



MIC MISSION NEWS

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Délia Tétreault and the Written Word

by Gisèle Villemure, M.I.C.

As a child Délia loved to read. Is it any wonder then, that as an adult she should have made use of the written word as an effective means of apostolate? Even in the very first years of the founding of her Institute, she felt that information should play a leading role in quickening the missionary spirit in the society of her time. She firmly believed in the power of the press.

A tangible proof of this may be gathered from the fact that as early as 1920 she launched a French mission magazine, *Le Précurseur*. (An English edition was to follow in 1923.) The aim of these publications was to make the work of the missions better known, in order to promote the interests of the Kingdom of God. In the first issue of *Le Précurseur* (May 1920) Délia clearly

stated her objective: "In his audiences as well as in his private and public correspondence, the Holy Father insists

to awaken missionary vocations. Besides she wished to keep parents and friends informed of the work done in the

I remember how, as a child, I used to climb up to the attic of my home, to pore over old annals of the Holy Childhood and of the Propagation of the Faith which I had found lying about...

Délia Tétreault
Outremont, November 1, 1922

more than ever on the urgent necessity of promoting through every possible means, the work of the missions. Therefore, this modest magazine is being published in order to comply with the desire of our beloved Pontiff and of our Pastors." Délia also hoped thereby

foreign mission fields, and to invite donations which would facilitate their task.

Several years after she had laid the foundations of her missionary Institute, she accepted the charge of a printing shop for the publication of a diocesan newspaper in Three Rivers, Quebec. Her reason for this was to have her Sisters trained in printing work in view of the missions. In 1926 she wrote to Father A. Lapierre, P.M.E., regarding the creation of a small printing plant in Manchuria. She thus hoped to facilitate the printing of liturgical and biblical texts which could be distributed in Christian and non-Christian families.

Nobody can deny the influence of this medium of expression. On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the launching of *Le Précurseur*, Cardinal Villot, on the part of Pope Paul VI, wrote the following encouraging lines, "Your magazine contributes to one of the essential tasks of the Church. It prepares the way of the Lord." May *Le Précurseur* as it is now called, and its English counterpart ever remain conscious of their important role and play it to the greater glory of God.

PRAYER FOR THE MISSIONS

Lord, make me an apostle for Thy Faith.
Where there is the darkness of paganism, let me spread Light;
Where there is the hate of communism, Love;
Where there is the error of heretics, Truth;
Where there is the frustration of sinners, Forgiveness;
Where there are Muslims, Mary.
Grant that by my prayers and alms I may give to each continent what it requires —
To Africa, a native clergy of black hands lifting up white hosts;
To Asia, a rich harvest from the red blood-seed of her martyrs;
To Oceania, a necklace of islands made into a rosary for the Faith;
To Europe, already so tired, a renewal of youth at the altar of God;
To America, an exchange of material riches for the Pearl of great price.
Let me send my offerings where I cannot go;
My pains to comfort sufferers whom I shall never see;
And my sacrifices to help plant the Cross in lands that know not yet the Crucified.
Through Christ Our Lord, Amen.

From *The New Leader*, Madras, India

HONG KONG

OPERATION LIFE

by Colette Soucy, M.I.C.

About ten days after my arrival in Hong Kong I experienced a feast unlike any other feast. The following is a synthesis of this unforgettable experience which I call Operation Life.

On Tuesday, March 29, a telephone call brought very sad news to the M.I.C. Sisters in Hong Kong. Father Eneas Tapella, P.I.M.E., a personal friend of the Sisters, had suffered a fatal accident while riding on a scooter with a young Chinese, David Wong, as passenger. (David is barely 20 years old and is an active member of the 'Family of God', an association which devotes itself to the physically handicapped and mentally retarded.) Father Tapella and David were returning from a visit to a canteen which provides meals for handicapped children during their Summer Camp. Everything went well until suddenly, for a reason still unknown, Father lost complete control of his vehicle and two passengers were violently thrown onto the roadway. The priest was severely injured while David escaped with minor injuries. An ambulance was promptly called for and the two victims were taken to Queen Mary Hospital, on the Hong Kong side.

Our P.I.M.E. friend suffered excruciating pain and bled profusely. There seemed no way to stop the hemorrhage, a situation which worried the medical staff. During the first 24 hours at Queen Mary's, Father Tapella received more than 14 pints of blood in transfusions. However, this proved insufficient and he kept bleeding. Panic was in the air for the blood reserve was running out. What to do? It was at this moment that I saw what the true love of generous hearts can do. Here began for me the unforgettable experience of Operation Life.

