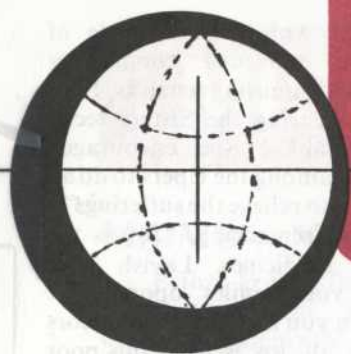




MIC MISSION NEWS

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The Christian vocation is an invitation to bliss.

JOYFUL BY NATURE

Is Christian life happy or sad? The answer is enlightening and felicitous. Christian life is joyful, by nature. It is happy, because of its special character which surpasses the common concept of human existence. It is blessed because the evangelical message of the beatitudes proclaims it as such, and to the present time, Christ's words promise and ensure that it is: "These things I have spoken to you that your joy may be made full" (Jn 15, 11).

This point is very important. It is really necessary to form in us the dominant idea that Christian life is HAPPY. We mean real Christian life; and we mean "happy" in the superior, intangible and inexhaustible sense, which is given to us by charity, that is by the action of the Holy Spirit in our souls.

Let us remember clearly: he who lives in God's grace possesses for this very reason a source of happiness that no exterior misfortunes nor any inferior depression can exhaust and extinguish. The Christian vocation is an invitation to bliss. No state of mind can make us so deeply happy as peace of conscience, or, preferably, let us say, as grace, that is charity. Joy, like peace, is a gift from charity. It is not distinguished from charity, but emanates from it (cf. Gal 5, 22; S. Th 11-11, 28, 1; and 4). Let us remember: "The kingdom of God does not consist in food and drink, but in justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom 14; 17).

Paul VI

LET'S CELEBRATE

Edita Telan, M.I.C.

Anniversaries and commemorations always call for celebration, the mode of which is often dictated by the time that has elapsed between the anniversary and the event it commemorates. A couple, for instance, celebrating their twentieth wedding anniversary exhibit more joy or solemnity than they would for their fifth or their ninth, and their golden jubilee with more jubilation than for their silver jubilee.

This holds true for individuals, communities, and nations. Not long ago, the United States celebrated the 200th anniversary of its founding, a cause of great rejoicing among the American people.

In the M.I.C. world, this year is one of jubilation. The third day of June 1977, marks the 75th anniversary of the humble beginnings of the first Canadian

Missionary Institute for women founded in Montreal. An apostolic school, conceived and realized by a Canadian woman of prophetic vision, became two years later the Society of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Out of Délia Tétrault's acknowledgment of God's magnanimity, the Society was born. Her gratitude for God's gifts took form in the nascent Institute, the purpose of which was and continues to be the sharing of the gift of faith with those who have not heard of Christ and His Gospel.

The Society began with four intrepid women who dared to set forth under the aegis of the Immaculate Virgin Mary. With the Holy Spirit leading, the Society after 75 years of existence claims almost a thousand women of different conditions and

cultures united in the joys of thanksgiving, and dedicated to spreading the Good News of Salvation.

Indeed, the tiny mustard seed has grown and flourished on four continents: Africa, Asia, Latin and North Americas. Still spreading, the missionary Institute reaches out to unfortunate brethren living in almost inaccessible mission lands. "All mission lands are open to you. To you it is said as to the apostles of old: Go teach all nations! Thus the Sacred Congregation of the Faith mandated the young Institute in 1908.

Through the seven and a half decades of its existence, the Society of the Missionary Sisters has continually sung Délia's wonderment at the Father's superabundant grace. And though each day, Délia's daughters celebrate God's love, there is surely something special in their hymn of praise this year, celebrations which will continue as long as the Kingdom of God continues to grow, world without end.

A JOYFUL HEART

Delia possessed a singularly joyful nature. She would willingly have made hers Saint Teresa's sally, "Deliver us from sad saints!" Even when pressed with trials, setbacks, and sorrows she found cause to rejoice in God's love. Her joyfulness blossomed forth in smiles and in kind words which swept away, as if by magic, the cobwebs of diffidence, the clouds of despondency. She wanted her daughters to be ambassadors of joy.

