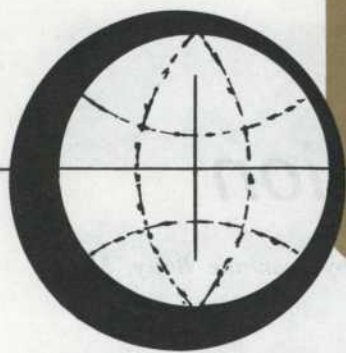




Together in mission

The term "in mission" means the state of being sent. While on earth Christ was in the state of being sent by the Father, so Christ was "in mission". He was a missionary. Christ's work continues through His followers who together form the Church.

By baptism one becomes a follower of Christ, a member of His Church, and enters into this state of

being sent like Him. "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you" (Jo. 20: 21). Each member of the Church is "in mission" — charged with sharing the saving message of Christ. Our task is to open our hearts to the person and message of Jesus and to find the person and message of Jesus in others. We are not alone; we are together in mission, sharing with all those He has sent. And He is with us.

Lord, open my hands!

A little child is born with his hands closed. These tiny hands convey a message. They are called upon to open to life. The role of parents is to urge the babe with closed hands to become an adult with open hands.

Open hands to work and grow.

Open hands to receive and to give.

Open hands to help and encourage.

Open hands to relieve and share.

It is a sad thing indeed to find adults whose hands are still as tightly closed as those of newborn children. They cling to everything they have and refuse to open their hands to a neighbour in need, to a person who calls on their assistance.

Before we open our hands, however, we must first open our hearts

to listen and to give comfort. If we look up to our model, Christ Jesus, we find that He kept hands and heart wide open to all human miseries. His hands were open to heal the sick, to absolve the sinner, to distribute a miraculous bread to the crowds that followed Him, to bless and to raise up to life. We have only to leaf through the Gospels to find many instances of this way of acting. For your references regarding open hands see: Mt 8: 1-4; Mk 20: 29-34; 1: 40-45; Luke 5: 12-16, to mention only a few. We leave you to discover for yourself throughout the New Testament, many more examples of open hands and open hearts. Note that when your hands are clasped in prayer they are really not closed but opened wide to draw down God's blessing upon the world.



Hands clasped in prayer are really opened wide to draw down God's blessings upon the world.

TOTONICAPAN, GUATEMALA

Disaster beyond description

by Jeannine Boily, M.I.C.



In the aftermath of the earthquake

I was sleeping soundly on the night of February 4 when I was suddenly awakened by a tremendous quake. My first thought was that if this meant death, I might as well offer up my life to the Lord. My second was to run out of my room and find my two companions. Snatching clothes against the cold, we rushed outside wondering what had happened. Every twenty minutes or so the earth shook beneath our feet.

Neighbouring streets as well as the park were crowded with people, stunned by the suddenness of the event. Hardly anything was said. We shared our common fate in a sort of mute resignation. It was only when the sun rose that we realized the extent of the damage. The air was filled with the dust of crumbling houses. Everywhere we looked, we could see only ruins. Hundreds of dead and injured were lying in the streets. The scene was beyond description. When night came, the people huddled under tents or makeshift shelters, in the park or in open spaces.

On February 6, we started on a round of neighbouring villages where the damage was even greater than in Totonicapán. Chimaltenango was a mass of rubble. Where the church had been, only the statues of Christ and of our Lady stood intact inside the ruined sanctuary. A group of vil-

lagers had gathered around, as if for safety, and were praying fervently. On our way to Tecpan, another small village, we met an injured man lugging a two-hundred-pound sack of maize. "The people of my village have nothing to eat and are without shelter. I'm doing what I can to help them out." He himself had lost everything except this provision of maize which he intended to share with other unfortunates. In Quiche, we met one of the teachers trying to help the panic-stricken villagers. Exhaustion and grief were etched on his weather-beaten features. But, in spite of the tragedy that had overtaken him and his countrymen, he found the courage to accept God's will with resignation. He confided, "As a child I had never known what it meant to sit on a chair. When I became a teacher, I was able to build a small but comfortable house. Now I've lost everything. The Lord had given; He has taken away... My only regret is that now I can't help my poor mother who is in pain."

