity of those I dare not call pagans. I would rather say they are non-Christian believers.

The Chinese dearly love their children. Nothing seems too good for them. Although the majority of the sixty mothers I visited during the month of May are illiterate they all appreciate the priceless value of a good education. They leave their children free to opt for the religion they wish to practise. But for their part, they usually remain staunchly attached to Buddhism or Taoism, as the case may be.

The parents of our students belong to that group of people who fled the Communist regime during the 1950's and later. They were then young but could not pursue their studies because they had to earn a living. Whole families poured into Hong Kong. Without friends or relatives to help them out, they had to start from scratch. Some had to leave their younger children behind in the care of grandparents who could not attempt to flee.

We are told that in mainland China people are happy because

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Sister Florentine Dansereau, M.I.C., was born in St. Therese of Vercheres on December 15, 1901. She entered our Congregation on February 2, 1923, made her religious profession in 1925, and was a member of the group of three Sisters assigned to open our first Japanese mission, in 1926. She is now on home leave in Canada. All in all, she has spent 48 years in Japan. Quite a record!

A Dream Comes True

Sister Florentine reminisces...

Ikeda Teruko came to us in 1934. Her brother-in-law, then an employee of the construction company which built our first Japanese kindergarten, confided to me one day, "Sister, I have a young sister-in-law at home who is rather peculiar. The family worries about her." "What is the matter?" I inquired. "Oh, she is stubborn. Can you believe it? She refuses to marry." When one knows something of the Japanese mentality on this subject, especially in the pre-war years, Teruko was indeed peculiar. "Why don't you bring her here for a visit?" I urged. He accepted, and a few days later Teruko and I got acquainted.

She was a lovely, nineteen-year-old non-Christian girl, with pleasant and easy manners. It was not long before we were chatting like a pair of old friends. She explained that she had always wanted to do something special for other people: the poor, the unfortunate. Marriage meant nothing to her. When she was about to leave, she ventured to say,

"Sister, your way of life is the one I have always dreamed about. I'd like to know more about it." I invited her to visit us as often as she felt like it.

Eventually, she became a catechumen. After the usual period of instruction, she was baptized. It took a lot of courage on her part to act as she did for her family was firmly opposed to her project from the start and made her life miserable. But she held her own. For two years she worked in our kindergarten. Her desire to dedicate her whole life to God never faltered.

She wanted to enter our Congregation, but at that time we had no Japanese novitiate. We introduced her to the Congregation of Bernadettes, a religious community founded by Father Flaujac, priest of the Paris Foreign Missions, known everywhere as the apostle of the poor, the sick and the handicapped. Here at last she reached the goal of her aspirations.

After her profession, Teruko, now called Sister Lucia, was as-

signed as teacher to the children of T.B. patients admitted to the charity hospital. This building and several others sprawl over three hills donated to Father Flaujac by His Majesty, the Emperor, to be used for his charitable institutions. For the last ten years, Sister has been in charge of a group of mentally retarded patients between the ages of twenty and thirty. At present the various buildings on the hill house over one hundred handicapped patients, children, and adults, cared for by thirty-five Bernadettes and fifteen auxiliaries.

Last summer, Sister Lucia paid me a surprise visit. She had just been decorated by the Emperor himself with a medal of merit and had been awarded an honour diploma for her thirty-five years of service to the handicapped.

She was the same sweet unassuming person I had known. Her honours sat lightly on her. Her dream of long ago has come true — she radiates the joy and charity of Christ.

PHILIPPINES

The Second Asian Meet

by Anthea Raso, M.I.C.

Preparations had long been underway for the Second Asian Meet, to which the Philippines served as host country. Major Religious Women Superiors and Formation Personnel of Asia were in session from April 1-10 at Loyola Heights, Quezon City.

Our Filipino Sisters, particularly the Formation Committee and the different committee chairmen, worked very hard to make this session redound to the good of the Church in Asia. It is hoped that Asia will truly become alive to us religious, and that we in turn will respond in a manner that is genuine and practical.

The common sharing of experience during the First Meeting held in Hong Kong in November 1972 led to the realization that of the total 60,000 Sisters in Asia, 5,000 were under formation. Hence, the theme for the Second Meeting was — "On-going Formation".

The tightly-scheduled days ended up in a very cheerful festival, rightly called "A Barrio Comes Alive!" There was singing, dancing, and plenty of laughter beneath a crescent moon, on the grounds of the Sisters Formation Institute.



Sister Anthea keeps a cheerful outlook on the world.