During a retreat she made in the first years of the foundation she wrote to the Sisters, "I have understood better than ever, how spiritual joy enables one to progress rapidly in God's service. Joy is a homage to divine goodness. It

appears to me as one of the virtues which ought to characterize our little community." She encouraged the first group of Sisters assigned to Canton, China, to assume their difficult task of adaptation in a joyful spirit: "Cultivate the spirit of joy in everything you do. God loves a cheerful giver. To give cheerfully is to give twice. May the Lord increase your courage, your generosity, and your joy." Again, to another group of her missionaries: "Rejoice and be happy apostles, discovering God's love in all creatures, not only in those endowed with reason but even in animals, birds, and other tiny creatures which look to us for protection. Bring joy to everyone, everywhere you go."

Endowed with a keen sense of humour she enlivened community recreations with amusing remarks. How she enjoyed hearing the Sisters recall childhood pranks! She encouraged those at work among the lepers to do all in their power to relieve the sufferings of these outcasts remarking, "Joy is the best of all medicines. Lavish your tenderness, your smiles upon those among whom you live. Be ambassadors of joy. After all, joy is what this poor world of ours lacks most." She advised a group of novices, "Be cheerful, loving, humble saints. There is no better way to make others happy." And again, "Cultivate the virtues of joy and amiability. They greatly contribute to the happiness of families." Many more such instances could be given. Enough has been said to give you an insight into the joyful heart of Délia Tétreault, and encourage you to be joyful always, out of gratitude to God for his bounties.

MADAGASCAR

FAMADIHANA TURNING OVER OF THE DEAD

by Odila Plante, M.I.C.

The Malagasy have an ardent love of life. An old proverb expresses this feeling — *Mamy ny aina*, Life is sweet. Life, they believe, extends beyond the grave. It differs but slightly from earthly existence, and death is not to be feared.

Of course, many Malagasy are Christian. They have learned from the missionaries about *Andriamanitra*, the Perfumed Lord. As a rule, they have accepted the idea that he is unique. But, some still consider him to be the chief deity. According to the people of the countryside, more especially, the world is full of supernatural spirits. Who, at one time or another, has not seen the souls of the departed haunting the neighbourhood?

Even in Tananarive, the capital, people will tell you how the spirits of the dead slip in through open windows, in the cool of the night. In every Malagasy house, the north-eastern corner is the "holy corner" dedicated to the ancestors. Holier still is the tomb, the only lasting dwelling place. "Build a house," asserts the old Malagasy proverb "and

you work for a day; build a tomb and you work for eternity." No wonder graveyards are held as sacred places.

Malagasy homes will be safe only in so far as the dead are pacified. They must be helped to become genuine ancestors through certain ritual ceremonies. Otherwise, they will return to harass the living. Among these rites *famadihana* or turning over of the dead is one of the most important. Of course, turning does not mean that the dead are literally turned over. The ceremony consists in taking up the remains of those who have lain so long in their tombs, that the shawls they had been wrapped in have fallen to pieces. Time has come for them to be wrapped up in new shawls and to be transformed into sacred personages who can, henceforth, dispense both temporal and spiritual benefits. The Malagasy venerate the saints of the Christian calendar. But they also honour their ancestors as saints. Are they so far wrong about this? In villages, pastors attend the turning over of the dead. To Westerners, it may seem a bizarre idea to combine

famadihana and All Saints, but to the Malagasy it is perfectly proper.