At Zaragoza, where a community of Sisters had their novitiate, we found that not a single house had been spared. A Sister recounted, "I felt a terrible shock in the middle of the night. It was a vertical quake, the most dangerous as I soon realized. I hurried out by the back door, expecting that the 16 novices and

postulants had escaped through the front. It was pitch dark. Impossible to move from the place where I stood as the convent and the church had been shattered by the quake. All around me, I could hear heartrending cries, moans, sobs... The hours until dawn seemed endless. At last, the sun rose on a scene of disaster. Only seven of my girls were found. Together with the villagers, I started to look for the nine who were missing. At 9:00 a.m. we found two who were badly injured. Later, we extricated a third one from the debris. The other six had been killed by falling roofs and walls." That same day, over three hundred dead people were buried in Zaragoza.

I think it worthwhile to quote, in closing, from a message delivered by the bishops of Guatemala: "Our Church has long suffered from the lack of social justice and of charity. The blood of the innocent was shed only too often. It took this great human disaster to awaken the people to the sense of their responsibilities. As always, the poor, the innocent are the most pitiful victims of what happened..."

And now a significant reaction is taking place. Families living at odds for years are being reconciled. Grievances have been forgiven and old grudges buried. All are uniting to build happier tomorrows.

LA PAZ, BOLIVIA

A Bolivian girl called Lucy

by Ghislaine Séguin, M.I.C.

Meet Lucy, my charming young Bolivian friend. She was born far from La Paz, in a tiny village of the Potosi region. Her mother died, in tragic circumstances, when the child was only two years old. Although the father soon remarried, Lucy was never to know the tenderness of maternal care.

Lucy's father was a herder. In his harsh life there was no place for pity or compassion. Lucy was barely five when he sent her, with a younger brother, to care for the family herd of sheep, high up in the mountains. A sack-like garment was all the protection the children had against the biting cold, at 14,000 feet of altitude, in the Andes. In order to keep reasonably warm, the pair often huddled against the sheep. Their provisions for the day consisted in a mug of corn mush handed to them before they left in the morning. Lucy led this miserable existence until she was 14.

She was then told she must earn her own living and was sent to Oruro, a neighbouring town, where she worked during a whole year for a hardhearted woman who treated her as a drudge. As her mistress refused to pay her any wages, the girl finally decided to make her way to La Paz, the capital. For two years she worked hard as a housemaid for a minimal salary. Even though she remembered how tough life had been in the Andes, she finally got homesick and returned to her village. However, she soon realized there was no future for her unless she had some schooling which she could not hope to get in her village. So, carrying her scant possessions in a small bundle she returned to La Paz where she arrived on Christmas Eve.

After wandering for hours through the streets in search of work, she finally came to our convent and resolutely knocked at the door. She was given a warm welcome and we

shared our Christmas supper with her. As she was exhausted with her journey, we decided to keep her for a while to have her rest and eat her fill. Some time later she accepted with alacrity our offer of work at our convent with reasonable wages.

Lucy has now been with us for over two years. We are satisfied with her and she feels happy and secure. She has had only a few years of elementary schooling but she is clever and eager to learn. We have, therefore made it possible for her to follow evening classes which will lead her to the secondary school level.

Although her childhood was so unhappy, she has kept a remarkably cheerful outlook on life. Her aim in wishing to pursue her studies is to return to her home village. "My people know practically nothing about the true God. The only religious formation I myself received as a child was from my father who taught us children to worship the sun, every morning before starting to work. The superstitions of our Inca ancestors are all mixed up in the villagers' minds with a few remnants of the Catholic faith taught by the first missionaries. At present there are no Catholic priests to minister to their needs. My ambition is to become a catechist and invite a neighbouring missionary to visit the village once in a while. But, I have to be practical and must first learn to earn my own living while being useful to others..."

Lucy would like to attend sewing classes which would help her in her apostolate. "I must start by the women and win them over by teaching them something useful. The men may follow later on. Perhaps a male catechist could be found..." Lucy is a genuine lay apostle who wants to dedicate her whole life to Christ as a catechist among her own. Who will help her reach her goal?

JAPAN

THE

The effusion of the Spirit in many places and the variety of His manifestations have marked the past few years in a special manner. Our St. Francis Xavier School, *Xaverio Gakuen*, in Koriyama has been beneficiary of many blessings for which we feel deeply grateful.