Bits out of mission life

KATETE, MALAWI

The teachers in our mission school are deeply interested in ongoing formation. Thanks to generous help received from a group of Quebec students, we have been able to repair an old unused building which we put at their disposal as a library. The books are never idle. They pass from hand to hand, as all are eager to add to their knowledge and obtain coveted credentials. Their grateful thanks go to their young Canadian friends.

Our old mini-hospital has given place to a new building with a dispensary and maternity unit attached. Since then, the number of patients has increased. In the maternity ward, there are too many babies for the number of cots available. Resourceful African nurses solve the problem by arranging comfy little beds in large basins and everyone, including the babies, is happy.

Marie Marthe Terrien, M.I.C.

TAIPEI, TAIWAN

This year, the majority of our catechumens are young. Last Sunday, our pastor revived the ancient ceremony of the introduction of catechumens into the Church. After the Offertory, the group was asked to leave as used to be done in primitive times. When Mass was over, they were solemnly led up to the altar: four young girls (three are university students) two young men, and two old ladies. Two more ceremonies are scheduled before they are baptized some time after Christmas.

Marie Berthe Fleurent, M.I.C.

MADAGASCAR

At present, most of the M.I.C.'s in Madagascar dedicate themselves to education. The phenomenon of nationalization exists and its effects are clearly visible. Eventually, we will hand over our elementary schools to laymen, when they are willing to take over. It is difficult for them to assume the academic direction and the financial administration at present because the situation of Catholic schools is very complex. There is actually a move to obtain from the government a clear and consistent status for private schools, but the final issue is unpredictable for the time being. The financial question is the most serious

and decisive as far as parents and the institutions are concerned.

All the schools where the M.I.C.'s are teaching are parochial schools. The subsidies allotted by the government are very low. Fees paid by the parents are used for the upkeep of the school and for the salary of the professors. Because of this situation, the salary of the professors is less than that of public school teachers. Foreign personnel is willingly accepted in places where there is a lack of Malagasy personnel. Unlike what was done in the past, acceptance of personnel is not limited to citizens of a few countries only. Cooperation agreements with France have been expanded as well as those concluded with other countries such as Asia, America and Europe.

LONDON, ENGLAND

Ever since I came back to London for the first semester 1974, I have been wanting to share with you a remarkable experience I was privileged to live in Taizé last summer. But time seems to fly even faster here, what with studies, examinations, community meetings, etc. So, I had to wait until the holidays to tell you about this event.

The Council for the young opened on August 30 and closed on September 2. About 45,000 young people from everywhere attended. It was a moving spectacle to see them, divided into groups of eight or ten, meeting three times daily for prayer sharings, singing of Psalms, reading of the Gospel or of Saint Paul's hymn to charity. Between meetings, precious moments of silent meditation were spent in the church or outside.

Young men and women from various ethnic groups gave realistic accounts of pitiful situations of poverty and injustice in their respective countries. But if negative aspects were duly pointed out, positive events were equally emphasized.

On the final day, the theme was "Set the world afire!" This latter theme as well as the two preceding ones, "Destitution", and "Resurrection", were accompanied by appropriate music thanks to an orchestra organized by young American participants.

Besides our prayer sharings, we also held daily sessions, in small groups, to open windows on a universal world. I found these meetings very profitable,

from more than one point of view. The young are full of enthusiasm. They gladly picked up the challenge of the Council. "Risk everything if you want to get something done." "Nothing venture, nothing have," as the old English saying goes. Have we enough hope in our hearts to obtain even the unhoped for?

Pauline Boilard, M.I.C.

KORIYAMA, JAPAN

On Sunday, February 2, over 300 persons assembled in the church of Koriyama to show their love and gratitude to our dear Sister Rita Martel who passed away so suddenly in January. Sister who came to Japan immediately after World War II, started English classes, visited the poor, directed a kindergarten, and was the foundress of our Xaverio Elementary School of Koriyama. Girl and Boy Scouts, Brownies and Cubs all feel they owe their existence to the zeal of Sister Rita who gave them so generously of her time, love, and dynamic activity.

During the eulogies, a former PTA President recalled the astonishment of the parents when, for the first time, financial aid was asked for the school building, fifteen years ago. On such occasions, according to local custom, a list of the donors and the sum donated is drawn up. But this once, Sister asked that each one give what he wanted to give, and that no name or amount be written on the envelope that was to be turned in. Only God was to know what they gave. This was so unique, that the impression is still vivid to many. Others told of the leading power of this humble Sister, who persuaded them to send their children to a school that had only one old classroom to begin with... "She promised us a school. She did not deceive us, and today Xaverio is a credit to our city. We all feel Sister Rita Martel was the soul of the project..."

