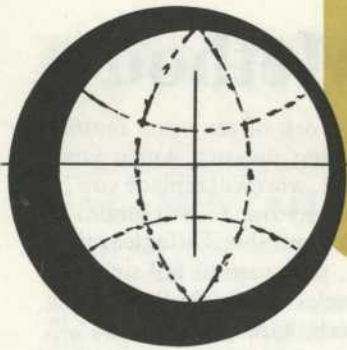




MALAWI, C.A.

The Rosarian Sisters Celebrate

It happened on Holy Saturday, April 4, 1953. In the wake of the rainy season, nature had burst into luxuriant foliage and decked itself with sweet-smelling flowers. The setting was perfect for the inspiring ceremony about to take place in the Prefecture of Northern Nyasaland, recently detached from the huge diocese of Lilongwe. On this memorable day, for the first time, four African girls took the habit of the Rosarian Sisters, an autochthonous community whose basis was laid on November 1, 1951.

For Katete, at that time the most important mission centre in the Prefecture, the event marked a joyful highlight. But, most of the Christians assembled for the Holy Week ceremonies, did not fully grasp its deep significance. They admired the missionary Sisters who for several years back had been caring for their sick and teaching their children. But they found it hard to admit that young women of their own race might be called to a similar vocation. Was it not unacceptable for African girls to renounce marriage, their most sacred duty, as far as the clan was concerned, in order to help others? The great tribal family was sure to suffer if its most eligible members refused to bear children, to participate in its civil and religious evolution.

Even to the Christians, it was all a mystery. How could girls from the North, the South, the East, the West, agree to live together, having the same rights and duties, sharing their meagre salaries to support their community? Would they be able to persevere in a life where they would have to obey, to go wherever they were sent to spread the Good News?

For the girls' families, it was especially difficult to accept being looked down upon because they had allowed their daughters to enter this strange life. In spite of all these difficulties, however, the four girls remained undaunted. With what joy they received from the hands of their Pastor, the blue habit of the Rosarian Sisters!

On the same day, the four novices took up their abode in their new convent, a modest four-room house built expressly for the purpose. It had been solemnly blessed after the clothing ceremony. The parents were this once duly impressed upon seeing their daughters housed in such comfortable quarters.

Slowly but surely, the new community was accepted by the population and saw its membership increase. During seventeen years, the formation was entrusted to the M.I.C. Sisters who did all in their power for their beloved African Sisters in Christ.

Since 1970, however, the Rosarian Sisters have been completely on their own. They have continued to increase, thanks to the devoted guidance of Msgr. J.L. Jobidon, W.F., a Canadian from Chateau Richer. At present there are about fifty professed Sisters. Six postulants entered upon their formation period at the end of 1977.

From the point of view of professional qualifications, five have their B.A., allowing them to teach at the secondary level. Two are State Registered Nurses; six are qualified as midwives and assistant Nurses. One has just left for the Eldoret Pastoral Institute in Kenya for one year of study in specialized pastoral activities. Most of the others are qualified to teach on the primary level. All benefit by continuing education. The Rosarians are a thriving group of dynamic apostles. In them more especially Delia Tetreault's dream of establishing many autochthonous communities for the evangelization of their own people finds its blessed realization.



*The Rosarian Sisters with a group of friends.
 Centre: Msgr. J.L. Jobidon*

Delia Tetreault's Missionary Method

At the time when the first group of Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception left for China (1909), missiology as a well defined science did not exist. It was slowly taking shape in European centres, borrowing elements from theology, ethnology, researches in adaptation, methods of famous missionaries, etc. The first formal Canadian Missiology Institute was organized in Ottawa in 1948.

Delia would undoubtedly have welcomed such an initiative meant to promote world evangelization. Death came to her before anything of the sort had ever been realized. She was destined to live through a period of improvisation and, stranger still, was denied active service on the mission front. Twice she was on the point of leaving first for Africa, then for Asia; twice a serious illness ruled out her departure. Nevertheless, her letters and directives reveal the broad lines of a practical plan of action born of her initiative and lucid apostolic spirit.