On Wednesday, March 30, we learnt that Father Tapella was dying. As a last resort, it was suggested that another series of transfusions be given, in an ultimate effort to bring him a new lease of life. The message was no sooner transmitted to our Good Hope School, than a group of students rushed into Sister Mary Olga Lam's office, enquiring about the possibility of donating their blood. These students did not come only for themselves but on behalf of many others. In the afternoon of March 30, a Red Cross team arrived

at the school to collect blood. More than 100 volunteers, myself included, took part in Operation Life. The students were from 17-20 years of age. All were convinced that giving blood to save a friend is a supreme proof of love. They deeply felt the joy of sharing something of their life with their missionary friend.

Between March 31 and April 3, the physical condition of the patient became even more critical. But, fortunately, because of the blood collected at Good Hope, the hospital was well equipped for all the transfusions which might be needed. On April 3, a slight change for the better occurred. Although unable to speak, the patient recovered consciousness. Hope increased, but nobody dared to pronounce Father Tapella out of danger. Would Operation Life succeed in defeating death? None of us could tell.

Early on the morning of April 5, the telephone rang again. Could good news be expected? Alas, Father Tapella had died at 4:00 a.m., in the first hours of the "Ch'ing Ming Festival", a day on which the whole of Hong Kong honours its dead. Operation Life had been unable to save the life of the forty-seven-year-old missionary. Death had defeated life.

But Operation Life had not really failed. The death of this good friend of the poor and underprivileged of Hong Kong is the breakthrough of life for everybody. It becomes the dawn of a new day overflowing with a life, always new and stronger than death.

Father Tapella's last words, as related by David Wong, were: "If I die, in memory of me, and for His sake, carry on what I have begun. Work hard and have the courage to live to the full. If I die, David, greet all the Fathers and all my friends for me..." Somehow, his final message is really the faithful echo of a motto he had placed at the back of St. Francis-of-Assisi Church, his parish. It reads:

A tongue for truth,
A heart that loves,
A sympathy that understands.



She feels deep joy at sharing something of her life with her missionary friend.

According to the young who have closely known Father Tapella and those who have lived with him, the above three lines summarize the existence of the authentic missionary that he really was, in a quiet courageous way. Father Tapella's motorcycle accident has not been an absurd event. On the contrary, it has become a meaningful event, carrier of life, of a Life stronger than all deaths.

Only Half of Cubans Still Catholics

ROME (NG) — The percentage of Catholics in Cuba has dropped by almost half since 1961, according to a report in the Italian missionary magazine *Mondoe Missions* (World and Missions). The report stated that in 1961 more than 90 per cent of Cubans were Catholic. But current Church statistics reveal that at present only about 50 per cent of the present population is considered Catholic. Scarcity of priests seems to be a major reason for the drop. Only 196 priests now work among a population of about 10 million. In 1959, there were 700 priests in Cuba. The diocese with the lowest percentage of Catholics is Santiago de Cuba, where there are 30 priests for the diocese's three million people. Foreign priests as well as Cuban priests who have studied abroad are not allowed to work in the island. Cuban dioceses now have 45 seminarians of whom 36 were ordained to the priesthood during the last five years.

Catholic News Service

MAGNIFICAT!

by Monique Cloutier, M.I.C.

The Church of Wakamatsu joins in Mary's joyful song of praise, for God has now looked down upon it and blessed it with an unprecedented number of young people in search of the Truth. It all began in December 1975, when Sisters Jeanne Roy and Marie Simonne met two students in nursing, and a high school girl who had come to Sunday Mass for the first time, and invited them to the convent. We talked about God, and suggested that they come again with friends, which they did. During the months that followed, similar proposals were made to eight newcomers, mostly girls from public high schools.

In April 1976, an invitation was sent to our boarders, offering a deepening of the religious instruction they already received at school. Working girls who seemed interested were also contacted. All those who answered the call eventually brought along friends or relatives. Two of them even coaxed their mothers to study. By 1976, nine groups ranging from one to six members — 31 catechumens in all — were receiving religious instruction at the convent, one or more hours a week, on weekends. The number keeps on increasing. All that the missionary has to do is to keep on the alert, to offer the Word of God to those who thirst for it but who, for some reason or other, hesitate to ask.

During the summer vacation of 1976, a three-day session of intensive study and prayer was organized for the members of high school level: fifteen participated. We took our quarters in the school building, had our meals in the boarders' refectory, and slept in the Japanese tatami room. Religious instruction occupied four hours of the day: two in the morning, one in the afternoon, and one in the evening. Liturgy was especially prepared by our Sisters Hayashi and Sumitani: daily Mass at the parish church as well as morning and evening prayer, silent personal prayer in the afternoon, and Bible sharing on the last day. Relaxation was taken care of by swims in the pool and pillow fights at night. The goal of this short session was threefold: to offer the necessary conditions for a valuable prayer experience; to create

bonds of friendship among the catechumens of different groups; to impart solid religious instruction.