One example among others would be the story of Minako who lost her father while she was still a grader. At that time she was attending a public school in the neighbourhood. After her father's death, her mother, with the help of the grandmother, undertook the management of a *ryokan* or Japanese inn in a little village on the outskirts of Koriyama. Despite the distance and the modest means of the family, it was decided that Minako would attend our Junior High School. It was here that for the first time, she heard about Jesus, the God of Christians. Born in a Buddhist family,

PERU

Tocroyo

by Thérèse Bergeron, M.I.C.



This is the church built by the people of Tocroyo.

Sister Thérèse teaches the doctrine to Tocroyo youngsters.



LORD WORKS WONDERS

by Sister Céline Bourbeau, M.I.C.

this contact with the Christian religion was altogether new to her.

With her companions, she was taught to pray to our Father in heaven. She learned of His love for His children, be they black, white or yellow; she learned to know Mary, our Blessed Mother. She learned that, as children of the same Father, we are all brothers and that we must live in unity and love of one another. During these three consecutive years, she participated in the *Kokoro no tsudoi* or days of recollection and prayer which helped her discover the meaning of collaboration, of mutual aid, of friendship. Every morning, with her friends, she joined in prayer, and in the evening she thanked God for the day that had gone by, for the friendships shared, for the difficulties overcome. When Christmas drew near and the whole school, from the Kindergarten to Senior High, held a

Christmas celebration, she heartily sang the Christmas carols during the Candle Service, and she prayed fervently as she followed the candlelit procession. In short, Minako grew up in the atmosphere of a "mission school" and she lived the experience with simplicity and sincerity.

Before leaving Xaverio, she left us the following beautiful testimony: "When I entered Xaverio, I knew nothing about God. For me 'God' was something very distant, beyond this world, something vague that had nothing to do with me. At first, when prayer time came, I recited words, understanding very little of their meaning and import. As the days went by, without my even noticing it, everything changed. Today, as I am about to leave this school, I realize that God is a person, that among all persons, He is the One who is closest to me. He is there, in the depth of my being.



Minako heartily sang the Christmas carols during the Candle Service.

And she added this genuine act of faith — "Personally I believe in God."

The Almighty continues to work wonders. Blessed be His name! Our presence in Japan is indeed meaningful.

Tocroyo is a small village of the Andes inhabited mostly by merchants from the highlands who settled down here some fifteen years ago. Farmers or herders of sheep, llamas, and alpacas, live in the countryside. Of domesticated crops, the potato is the most important. The Altiplano is its original home and it continues to be the staple food of the majority. Eaten in its dehydrated form known as the *chuno* it is of the consistency of a cooked chestnut with a distinctive and agreeable flavour.

We arrived in the town of Yauri, where we established our headquarters, in 1972. From this more or less central area we are able to reach most of the outlying villages. My chief task is that of catechetical coordinator. I regularly visit groups of catechists who function in the remote areas, in order to encourage their efforts and help with their work. In Tocroyo, I have not a dull moment. The population, of about 3,000, is 95 per cent Catholic. However, because they hardly ever benefit by the ministry of a pastor, their religious instruction leaves much to be desired. The role of the catechists is to make up for this. They are a very dynamic group of committed men, a genuine apostolic leaven in the mass of the population.

When Tocroyo was first settled, the people begged the bishop to send

a resident priest. To test their faith, he answered that he would send them a priest if they agreed to build a church and rectory. They took up this suggestion and built a church of adobe bricks, sober in style and proportion. They painted the inside green, the colour of hope. It was large enough to accommodate over 500 faithful. A modest rectory was built alongside. True to his word, the bishop did send a priest to Tocroyo. He had not resided long, however, when he had to be recalled to serve a larger parish. Priests around here are all too few. The pastor of Yauri, for instance, has to minister to the spiritual needs of about 45,000 inhabitants scattered all over the countryside. He can seldom find the time for a stopover in Tocroyo.

In 1974, I started to visit this village once a week in order to prepare the pupils of the primary course to receive the sacraments. The catechists had their hands full teaching the doctrine to adults. Most of the villagers, the women more especially, speak only the Quechua dialect. Before the young are allowed to receive the sacraments, they are required to attend at least three catechetical instructions. None below the age of fifteen are accepted. Why such a ruling? In order to make sure they fully grasp their obligations. Last November, Mgr. Albano Quinn con-

firmed a group of 40 adults and 30 pupils who had been carefully prepared. It was a great day for Tocroyo.