On the eve of the ceremony, close relatives gather at the collective grave site. The senior member of the group turns to the four corners of the horizon, calling all the dead buried on this spot by name. Early, the following day, the tombs are opened by a team of young men. As the dead are brought out, the senior member of the group of relatives calls out, "Who goes there?" The remains are then joyfully bounced and tossed so they will "not feel sad". Noisy music is played and the people dance and sing. The skeletons, dried up by the red clay of the island, are carefully divested of the shreds clinging to them and wrapped up again in brand-new silken shawls. The women fight over remnants of discarded shrouds which are supposed to ensure fertility. After the dead have been buried again, all present participate in a banquet meant to strengthen family ties. The merry-making lasts throughout the day. This is a great occasion in Malagasy life.

The ceremony described above is held more particularly among the Imerina. Other provinces on the Island also celebrate special rites in honour of the dead. All consider their ancestors as "saints" to whom they may have recourse as powerful intercessors before God. The double burial described above is practised not only in Madagascar but in Indonesia, Oceania, and in certain parts of the Americas.

MY SPIRITUAL BIRTH

by Imelda Misao Takahashi, M.I.C.

Having been brought up in a Buddhist family, I knew very little concerning the Christian religion until I began attending public school. However, there was one question which continually recurred in my mind, "Why had Jesus been nailed to the cross?"

In the fall of 1949, a Catholic church close to my home was consecrated and a Spanish priest appointed pastor. I made up my mind to get acquainted with him to talk about my inner preoccupation.

As this church had been recently erected, very few catechumens were in attendance. Every day, however, students dropped in to study catechism on their way home from school. With what kindness this generous pastor guided me to Baptism! I was seventeen when the Lord bestowed upon me this ineffable grace, on Easter Sunday of the year 1950. I felt bathed in the love and mercy of God.

After graduating from high school, I began a nursing course at the Red Cross Hospital. These were the happy days of my life as a child of God, although the neighbourhood was non-Christian. Being spiritually newborn, it was not an easy task for me to develop my faith in such environment. I longed to live in thoroughly Christian surroundings.

I graduated from the Nursing School in the spring of 1954, when I was twenty-one years old. The Franciscan Missionary Sisters agreed to accept me as a regular nurse on their hospital staff. It was there I first met a Canadian Nursing Sister. Thanks to the example of her daily devotedness, I discovered the warmth of Christian love. She was a genuine witness of Christ. For the first time I realized what true human love really meant and found this to be a priceless challenging experience.

From that time onwards I was eager to talk to my fellowmen about God's love. I longed to devote my life to him and the wish to become a nun took birth in my heart. While I was working in the hospital, I happened to meet some Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate

Conception as patients. I learned a lot just by silently watching these Sisters during their illness.



Sister Imelda Misao Takahashi, M.I.C.

As I was far from robust, it soon became impossible for me to keep on working as a nurse. I looked for a job in a Catholic school and finally found one. During this time, I continually prayed to be granted the grace of religious vocation, and implored heavenly light in order to make the right choice.

In 1957, while I was attending Mass, on my twenty-fourth birthday, I gazed long and lovingly at a crucifix above the altar. I felt Christ was calling me to his service. This calling grew stronger and clearer in my heart and I immediately gave my assent. I then turned to a statue of the Immaculate Virgin. From his cross, Christ seemed to point to his Mother saying, "I want you to become a Sister of the Immaculate Conception." Then and there, I made up my mind to enter this Community.

On February 5, 1958, I was admitted to the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Magnificat! I was then twenty-five years of age. Nineteen years have since gone by and I am actually at the Mother House of the Institute, in Montreal, for one year of study. A few months ago, the Lord prepared a wonderful surprise for me. I had the great pleasure of meeting once again the Canadian Franciscan Missionary Sister with whom I had worked in Tokyo. She it was who twenty years ago guided me in my work and oriented me towards the religious life. My heart is filled with gratitude at the thought of all the graces the Lord has bestowed upon me.

FLASHBACK

by Jeanne d'Arc Nolin, M.I.C.

One of my favourite activities in the mission field was visiting the sick and taking them Holy Communion. Because of the noonday heat, I usually waited until late afternoon to start on my rounds. Another reason for this was that after school, little groups of students would gladly accompany me. One carried a crucifix, others lighted candles, and still others bouquets of wild flowers. Usually, a member of the Legion of Mary went on ahead to prepare the patients for Jesus' coming.