Were the first Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception adequately prepared for their task? Before sending out her missionaries, Delia made careful inquiries into professional requirements. For instance, the Sisters sent to take care of the lepers in Shek Lung, received basic training in Montreal hospitals before leaving. Likewise those destined to work in dispensaries spent a period of formation in various hospitals and clinics. The Sisters entrusted with teaching tasks were given special courses in the best Montreal educational institutions.

However, the Foundress herself considered this training inadequate. At least twice, she decided to delay the Sisters' departure in order to give them more time to prepare and to study. Only upon insistent requests on the part of the heads of Missions did she allow them to leave before their professional formation could be completed.

With a keen insight into the future, she foresaw the necessity of training local leaders who would take over when the time came for her missionaries to move elsewhere. In her correspondence with the Sisters stationed in the missions, she repeatedly insisted on the importance of learning both the oral and written languages. She had a deep appreciation of Oriental cultures and traditions. "Your most imperative duty," she wrote, "is to learn the

language and to get used to the customs which you must not try to change... Once you can understand the people and make yourselves understood, everything will become easier. Those among whom you live are undoubtedly as puzzled by your way of doing things as you are by theirs..."

From the first, she encouraged the formation of catechists and of autochthonous religious communities. One of the greatest joys she experienced in the foundation of the mission of Manchuria was the fact that the native novitiate of Manchurian Sisters of Our Lady of the Rosary was entrusted to her daughters. In her letters, she often inquired about the candidates. As soon as she heard that the first group was about to take the habit, she sent to the Sisters in charge a cheque to cover the expenses of a feast day meal to be given on this great occasion. "Let them know," she wrote, "that we share in their happiness and pray for their perseverance." During that same year she rejoiced in the foundation of another autochthonous community in Tsungming, Southern China. This group placed under the protection of Saint Teresa of the Child Jesus was called the Teresians. Our Sisters taught them the basics of religious life and guided them in their first apostolic activities. Engulfed in the Red invasion of their country, these communities can no longer function as units. But they certainly continue to sow the seeds of Truth in the souls of their compatriots.

With regard to the expansion of missionary activities she remarked, with her fine sense of discretion: "If you insist

on doing the work of ten years in one, you are courting disaster. Once your health is ruined, who will replace you? I may not have any one else to send... It would prove regrettable if after learning the language, you were to fall sick and become powerless to work. Remember the old proverb, 'Grasp all, lose all...'"

While still very young, Delia had been deeply influenced by the reading of mission magazines. When she later found herself at the head of a missionary Institute, she remembered how important such literature was for the development of a missionary mentality. With this aim in view, she inaugurated her apostolate through the press by the publication of a magazine (1920). She meant it to be a voice reminding Canadians of their duty as Christians to share directly or indirectly the riches of their faith with non-Christians. In 1923, she launched an English edition — "The Precursor".

Although a key figure in the panorama of Canadian missions, Delia Tetreault chose to work in the shadow of humility. Of her, the late Father Langlais, O.P., once wrote, "The hallmark of her character was a perfect discretion, the discretion of charity which is the measure of love in a soul led by the light of reason, the prudence of the saints..." Her attitude of humility and of detachment was fully consistent with a rare dynamism. One who knew her well, a faithful friend of the first days of the foundation, Mother Saint Anne Marie, C.N.D., paid her the following delicate tribute, "I thank God for all He has done in you and through you."

HONG KONG

Your Hand Leads Me...

By Therese Bellerose, M.I.C.

Dear Lord, your hand has led me this year in a special manner, to the friendless patients in Hong Kong Wah Hospital. Yes, I believe it was your divine hand which led me to their bedside in order to relieve their anguish, when there seemed to be no way out for them, when they felt hopeless and unloved.

You led me to them at times without my knowing exactly what I could really do to bring them comfort of

body and soul. You urged me to tell them about you, their Father, all loving and all powerful, to tell them they can rely on your help in all their needs. Gently led by your hand, I often arrived at the very last lucid moment to whisper your name to dying persons. When I returned the next day, I found that they had been gathered into the eternal Fold.

It was your blessed hand that led me to Peter, a Catholic soldier, to remind him that he also was a missionary by the very fact of his baptism. No matter how handicapped the hazards of war had left him, he was still a useful member of society, a beloved child of God.