Unfortunately, I had to give up my pastoral activities in the village during 1975 as I had been asked to visit a more remote district in even greater need of spiritual assistance. Catechists and school teachers took up where I had left off. Lately, I have received a request from my friends in Tocroyo, to visit them at least once a year. It is the least I can do to satisfy their thirst for things spiritual. The harvest is great but the labourers, alas, are all too few. So much work could be done here by even a small team of apostolic workers. Who will come to Tocroyo?

Dear Sister Madeline,

I am very glad that you received my letter and the money. I have read about the earthquakes in Guatemala and I am very thankful that I live where I do. I very much enjoy sending you money to help others. Each week I save a little money from my paper route and from baby-sitting and build it up and then I send it to you gladly. I have my membership card and I am happy to be a member of the ICMA. I will write again and send money.

Love always,

Signed: Andrea Mackie

Bits out of mission life

ESPINAR, PERU

The great majority of Andean peasants in southern Peru find it hard to make both ends meet, although their life is very frugal and their needs are few. Potatoes are the sole crop. Due to the altitude and to intense cold, these vegetables remain small and full of "eyes". Each family sells the surplus of its crop in order to buy bread, candles, coca, alcohol, etc.

In our Espinar zone, llamas and alpacas are raised. The herds are small and the meat and wool of slaughtered animals hardly suffice for home consumption. Nothing can be sold on outside markets.

It is very important for the entire family to keep in good health, each member being accountable for the performance of daily chores. Moreover, sickness is considered a curse which may extend to other family members and to animals. The whole family is expected to help drive the herds out to pasture early in the morning, and round them up at night.

Even the youngsters have their own allotted task which consists in fetching water from neighbouring pools or rivers. Each child in turn is also expected to give up one whole year of schooling to help with the family herds. Parents are usually reluctant to send their children to school, as they fear that once they know how to read and write, they may want to leave their lonely villages for large towns where living conditions are not quite so harsh.

Although life is rather drab in these Andean regions, as a rule the peasants are not unhappy. They lead an industrious life, in a closely knit community, where everybody is made to feel important in some way or other.

Agnes Bouchard, M.I.C.

MALAWI, C.A.

Here in Katete life is quiet, and the people with whom we live and share our time give us much happiness and consolation. Our main interest is the new Health Centre which is on the way to completion. From my office window I have a view of the four

blocks. Most of the equipment is now on hand. Running water has been installed in the first building. A modern solar installation on the roof will eventually provide us with hot water, quite a change from the old system of having to heat it over a firewood stove and carry it to the wards.

During the past year, we have been endeavouring to prepare our Africans for taking over some of our tasks. One of our helpers has been following a course as social assistant at the Magomero Government Training Centre. This will enable her to teach sewing and hygiene to expectant mothers. During her stay at our Health Centre, each mother prepares a layette for the baby so that it will be warmly clothed when the time comes to leave for her village. Another improvement is the translation of the "Under Five Clinic" talks into the Chilambya dialect.

Thanks to Doctor Philipps, a Canadian dentist from Saskatchewan, the secretary of our out-patient department has been given an eight-week training course in dental hygiene and in dental extraction with anaesthesia. Another of our assistants has been trained as a laboratory technician.

Problems do crop up daily while we prepare the Africanisation of our Centre. Revenues are scarce and our bursar often has "headaches", trying to make both ends meet. But our hope in the future is unshakable. Divine Providence has never yet failed us in our needs. Why should we worry?

Yvette Carle, M.I.C.

MADAGASCAR

Lately, I had the occasion of visiting the M.I.C. Novitiate of Our Lady of La Salette, at Mandrosoa on the rural route of Ambositra, where Malagasy M.I.C. novices are being trained. It was a pleasant experience which I want to share with you all. At present, we have three Malagasy novices at this formation centre. Sister Françoise de Varennes, who was first assigned to our Haitian missions and who came to Madagascar in 1965, is the formation directress, with a Malagasy professed Sister as assistant.