Every time I entered those drab huts, my heart was moved anew at the fervour expressed by my dear friends. The whole family often gathered around to share their sick one's happiness. All joined in the prayers said and the hymns sung in preparation for Communion. Afterwards, the pupils helped with the thanksgiving prayers.

The poorest of the poor among those visited was my old friend Nara. I discovered her one day, as I reached a distant village. In a serious car accident suffered years ago, she had been so badly crippled that she could not walk, even inside her hovel. The only help she could rely on was that of a retarded sixteen-year-old grandson and that of kindly neighbours.

Guatemala

DESIGNS AND SYMBOLS

by Céline Trudeau, M.I.C.

For the Indians of Guatemala, textiles long served as books. Each person could write his or her own. A journey used to be an exciting adventure when true tribal costumes were worn by man, woman, and child.

The biography of the wearer might be read in designs and symbols as well as in the way the garment was worn. One could tell at a glance, whence a man came, his social or official rank, his profession, etc.

Each figure of the designs had its own particular significance and position on the textile, according to laws of usage and dress laid down by tribal chiefs. Nobles and aristocrats were entitled to exclusive and elaborate designs.

As they were adapted for the

Her joy was boundless, when I told her I would bring her Holy Communion if she so desired. "Will the school children come to sing as they do in other places?" she anxiously inquired. Unfortunately, it was impossible to grant her wish this once. Special school sessions were to be held which all pupils had to attend. Therefore, on the following day, Nara was disappointed when she saw me coming unaccompanied. As she brushed away her tears, she exclaimed, "Can it be that nobody will sing for me and bring me flowers?" I explained the reason for the children's absence, and she soon forgot her frustration in the joy of receiving her divine Guest.

As I sat at her bedside, on the only rickety chair available, and started prayers of thanksgiving, she interrupted me with her own prayers and petitions. For the first time, I grasped the deep meaning of the beatitude, "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven". Nara really was heir to the Kingdom. She spoke to God with the assurance of a child to its father. Much to my surprise, her prayers reached out around the world, stressing the most pressing needs of individuals and nations. I returned home praising the Lord for the wonders of grace I had admired in the soul of the poor bedridden woman. She had taught me a precious lesson I will never forget.

middle class or the plebeians, these designs became simpler in meaning and pattern, but each textile always bore the chief symbol of the clan. Long ago, although symbols and designs were similar, each took on some individuality from the craftsmanship of its weaver. You usually had only to glance at a piece of cloth to know who had made it. Moreover, some used to weave into their work a tiny figure as signature.

No piece, however great the pride of the artist, was ever completely perfect. Even in the most exquisite garments worn by nobles or priests, one small patch was left plain or woven with threads of a different colour. Only the work of the gods was supposed to be perfect. What Indian weaver could compare with them?

All this is still true today of genuine tribal textiles. However more and more

villages are turning to the foot looms for the spinnings, weaving, and embroidering of textiles. While some villages continue to weave and use traditional textiles, others are gradually changing designs to supply modern demands.



Only the work of the gods was supposed to be perfect.

MZIMBA, MALAWI

CHRISTMAS IN AUGUST

by Céline Laurin, M.I.C.

Catechumens from outstations gathered very numerous this year for the final instructions given during three weeks in preparation for Baptism. Their presence at the mission centre brought life and animation and plenty of work. All were eager to make good the occasion of adding to their knowledge of the faith, and of practising for the great day.

In between catechism lessons, the women enjoyed the treat of being taught the rudiments of sewing. Each mother was anxious to complete at least one little dress or a small pair of pants for the children back home. How proud everybody would be!

Three weeks is a very short time after all. On Baptism day, catechumens became full-fledged neophytes filled with the new spiritual life which made them children of God. On the following day they received Confirmation.