Some time later, your hand led me to the bedside of a woman dying of

terminal cancer. When she was young, she had once made up her mind to become a Christian, but the tide of life had borne her along at too swift and busy a pace... She had forgotten her good resolution until, pinned to a bed of pain, she had time to reflect. She told me of her desire to become a child of God through baptism. The purifying waters injected meaning into her sufferings, and flooded her soul with serenity and joy.

Your hand led me to the beside of a man, father of many children, who apparently refused to acknowledge your love. His wife spent nights trying to alleviate his sufferings. One of his

sons travelled all the way from America to see him one last time. You know, Lord, how I prayed for this doubting soul... One morning, on my rounds of the ward, I found his bed empty. You knew him better than I did. I leave him to your mercy.

Your hand led me to a young Protestant woman—whose religious convictions were shaky; to a drug addict who had taken more than one “trip”; to a T.B. patient who impatiently shooed me away because she could no longer speak... You know every one of them, and their ways are not hidden from you.

Your hand led me to a young

patient who having undergone twelve operations in the head, was writhing in pain. She reminded me of you, my God, with your tortured body hanging on the Cross. In spite of her terrible sufferings, she found the courage to smile whenever I visited her. She begged me to pray in her place because she no longer had the strength to do so. I later heard that her parents wanted to take her away and provoke some “accident” which would put an end to her ordeal. This young girl is the only Catholic in her family. You alone can fathom the depths of her sufferings and can relieve her. Praise be to you whose hand leads me in all my ways!

HAITI

Photo / Report

Want to buy a hat? This smiling lady offers you a whole treeful. She has spent many a day deftly weaving them from straw or from sisal, a plant widely cultivated for its strong white fibre. Haitian women are particularly skilled in handicrafts of various kinds.

Each woman tends to specialize in certain commodities such as candles, clothes, cassava flour, avocados, straw hats, baskets, etc. The hours spent in town squares where they squat beside their wares and bargain for the highest price are filled with merriment. It is regarded as a mark of incompetence for a woman to return home with unsold produce. Since the reputation of being a clever trader is highly valued, the vendor adjusts her prices, as the day wears on, to make sure she will sell everything she has brought.



Merchandise of various description is stacked helter-skelter. The litany of hawkers fills the ears; the variety and colour of their wares fill the eyes. Everything can be sold; everything has value. The market is a showcase for the Haitian knack of making something out of nothing. Little girls, for whom acquaintance with the ways of selling in the market is desirable, are given small articles to dispose of and the proceeds belong to them.



In Haiti, it is the women who go to market. With head-borne loads, they start out early in the morning to avoid the heat of the day. The markets which offer the best price may be situated five to ten miles away. No matter! To these sturdy women, ten miles on foot seems no more taxing than a quarter mile stroll would be to us. For them, marching to market is a happy occasion and they frequently sing as they swing along.

Mary Honoured in Taiwan

by Gabrielle Drouin, M.I.C.

Last October 16, a grandiose ceremony took place in Hinshu, on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the apparitions of our Lady of Fatima. Over 10,000 Christians from all over Taiwan and the neighbouring islands participated.

The festival had been organized far in advance by the national episcopal committee. Ecclesiastical representatives from the Churches of the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Macao, as well as the bishop of Hong Kong joined with the bishop of Taiwan in this Marian celebration. The bishop of Fatima who had intended taking part was hindered at the last moment due to disrupted plane schedules. He forwarded a congratulatory telegram to Hinshu, imploring abundant blessings on all participants.

A splendid procession filed through the streets, over a distance of about two miles. Several Catholic school bands played all along the way, and beautifully ornamented floats added colour to the cortege.

Destination reached, groups from all the different parishes surrounded the altar erected in the centre of a huge court. The statue of our Lady of Fatima decked with flowers and lights, was placed close to the altar during the concelebrated Mass. Msgr. Peter Tou, bishop of Hinshu presided. In an inspiring homily, he recalled the role played by Mary in the history of our redemption, and her power of intercession before God. He urged all those present to pray in order to obtain freedom of worship for their brother Christians on the mainland.