Eight priests concelebrated at the Requiem Mass and six persons were delegated to recall the activities of Sister Rita. Floral tributes and gifts were lavished in such a way that we cannot but think this impressive ceremony will help in making God better known and loved. Many Christians who had not been to church for years, showed up. Printed copies of the text of the Mass were distributed among participants so that each person present could pray and sing: all felt they were really participating in the Mass. For many non-Christians this was a rare spiritual experience.

Janet Delisle, M.I.C.

Looking Back at Some Highlights

by Irene Pinsonneault, M.I.C.



Natividad Rodriguez an alumna of Saint Joseph's Academy, on her wedding day, with her husband Bennie Amurao, and Sister Irene.

I joined the Congregation of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in 1922. Reflecting over the past, I can see that I chiefly owe my religious vocation to the influence of my beloved mother, a deeply religious woman who early instilled in my heart love of God and of our Blessed Mother. It was, of course, a great sacrifice to leave her and all my dear ones to enter the convent, but I was convinced that this was what God wanted me to do in life.

During my noviceship I encountered many little trials. What novice has not had the same experience? At one time, I remember growing so tense that I made up my mind to take French leave! Just as I was making plans to go, I met Mother Foundress. With a motherly gesture she tapped me on the shoulder saying, "My dear little Sister, why so sad? I like to meet smiling novices. They help me forget my problems. Won't you promise me to smile from now on?" At these words of our dear Foundress, my own little troubles suddenly seemed to evaporate and I became a very happy novice.

In 1925, I made my first vows. The following year I was assigned to the

house we then had in Rome. There I spent some happy and fruitful years. Our chief apostolate was to teach the doctrine to little herdboys who tended their flocks on the hills outside the city. The majority were very ignorant of the truths of the Catholic faith in which they had been baptized. While in Rome, it was my privilege to visit many famous sanctuaries. I particularly enjoyed making frequent pilgrimages to the tomb of Pope Pius X.

Before leaving on a new assignment to the Philippines in 1933, I had the honour of being present at a private audience of Pope Pius XI. Turning to me, he asked, "Why leave Rome? It is as much a mission land as the Philippines..." The Pope smiled wistfully as he said this, then gave his blessing and the audience was over. Upon my arrival in Manila, I helped the Sisters with the running of a school for the Chinese.

In 1942, we were caught in the whirlwind of war. I knew the harsh realities of prison life at Fort Santiago, in Bilibid, then in Mantinlupa. It was no spree to sit on a rough floor, lie at night on bare boards, eat mush from crude coconut shells, suffer a two-week questioning... But through it all, I never felt unhappy nor down-hearted. I was convinced our Lady would take care of me.

On February 9, 1945, the day dawned silent and gloomy. All night long, the rat-a-tat of Japanese gunfire had kept us awake but now all was quiet. We risked a look outside the camp and found that the sentries had gone. We were free at last. Soon afterwards, the Americans arrived to take us to the San Tomas University in Manila where our immediate needs were attended to.

I returned to Canada in 1953. Many things had happened during my absence of twenty-seven years! My dear

mother and father were no longer there to greet me, but my brothers and sisters gave me a royal welcome.

After a year spent in the homeland, I was happy to return to the Philippines. My apostolate was not of a spectacular kind, but I found my happiness in radiating Christ among the dear gentle people I love so much. I can truly say that throughout the forty-eight years spent in mission lands I have found the hundredfold promised by the Saviour to those who have left everything for his sake.

(continued from page 3)

they are all treated alike. The fact is that they are paid ridiculously low salaries and cannot freely communicate with their relatives on the outside. Try to imagine the anxiety of the poor parents who do not know what has happened to their dear ones. My heart goes out to them because they are so brave, so industrious, so patient under trial.

Those who have made it to freedom appreciate their lot. Freedom is doubly sweet to people who have felt its deprivation. I am very happy to have launched this family visiting project. At first, it was feared that our senior students might feel embarrassed to have me call on their parents, in their humble homes. But I have found the contrary to be true. For my part, knowing their family background, I have been able to understand their problems better. How can young girls find the time to study when, on returning home, all the household chores are awaiting to be done? The father and mother are out eking a meagre livelihood. Then there is the worry over younger brothers and sisters. All too often there is not enough to eat. Dear readers, may I ask you to remember these courageous people in your prayers? They have paid a high price for the freedom they enjoy.

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