In the evening, the newly baptized filled the air with lusty songs in praise of the Lord. Dancing also expressed their lively gratitude. It was rather late when the throb of the drums, the

laughter, and the songs died down in faint murmurings. The mission premises were wrapped in the peaceful quiet of the night. But not for long...

A woman in great pain came stumbling out of the hall. Before her cries for help could be heard, her baby was born close to the church building. Christmas in August! This little child was born on a cold winter night (in Africa this is the winter season) with the ground for cradle. But it did not take long for help to arrive. The mother and her baby were soon carried inside and given a rousing welcome and expert attention.

What will this child become? Heaven only knows. He certainly has a courageous mother... The following day, she joined the group to be confirmed, proudly carrying her newborn son in her arms. In consideration of her recent ordeal she was offered a seat during the Mass celebrated at 10:00 a.m. She sat all smiles, like a queen on her throne, close to the Bishop and close to the altar. Her happiness was reflected in all the faces of those who surrounded her and her child.

MISSION BRIEFS

MZIMBA, MALAWI

Before leaving for the bush, on a catechetical tour, I had carefully wrapped up all my things, especially my books. I knew that our little house was to be wired for electricity and I did not want to have to clear up a mess upon my return. To make sure of my Bible, dictionaries, and manuscripts, more especially, I put them in a tightly closed box placed in the storeroom for greater safety. Well, as the old saying goes, "Man proposes and God disposes". Imagine my disagreeable surprise when I returned, a few days later, to find that termites had found a way of entering the tightly closed box. They had burrowed their way through pages of my precious Bibles (French, English, and Tumbuka) as well as through the rest of my books. To say that I was annoyed is putting it mildly. But a companion reminded me, "You are very keen on accepting events as part of the workings of divine Providence. Perhaps this is a first class occasion of practising this pet theory of yours..." At first I felt peeved, but then I reflected how much to the point this friendly advice was. Moreover, the Sisters were sympathetic and did their best to replace the books that had been spoilt. Let us hope the termites did not have an indigestion but absorbed some religious sense of respect for the Scriptures!

Germaine Morin, M.I.C.

LIMA, PERU

Senora Agripina, one of our most devoted lay apostles, is very ill. As she can no longer come to church, the Sisters take turns bringing her Holy Communion. For years Agripina saw to the decoration of the altar at our parish church. Poor in the world's goods, she had had very little schooling, but she was intelligent, hardworking, and resourceful. In order to keep her family together, she cooked pastries which she sold on street corners. Thanks to her diligence, she thus earned enough to put two of her sons through a medical course. She even found time and means

of doing her share in parochial activities. We could always rely on her to keep the church premises neat and to deck the altars and shrines on special occasions. May the Lord grant her a complete recovery and many more years to labour for his glory.

MATI, PHILIPPINES

In August, a disastrous earthquake shook our region, but fortunately there were no losses of life in Mati itself. On the other side of the island, however, a huge tidal wave wrought heavy damage. Hearing a strange noise, a fisherman and his family rushed out of their house sited at a short distance from the shore. Horror-stricken they were faced with a tremendous wall of water moving on towards them at lightning speed. Before they had time to realize what was happening, the father and children had been swept off their feet into the swirling waters. The mother desperately clung to a tree and was saved. When the water finally receded, she found herself perched 30 feet above the ground on the top of a coconut tree. This tidal wave caused a heavier death toll than the earthquake itself as entire villages built close to the seashore were swept away.

PORT-AU-PRINCE, HAÏTI

In late September, over one hundred teachers and principals of schools in the capital attended sessions specially prepared for their benefit. Mr. Remy Zamor, professor of social sciences, gave a talk on the historical formation essential to educators. He proved his assertions by the following remark, "The birth of the Haitian people cannot be considered a spontaneous event. History begins not with the recital of events but with the explanation of such events." For his part, Mr. Michel Honorat, ethnologist, developed the theme — "The child in Haitian culture". According to him, education must be grounded in a country's culture.