During Mass a special message arrived from Pope Paul VI granting his fatherly blessing to the assistance. Fifteen priests distributed Holy Communion to the faithful. At the final blessing, the assembly sang a vibrant hymn to Mary, thanking her for the numberless graces received. All left feeling overjoyed at having contributed to her glorification.



Our Lady of China

MALAWI, C.A.

First M.I.C. Sisters to Arrive in Mzuzu Diocese (1948)

by Lawrence Shawa

The following testimony was given by Mr. Lawrence Z. Shawa. Born in 1922, he inaugurated his teaching career in 1945. In 1956, he was promoted assistant inspector of schools, a position he occupied until 1962, when he left for England to pursue his studies until 1966. The following year, he became Catholic Secretary of Education for the diocese of Mzuzu, a post which he filled with competence up to his retirement September 30, 1975.

Being one of the first English Grade School Catholic teachers of the Mzuzu Diocese, where I began teaching in 1945, I can still recall the arrival of the first four M.I.C. Sisters at Katete, in 1948. Of these four Sisters, I mostly remember two: Sister Magdalen who eventually became Superior General of the Congregation, and Sister Joseph who taught in our Primary and later in our Secondary School. I gave Sister Joseph's name to my eldest son in memory of their arrival in the diocese. These Sisters are best remembered because they were my first Tumbuka language students. They, in turn, became Tumbuka language teachers to all their fellow Sisters who joined them in the diocese.

These first Sisters worked very

hard for the spread of Christianity. The Catholic Church was new in Northern Nyasaland at that time. They worked as hard as the first Fathers, teaching catechism, visiting sick people, recruiting new Sisters for the diocese. Katete was their headquarters as well as the diocesan headquarters.

As the number of Sisters increased, their duties and responsibilities likewise increased, spiritually, socially, and educationally. Spiritually, they cooperated in teaching catechism to the young and to adult people; they collaborated in establishing the Rosarian Congregation for the local Sisters, a foundation initiated by Msgr. St. Denis. Educationally, they fulfilled their duties in Primary and Secondary Schools and in Teachers' Training Colleges. They also established Primary and Secondary Schools, Boarding Schools such as Katete Girls', Kaseye, and St. Maria Goretti. They also firmly organized Marymount Girls' Boarding Secondary School which has helped so many girls to go on for secondary education. Before the coming of the

Sisters, all girls were stopped from learning while still in Primary Schools. At that time this was the accepted custom of the parents.

Later on, Catholic girls from practically all the Catholic Village Primary Schools were sent to the Sisters' Boarding Schools. Actually, all the responsibility of these schools has been handed over to the Rosarian Sisters. However, the Sisters are still doing quite a lot for this diocese in all the above mentioned fields.

The M.I.C. Sisters have also done a great job for us on the health level. As soon as they arrived, they opened clinics and dispensaries some of which are still functioning. In every parish there is a dispensary. Some of these are as big as hospitals. The death rate has been greatly reduced since the arrival of the M.I.C. Sisters, thanks to their tireless care, the lectures and the medical facilities they offer.

Besides all the above services, the Sisters have established very numerous Domestic Science Centres for the girls who have left school and also for married women. In these Centres they teach reading, writing, cookery, sewing, and knitting. Life in the families has been very much improved both spiritually and physically because of these Centres.

MISSION BRIEFS

CALAMINTAO, P.I.

I am getting attached to this country, to these simple, and sympathetic people who always enjoy feasts and celebrations. Together with a guide, I lately had the occasion of visiting Calamintao, a forty-five minutes' flight and seven kilometres' walk in the mud and brushwood, eight to nine feet high. We succeeded in beating a path, along which I had my first encounter with a snake. The village is situated in a valley surrounded by huge mountains. About twenty families, that is some eighty-five persons, live in this isolated spot. Our Sisters' residence is a bamboo hut, which provides them with natural air-conditioning. The people are poor, open, and kind. They are non-Christians. Hygiene is poor, malaria is endemic; a few cases of polio have been detected. On this first trip, I brought back three paralysed children to Manila to get prostheses for them and find out what should be done for their rehabilitation.