From September to December 1976, additional courses were given to those who had joined later in the year, as well as those who had not been able to participate in the summer programme. This enabled catechumens to decide in full knowledge whether or not they wanted to make the first official step towards baptism.

In Japan a three-stage programme has been adopted in preparing catechumens for baptism. The first step is taken when the person has had sufficient instruction to believe in God and Christ and has a genuine desire to put into practice the teachings of the Gospel. During a special ceremony inserted within the Mass, the candidates publicly express their will to follow Christ. They are given the official status of catechumens, and are introduced to the Christian community, in whose liturgy and religious activities they will henceforth participate, while continuing their study of religion. The length of the first stage varies with each individual, depending on the degree of previous instruction and on his or her personal decision to take the second step. This consists in a formal demand for baptism made at the beginning of Lent, followed by a period of intensive preparation for the final step, namely baptism, usually conferred on the Easter Vigil.

Last December, on the feast of the Immaculate Conception, twenty-five of our thirty-one catechumens took the first step; out of the six that did not do so, five had been refused authorization by their parents. It was a beautiful ceremony during which each catechumen received a crucifix and a lovely card bearing the 'Our Father' done in artistic characters. We had not imagined they would wear the nearly three-inch-long crucifix, but the first thing they did after Mass was to buy a neck chain, and to go out in the streets, proudly wearing the symbol of their allegiance to the Lord.

How many of these young people will take the second step and when?

IN OUR M

A Muslim student writes to our Sister

Dear Friends,

My aim in writing this letter is to let you know how much I appreciate your kindness to me. I will doubtless make many a mistake in style and in grammar. Please overlook these and see only my good will.

I am now twenty-eight years old and have passed eight years abroad, far from the members of my own family. I met a great number of people belonging to various races and countries and am, therefore, in a position to make comparisons. Never in my life, have I been as warmly welcomed as by the two Sisters I first met as well as by the other members of your community. I was impressed not so much by what you gave as by the way in which you gave it. Your manner of welcoming people is the best I ever experienced.

You have chosen to serve people and I admire you for this; you have really become mothers to all who attend your Church. It is very difficult to serve others in a disinterested way, without salary, without anyone witnessing how you act. I often wonder if, as a medical doctor, I could ever do that much... In my opinion your role is a very difficult one, the most wonderful and the most humane of all roles.

In Africa, when our own mother is gone, we have the custom of adopting another woman as substitute. Even if you are everybody's mother, won't you adopt me especially as your own child? You have greatly assisted me in many ways. Your particular way of helping

This year, next year, never? Some have already made up their minds, but because of the social conditions in Japan and the very small number of Catholics, such a decision is always a more or less heroic choice. Even when it is made, opposition by the family may delay their joining the Church for many years, or even prevent them from doing so, especially in the case of girls. Marriage here is the great problem. All

MAIL BAG

ur Sisters at work in a socialist country.

others has fascinated me. Such has been your kindness to me that I do not hesitate to make this request. Taking account that you are the untiring servant of many people and that I am a student, I would like to fix a given date to talk things over...

My main desire in life is to help as many persons as I can. I dearly love my country which badly needs me as a doctor. But, I love all nations and want to help the most destitute, the most desperate. By helping me, you will be helping them all.

Another problem that begs to be solved is a certain opposition I have noticed between Muslims and Christians. I cannot understand why this should be so as we believe in one God, all merciful and all powerful. It seems to me that we should work together to build a better world since we fundamentally have the same faith. Let us forget our differences and work at achieving unity. Please do not doubt my sincerity.

I believe you are doing exactly what your Church expects you to do as missionaries. Thank you again a million times for your kindness. I can find no words either in French or in my own language to express my lively gratitude. What wonderful servant-sisters with open hearts you all are! I would like to spend the rest of my life with you. However, my duty calls me elsewhere. Long live union among Sisters! In the name of God, I close this letter. May He keep you all in his love and care.

MOHAMED

we can do is pray for those whom the Lord has sent us, that they may pursue in joyful hope the quest they have so generously undertaken, nurturing in their hearts the wonderful gift of faith and looking forward to the day when Love will have the last word.

"Holy is His name
and His mercy reaches from
age to age
for those who fear Him."

LLALAGUA, BOLIVIA

BOLIVIAN DOCTORCITOS

by Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C., M.D.