Even before he starts coming to school, the child has already acquired a certain amount of popular knowledge. In order to understand and to guide him, we must take account of such knowledge." He added that educators are responsible for the future of the Haitian nations. Brother Hubert, F.I.C., specialist in catechesis, shared his experience and convictions with the participants. He stressed the following points: each catechism lesson must be made as if God were present; the child must be prepared to meet God, condition for his call to faith." As a conclusion to these meaningful days of reflection and study, Doctor Legrand Bijou affirmed that the high point of the education of liberty in a child, is to teach him to do without us teachers. "Liberty is formed in the children we have to teach, more by what we are than by what we teach."

SAN FRANCISCO, U.S.A.

A "Love Cup" experimental programme was launched, last year, in Allentown's diocesan elementary grade school, (U.S.A.) under the sponsorship of the Holy Childhood. It netted the substantial sum of over \$6,000.00. This is a programme based on sacrifice. One day a week during Lent, the children choose to have a cup of water instead of milk or juice. The water is served in a special cup imprinted with the Holy Childhood symbol and motto, "Share your Love" on one side, and "A cup of water... in my name" on the other. The price of the normal beverage is collected in a larger version of the "Love Cup" and is used to purchase and distribute low cost, high nutritional food for starving children of the Third World. Msgr. Robert Coll, originator of the programme says the purchased food is specially designed for emergency feeding in famine areas. He says it demonstrates to our children that there is something constructive an individual can do about hunger. It guides them through the steps of knowing, caring, and acting. The cup itself is important being both a symbol and a tool. It symbolizes our concern for others and is a concrete thing that the children can see and use for their acts of sacrifice. This programme was expanded nationally during the present year, students being encouraged to buy their cup of water, each Friday of the Lenten season. Student leaders, called mission delegates, made the rounds of the schools, collecting money offerings and sending them to the Holy Childhood

VILLA TUNARI, BOLIVIA

QUECHUA WOMEN IN THE CHAPARE

by Pierrette Quevillon, M.I.C.

For several years it has been my privilege to work among the women of the Bolivian village of Villa Tunari. As a rule Quechua women are hard-working, faithful, courageous, and deeply attached to their family. They are ingenious in finding ways of providing food and clothing.

The great majority who live in these remote districts speak only Quechua. According to the male point of view, a woman has no need to go to school. She exists only to bear children, cook meals, wash dirty clothes, work in the fields, herd sheep and llamas... To send girls to school is, therefore, a waste of time. Indeed, very few study beyond the primary grades. Practically none are allowed access to secondary schools. Women's lib is still unheard of in this region.

For the past three years, I have tried to help improve these conditions and the women have gladly cooperated. To several groups formed in Villa Tunari and neighbouring villages I have been teaching lessons in reading and writing, cooking, sewing, knitting, etc. Women have been especially diligent in

following catechism classes, in order to learn the basics of their Christian faith. Until now, their religion consisted mainly in exterior practices often tainted with local superstitions.



Sister Pierrette teaches lessons in reading, writing, sewing and knitting to the women of Tunari and other villages.

Although their men folk look down on them, the Quechua women are the guardians of ancient customs and traditions which they faithfully pass on to their children. They also see to the decoration of the church and home altars on the occasion of patronal feasts.

Experience has taught me the importance of learning the language. The older women are sometimes tempted to drop out of my classes because they do not know enough Spanish. The young who have learned a smattering of the latter language in school are more easily won. But I am not giving up. God willing, I will learn Quechua and do my full share in improving the lot of these women so worthy of interest.

Dear readers, I will soon return to my dear Chaparé mission. I do not want to go alone. Please accompany me through your prayers. I rely on you all.

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Association. An adult moderator is appointed by each school. "Operation Love Cup" is: children helping children: an opportunity for grade school students to share their love with children who may otherwise die of starvation; each child's personal choice to make an individual sacrifice. Suitably carried out, the programme proves how each and every person can make a difference, learning the Christian concept to love by doing.

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