Mireille Bourdeau, M.I.C.

CAP HAITIEN, HAITI

Here we are on Main Street. Pedestrians greet you with a warm smile and a hearty "bonjour". Life flows on at a leisurely pace in Haiti. Why hurry? Tomorrow is sure to come! The chief attraction in the city is the market place where sellers and buyers carry on brisk business. Onlookers watch the scene with amusement while shoeblacks dart among milling crowds, ringing their hand-bells. Let us now move on to the bus station where vehicles stand ready to convey us to our destination. They come in all sizes and colours, each with its name splashed across the back or on the sides: "Three Babies", "Pinkie", "Philomena", "Freddie", "Immaculata", "Eternity", "Cape Beauty", etc. We climb inside and roll along to an almost empty spot, on the outskirts, called the "Boundary of the Three Bottles". Why such a name? The gate that bars the way is topped by three huge bottles, each topped with a cannon ball. Below, a sign proclaims that this is the city's boundary line. A small police station guards the gate. A few miles further on, we halt in front of the Communal Refuge which houses the aged and handicapped entrusted to our care. Just now our "family" consists of

150 old people between the ages of 75 and 95. Among these guests of ours, sixty-two are blind, and a good number are crippled. Many of them are quite close to the "Beautiful Gate". Their last years have been made serene, after a life of misery. I have been in charge of this big family for twenty years, and can think of no greater happiness than taking care of the suffering members of Christ. This I have been able to do only because generous benefactors from the homeland have been my constant purveyors. God bless them all.

Rachel Blanchette, M.I.C.

OTTAWA

On the feast of Christ the King, Father Leo Charlebois admitted into the Church Suzan Nip, an Anglican from Hong Kong, and baptized her two children. For Mr. James Siu, her husband who is a fervent Catholic, this was a long-awaited day of jubilation. We, at the Chinese Centre, shared his happiness and that of the little family now more closely united than ever. Refreshments were served after the Eucharistic Celebration. In the afternoon, Sister Nina and Sister Odile visited Mrs. Chu, an elderly Christian lady. As they found her seriously ill, they called a priest who administered the sacraments and anointed her. Her family has been Christian for five generations. As she speaks neither French nor English, Sr. Odile was happy to interpret in Cantonese. Before the priest left, Mrs. Chu asked that he bless the house to which they had lately moved from another part of the city. On the following day, we heard she had died peacefully, shortly after our departure.

Odile Malboeuf, M.I.C.

YAURI, PERU

Sisters Agnes Bouchard and Pierrette Bernier recently conducted a Cursillo for Christian animators in Phausiri. During the slides showing a scene of the Nativity, a woman started to cry. "Just think!" she exclaimed, "Jesus was born poor like us poor people. His parents were humble folk. He loved the poor. They were his friends..." It has been our good fortune this year to provide Latin American Bibles for the people of the countryside, at a very low price. The Holy Book is

very precious to them. A woman told us that in order to earn this modest sum she had gone without meat for several weeks. Many others put aside one cent at a time in order to buy the Holy Book. For them the Bible is a treasure beyond compare. Sr. Pierrette Bernier recently visited many remote villages whose inhabitants had asked to receive religious instruction. She later related what a wonderful experience these two days had been to her, from the point of view of faith. So famished were these people for the word of God that one night she had been unable to retire until 1:00 a.m. The next day, she was awakened as early as 6:30 a.m. by Francisco, one of the Christian animators, who had brought his prayer book and hymnal "Hermanita (sister) please teach us some hymns. There is so little time left..." If space allowed, we could cite many more such examples.

JAPAN

TANABATA or Star Festival

One of the most colourful summer festivals in Japan is Tanabata Matsuri or Star Festival, a traditional event generally observed each year, on or around July 7. It is an occasion for merriment, especially for young people who enjoy the many brilliant displays in front of shops and of private homes.

This ancient observance is associated with a fairy tale of the two stars Altair and Vega. According to the legend, these "star-crossed lovers" were separated by the celestial king on opposite banks of the Milky Way. However, it is believed that the two "radiant lovers" have a joyous meeting once a year on the seventh night of the seventh month.