When this project was initiated in 1974, we started with a few young men who came from their villages to our hospital in order to acquire elemental knowledge in medicine. The first to be admitted stayed with us for several months to acquire basic training. Three other students joined them later on, at the hospital in Llalagua.

None of these young men had had more than elementary schooling, but they all proved to be intelligent and skillful. They learned not only what is included in a First Aid Course, but also many things such as how to appreciate vital signs; to recognize the current diseases and give adequate treatment or see the need to send for a doctor; to treat wounds and burns until completely healed; to give injections, including I.V.; to dispense advice concerning hygiene and preventive medicine... All our "Barefoot Doctors" were welcomed back to their villages, where previous and subsequent visits of the doctor and social workers helped to have this new health program accepted and promoted.

During a second year, i.e., 1975, four other villages benefited by the same help. One of the new applicants to become a "Barefoot Doctor" was a girl, who proved very successful in her studies and training. We consider this a very positive initiative, in terms of promotion for women in remote rural areas. The present year should see four



Making the rounds of villages. A "barefoot doctor" takes blood pressure, while Doctor Suzanne makes consultations.

more students obtain their first certificates and start working as health technicians in their own villages.

Three of them have already built their own clinics and others are making bricks. The clinics, already completed during 1975, have received the basic equipment needed. Drugs were at first provided as a donation, but the people were then encouraged to pay a token sum so that they could eventually buy what they needed from the hospital, at a minimal price.

At present, the villagers themselves, who have become much more health-conscious, are asking for longer and more complete training of their so-called *doctorcitos* (ito is a diminutive of appreciation and tenderness). They also wish the Doctor from the hospital to come more often and, within possibilities, to perform surgical operations.

Thanks to the help of CUSO and to a generous donation from *Développement et Paix* their wish is about to be realized. A well-equipped modern mobile health unit will make the rounds of rural areas during the present year. The people of the countryside who have had so little medical assistance, will henceforth be better cared for. We rely on the powerful assistance of your prayers and sacrifices, dear readers, to further our mission of healing with Christ, the divine Healer, as our inspiration.



Doctor Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C., looks on while a "barefoot doctor" gives first aid at Llalagua Hospital.

MISSION BRIEFS

PONT-VIAU (Canada)

Last February 4, a specially festive atmosphere reigned in the house of Pont Viau where 400 M.I.C.'s gathered in the chapel, at 2:30 p.m. for the official opening by Sr. Monique Préfontaine, Superior General, of our 75th Jubilee Year. After the hymn to the Holy Spirit, Sr. Monique gave the inauguration address and read a message from the President of the Canadian Episcopal Catholic Conference, Msgr J. Emmett Carter. She also read greetings sent by Mr. André Vallée, Superior General of the P.M.E. Fathers. Their Society offered a lovely wooden sculpture of the Immaculate Conception as a Jubilee gift. The Eucharist was presided by the Pro-Nuncio, Bishop Angelo Palmos, and concelebrated by some forty P.M.E.'s among whom, Archbishop Gilles Ouellet of Rimouski.

SAN JUAN (Philippines)

The administration faculty, and student body of the Immaculate Conception Academy (I.C.A.) of San Juan joined forces to render meaningful the celebrations of an important milestone in the history of the M.I.C. Sisters. The opening of the diamond jubilee year was marked by a Thanksgiving Mass attended by the students, faculty, and administration in the morning of February 3, 1977. Msgr. Juan Velasco, DD., in charge of Chinese communities in the Philippines, officiated. On the fifth and sixth of the same week, took place the presentation of "Spark of Love", a dance-musical ensemble, on the life and history of Mother Foundress and the congregation. Mrs. Cristina Bichara, director of the I.C.A. Children's school of Ballet, utilized her best resources to present a beautiful choreography on this theme. Digna Magtibay, M.I.C., also took a lead in it. She danced and interpreted the role of Mother Foundress, to the tempo of music supplied by the choir. Mamie Martel, M.I.C., overall music director, assumed the arduous task of training, disciplining,

and blending the voices of girls composing the High School and Grade School Glee Clubs. For their part, the Sisters recorded some French folk songs to serve as background of the novitiate setting. This was a free presentation offered by the ICAns to the public, more specially to the M.I.C. Sisters' benefactors, parents, and friends.

COCHABAMBA, Bolivia

All of us attended the funeral of Froilan, a Bolivian seminarian, whose tragic death occurred on the day before he planned leaving for Mexico, to pursue his studies. We accompanied the funeral cortege to the cemetery. There, we witnessed a truly heartrending scene. Brothers and sisters of the departed seminarian lamented: "Froilan, why have you left us? We are not reproaching you for dying, since you did not wish to die... But we want to tell you again how much we loved you, before you are put away into that big black hole..." His mother enveloped in a long black veil, cried out in her Quechua language, "Froilan, why did you have to go? You have taken away my hope and pride in you, my beloved son. What will become of your brothers? Who will pay for their studies? How can we get along without you? Froilan! Froilan!"