Besides pursuing their religious formation, the novices do their share in pastoral animation. The pastor of Our Lady of La Salette parish has entrusted one of them with the preparation of fifteen adults for baptism. The group meets here, at the Novitiate, once every fortnight for instruction and guidance. Prospective candidates are always accompanied by godfathers (or godmothers) as the case may be. These so-called godparents help the catechumens in their studies and in their family problems, whenever these crop up. If the pastor finds them sufficiently prepared, these catechumens will be baptized at Easter.

Every Friday, another novice gathers the children who attend public schools in order to teach them catechism, as these youngsters would otherwise be completely deprived of religious instruction. The doctrinal lesson over, they are taught various handicrafts. Another group of forty children whose parents cannot afford to pay school fees are taken care of. On Sundays, they attend doctrinal classes and on Fridays are given lessons in home economics. At present this group numbers forty.

One of the novices is also in charge of a group of Guides, as senior assistant to the Leader. As assistant, she occasionally takes part in camping expeditions, formation of packs, weekend meetings... These contacts with the young prove very fruitful.

The Malagasy Bishops' Conference has asked that the Sisters assume a more various role in the various parishes where they are stationed. They rely on them to quicken the true Christian spirit among the faithful. This is what the novices of Our Lady of La Salette Novitiate are trying to do.

Marie Odila Plante, M.I.C.

MALAWI, C.A.

Activities such as "Youth Week" are very healthy programmes which encourage Malawian youth to participate in development change. Recent years were particularly remarkable for worthwhile achievements. It was a novel experience for students pursuing full time higher education to participate with enthusiasm in "Youth Week".

Chancellor College students undertook a project for digging a water pipe trench covering a distance of about half a mile, towards Makhetha township. For years, Makhetha had



Reverend M. Repentigny, W.F., looks on approvingly as students help level school grounds at Marymount Secondary School.

been without any reliable water supply. The only available source was from a pond situated about a quarter of a mile away. Now the people have abundant clear water, piped to their locality.

Students from the Polytechnic engaged in the clearing of the old Blantyre market. Heaps of broken brick were lying all over the place. The boys did quite a job on the site. For their part, students from Bunda, the Institute of Public Administration and Soche Hill College, were also involved in similar projects. This proves that our young people not only believe in the dignity of manual labour, but are also involved in the community around them.

"Youth Week" is seen by most as an important factor in building up the nation. Teams of University students are particularly valuable because they are usually composed of youth of the widest ethnic origins. In this way, they create a national consciousness desirable in a developing country like ours.

As a rule, the more such projects involve physical labour, the easier it becomes to build bridges across the rift in society between the educated classes and the country people. This helps break down the popular prejudice that educated young people are averse to "soiling their hands".

The youth are the vanguard of any nation. They carry future responsibilities in their hands; therefore, they must be properly trained. This responsibility should not be left to parents alone. The problem is a vital one requiring the attention of every one in the nation.

Condensed from *Moyo Wathu*

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TANABATA FESTIVAL by Clara Maeda, M.I.C.

Tanabata or the Festival of the Seventh Eve has always been dear to the children of Japan. Like many others, this festival originally came from China.

It is based on the story of Shokujō, the Weaver Princess Star (Vega), daughter of the King of the Sky, and Kengyō, the Herdboy Star (Altair). The Weaver Princess Star was beautiful, industrious, and skilful at weaving.

One day while she sat at her loom weaving magnificent garments for her heavenly father, she was visited by the Herdboy. The two fell in love. When the father noticed that his daughter was neglecting her work, he grew angry. Learning about her romance, he forbade the two to meet except once a year, on the seventh of the seventh moon. For the rest of the time, they had to live on opposite banks of the Milky Way or River of the Sky.

This annual festival is celebrated as a sharing in the joy of the Weaver Princess and her Herdboy at meeting again. Children and adolescents delight in decorating freshly cut bamboo trees with daintily cut papers of various sizes and colours. Cities and towns take on a festive look as children march and dance carrying the bamboos and singing folk songs.

On the following day, these paper decorations are floated down the river. This is called *Tanabata okuri* or a farewell to Tanabata. Although the festival is observed all over Japan, it has particular attraction in certain places such as the cities of Sendai and Akita, as well as in the Miyagi and Tohoku districts.

Because the Princess was a good weaver, girls in former days observed the festival in the hope of improving their craftsmanship in weaving and sewing. Later she became the patron of the arts — song, music, and poetry.

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