Even in our modern times, Tanabata has a traditional significance. Offerings are made to the stars in honour of their happy reunion. Young children decorate bamboo poles with strips of brightly coloured paper on which they write poems and good wishes.

This festival originated in China, during the reign of Emperor Koken (756 — 763 A.D.). The celebration was of a religious nature when it first came to Japan. It later evolved into an affair of literary interest and has long been interwoven into Japanese folklore. With the years, it has become a festival for the young to be observed in a spirit of joyful enthusiasm.

JUBILEE IN BOLIVIA

by Délia Philippe, M.I.C.

Sister Délia Philippe spent most of the fifty years of her religious life on the mission field: first in Cuba from 1952 to 1972, then in Bolivia from 1970 to the present year. On February 11, 1978, she chose to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of her religious profession in the remote mission of Villa Tunari, Chapare, Bolivia. In the following lines she describes the celebration held in the modest parish church of Villa Tunari. Sister came back on home leave in 1977, and left again the same year for Bolivia, at 73 years of age.

The feast of February 11 was very joyful and inspiring. I felt surrounded by the love and concern of all my dear Bolivian friends who joined in my thanksgiving for the double grace of religious life and the enjoyment of it for fifty years. The Franciscans of Chapare were present at the concelebrated Eucharist, and the Sisters of the region also honoured me by their presence. A group of M.I.C. Sisters drove from Cochabamba and even as far as from Catavi to share in my jubilation. The singing was rendered by my dear little friends, the children of Villa Tunari.

On the following day, some Canadian friends arrived, much to my delighted surprise. They proposed to take me on a "honeymoon" trip to the mining region of Catavi, where our Sisters conduct a dispensary for the miners and their families. I had long desired to visit this mission; one of the most distant and of the poorest. Now my wish was to be granted.

We travelled by jeep over the 350 kilometres that separate the Chapare district from Catavi. On the way, we climbed up an altitude of 4,800 metres.

The landscape on these heights is bleak. Over two hundred mines are found in this region. They yield rich deposits in tin, silver, wolframite, sulphur, cobalt, etc. To say the least, the conditions in which the miners work are miserable. Large families receive the same amount of food rations as families of only two or three. Wages are so low that miners cannot afford to buy food elsewhere. I realized that not only is the landscape bleak but so is the future of these poor people.

Houses in Rural Guatemala

In this region, two types of houses may be found: those built of adobe or tile bricks, roofed with tiles, and fitted with doors and windows; those with walls of mud or stone, wattles or reeds, thatched with straw, palm leaves, corn husks, or coarse grass. The latter are usually windowless.

Some huts have a very high peaked roof with eaves extending almost to the ground as a protection against the fierce sun and the pounding rain. Others have a ridgepole roof, while a third variety is tepee shaped, with a sort of inverted clay dish capping the tip.

Adobe houses usually have two or more rooms, and may be built about a patio. A corridor runs across one side encircling the whole house. Only the well-to-do can boast of such homes. Some thatched huts are separated into two rooms. They stand alone or in compounds where several huts outline a central square. Doors open on the square, never on the street. In these live grandparents and parents of married sons.

Furnishings are simple mats or a crudely made bed, one chair, benches, a wobbly table... Hanging from the beams or stored above the rafters are

the family looms and other tools of the local trade: fishpoles, nets, oars, baskets, extra garments, and precious seed corn.

Every house has its open-fire stove built on the floor or on a raised platform. A few have an outdoor beehive oven in which to bake ceremonial bread. In certain villages, a communal oven is available. Of course, each household has its own *metate*, the oblong stone on which corn is ground into a paste.

In all houses, may be found a simple domestic shrine. This usually consists of a table on which are exposed pictures or small statues of the family patron saint, or of that of the village. These altars are gaudily decked with bits of tinsel and mirrors, candles, incense burner, etc.

Attached to the homes of certain villages are tiny sweat bath houses. These are miniature huts, about four feet high, walled with field stones and roofed with wood, daubed with clay. Some villages have larger communal sweat bath houses. This fashion of bathing apparently came down from the Maya. Archeologists have often found similar buildings in ancient Maya ruins.

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