Marie Anna Lavoie, M.I.C

CAP HAÏTIEN, Haïti

I am still on duty at the Communal Refuge and love my work among the poor. Our old people number 150 — 81 men and 69 women — divided into five groups. Besides the large ward, there is a smaller one with ten beds, and another with only three. The dispensary is situated in the centre. Ours is a large family to provide for, especially as the greater number are handicapped. But a wonderful spirit of sharing reigns in this house. The patients call one another brother and sister and these are not empty words. The more robust help the

weakest, among whom are 61 blind men and women. Those who feel able to do so, work in the vegetable garden; the women see to the cleaning, the mending, the making of beds, etc. We are also helped by third year nursing students who take turns caring for the bedridden, giving injections, making dressings etc. During the past months, fourteen of our charges have died a peaceful death. Dying holds no terror for our old folk! They say of those who have gone, "How lucky they are! How we envy them!" I am very happy to care for these old people who have known so few joys during so many years. To them the Refuge is the next best thing to heaven.

Lucienne Dery, M.I.C.

DROUART, Montreal

In order to encourage people to become more mission-conscious. Sr. Paule Charpentier has launched a mini-project which consists in obtaining from relatives or friends the offering of a "Yearly Hour" of prayer, of suffering, of salary, for the benefit of her dear children of the Carribean. She calls this the Hour of Haïti and so solicits acts of friendship, of fraternity, and of sharing. The 54 responses received so far are encouraging, as may be gathered from the following letter from a former student: "I was pleased to receive your letter. Never have I forgotten the good time spent at your Immaculate Conception School. I keep especially pleasant memories of those years when you were my teacher. Do you remember the time I put a stuffed squirrel on the chair? My children enjoy hearing about this boyish prank of mine. I have been a physician for about ten years, and a specialist for the last four. However, my heart is rather that of a country doctor, lost in the city... You surely know as well as I do, the painful solitude of people who seek happiness in material goods which never satisfy them when they are obtained. Eight years ago, I married an adorable girl who was a nurse at the Hotel Dieu of Montreal. We have three very lively sons, a dog, very lively also, and a guinea-pig which, thank God, is very quiet. I recently received from one of my patients a check to the amount of \$100.00 to be donated to a work left to my choice. I am happy to send it to you for your missions.

Sincerely yours,

Jean F. Letendre, M.D.

KATETE, MALAWI

KATETE HONOURS ITS AGED PEOPLE

Last March, Katete Mission honoured its senior citizens as well as its sick and handicapped who were thus given the opportunity of receiving the sacraments, and of preparing for Easter in an adequate manner. Members of the Legion of Mary, together with a group of neighbouring Christians, undertook to help the aged and the incapacitated living within an area of six miles. Others were conveyed to the gathering on bicycles, in wheelbarrows, in ox carts, in cars, etc. A wheel chair and sturdy arms were put at their disposal upon arrival.

Over sixty aged, sick, and crippled sat on mats close to the altar in our parish church. First on the programme was a penitential celebration with general absolution for the sick and disabled. Then Mass was offered. Afterwards, took place the baptism of a *wagogo*, (grandmother) said to be over one hundred years old. She had insisted on coming to the gathering although she

had never been baptized. Such was the sincerity of her faith that the pastor did not hesitate in granting her wish to become a Christian. She was given the name of Magdalena. Another Magdalena, a seventeen-year-old girl crippled by polio, was carried to church for the first time in her life. She received the sacrament of confirmation.

The liturgical celebration over, willing hands helped our guests to the Domestic Science Centre where a hearty meal was served: *sima* or corn mush, rice, *mpharata* or ants, meat, sweetened tea, etc. Afterwards, slides were shown illustrating the fourteen stations of the Cross. The assistance, deeply impressed, often broke out into spontaneous prayer.

Before leaving, each person received a small gift: tobacco, salt, a piece of soap, beads... These simple gifts were so deeply appreciated that those who could stand on their legs danced with joy. One old grandmother declared, "I

am so happy I won't be able to sleep a wink tonight." A grateful thank you to all those who collaborated in bringing joy to our aged and sick people.



Dongolosi, crippled for twenty years, is conveyed to church in a wheelchair.



Father Dresselhaus, W.F., looks on approvingly as old Mrs. Kaunda is carried in by her friends.

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