



Snapshots of M.I.C. History

by Madeline Maillet, M.I.C.



This year marks the 70th anniversary of the first M.I.C. departure for the missions. The brief lines which follow recall this momentous event in the life of our Institute.

The year — 1909

The month — January

The setting — the Mother House of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Outremont, Montreal.

The persons — the Archbishop, the Foundress and her young community which then numbered 15 members.

The Society of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception was barely seven years old. On this cold January day, Archbishop Bruchesi who liked to call the Sisters his "apostles and beloved children" had come to the Mother House with an important message. He was just back from Rome where Pope Pius X had assured him of his blessing on a work undertaken for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The whole world had been assigned to the M.I.C.'s as their field of apostolate. Now, the time had come to reach out to the first portion of this field — Canton, China. The bishop of this vast diocese had requested Sisters to take care of orphaned children, the aged, the destitute...

Around Mother Foundress, the Sisters looked from one to the other, wondering who would be the chosen

ones. They were still such a "little flock" that not many could hope to go. The Archbishop smiled at the eagerness he saw mirrored in their faces. Then he took out a list and read the names of the privileged ones: Sisters Marie de Lourdes, Saint Joseph, Marie de l'Enfant Jésus, Saint Pierre Claver, Saint Jean l'Evangeliste.

When she heard her name called, Sister Saint Jean exclaimed in surprise, "Did I hear right? Was I really named?" She had every reason to be surprised. Besides the fact that she was still a novice, she had lately been told her lungs were affected with T.B. and she might have to leave the community. Mrs. Lalumière, her mother, had offered to have her leave for the missions if she were cured. From this time onward, Sister rapidly recuperated and the doctor pronounced her fit to leave. Another novice, Sister Marie de Saint Georges, was named, the "sixth lucky one" as she laughingly called herself. By a special dispensation, both novices were allowed to make their temporary vows ahead of time, on August 15.

Meantime, preparations for the departure of the first group were being made. Wishing to associate the faithful to the apostolate, the Archbishop asked the Sisters to make the rounds of the principal churches in his Archdiocese in order to receive the alms offered by the faithful for their future mission. The Foundress herself took part in this venture going from one church to

another, every Sunday, at times on foot, at times in a horse-drawn wagon.

The great day dawned at last — September 8, 1909. Touching farewells were exchanged between members of the Community, parents and friends, and the departing missionaries. In the early evening came the departure from the Mother House to the strains of the Ave Maris Stella. The professed Sisters accompanied the group to the cathedral where a last ceremony was to take place.

As the Sisters came out of the cathedral they were surrounded on all sides by parents, friends and well-wishers. The Archbishop himself joined the group of those who accompanied them to the station. At ten o'clock the train left. The crowd, subdued and deeply impressed by this first missionary departure, slowly dispersed.

On the following day the newspapers carried enthusiastic reports of the event. But Mother Foundress paid scant attention to the praise lavished on her missionaries and her budding society. Several years later, when trials of all kinds beset her and her daughters, she was heard to murmur in a reminiscent mood: "That first departure for China... Returning home that same evening I blamed myself for having allowed such ovations. From now on, our departures will be effected in a modest manner, as far as in us lies. Our Sisters will then understand more clearly that they are only poor missionaries sent out to evangelize the poor, the outcast, the defenceless..."

Catholic Church in Uganda Celebrates Centenary

It was not part of the Centenary programme but still how symbolic it was! Twelve pure white egrets perched on the bare branches of a lifeless tree, overlooking a little island in the small lake at the Namugongo Shrine of the Uganda Martyrs, where the Centenary ceremonies were taking place.

The entire island was covered with the traditional thatched roof of a royal house liturgically adapted for the ceremonies. Beneath this, three Cardinals including Cardinal James Knox, papal envoy to the ceremonies, thirty-two bishops from eleven countries, and 226 priests in special centennial vestments had begun concelebrating the centenary Mass. A short bridge connected the island to the rolling green hills that surrounded the lake. Tens of thousands of Catholics sat on the slopes as they participated in the Mass.

When the vast multitude began to sing the Credo, the egrets left the bare branches of the lifeless tree, circled the congregation and the concelebrants, then resettled in a different tree which overflowed with foliage...

Pope John Paul II said in his message to the Christians of Uganda: "We should not forget that this martyrdom in Uganda occurred only a few years after Catholicism was first brought to the country. One could therefore rightly conclude that the soil was in some way ripe to receive the Christian religion, waiting for the seed of the Gospel, so that when it was sown, the field could at once produce such rich fruit..."

Thanksgiving for the "rich fruit" was the main purpose of the centenary celebrations. Shortly after the death of the martyrs, the Catholic community in Uganda had grown to two thousand, then to a hundred thousand. Today it numbers four and a half million. Four hundred and eighty of these have been ordained priests. Nine, including Cardinal Nsubuga, have become bishops. Two thousand junior seminarians and over five hundred major seminarians are presently preparing themselves for the priesthood. Two hundred and sixty have become brothers and over sixteen hundred are sisters, while nearly sixty thousand serve as catechists. The missionaries remain exceptionally dedicated and, throughout the last hundred

years, the laity have been remarkably committed even though on many occasions their faith has been tried as by fire. The seed has yielded rich fruit and in gratitude the Church in Uganda celebrated its centenary one hundred years to the day when on February 17, 1879, the first missionaries arrived at Entebbe, on the shores of Lake Victoria.

The arrival of these missionaries bringing the Word of God to the people of Uganda was symbolized during the centenary Mass when a missionary raised the gospel book on high and carried it over the bridge to the shores of the lake. There it was received by a son of Uganda who read the gospel of the Mass.

As he proclaimed the Word of God, tens of thousands seated on the green slopes around the lake listened attentively. They had come from every diocese in Uganda where the day was a national holiday. They had come in anything that moved, in spite of the current shortage of spare parts, of petrol... Some dilapidated vehicles never made it, but the people tried because as one said, "This is our day!" They came through numerous road-blocks, and they came in fear due to the current situation in the country, but they came. A number of disabled came in wheelchairs, and thousands of others came on foot.

After the Gospel was proclaimed, a specially selected choir of over two hundred men and women, in white and

gold half-length capes, raised their voices in joyful song under the direction of Mr. Bukenya, of the Makerere University School of Music, who stood on a tiny island in the lake. Most notable in their repertoire was "Marching United in Christ", which was composed by Fr. Okello, as a musical rendition of "United in Christ" — the motto of the Centenary.

This motto had been emphasized throughout the land during the year of spiritual renewal that preceded the celebrations. It had been a call to every Catholic to understand his role in the Church and to act accordingly. It had been a call to march united towards a new century of Christianity, a new phase, which Cardinal Nsubuga said "will radiate our oneness in Christ by our authenticity, unity, fidelity, and apostolic charity in all the different sectors of life to which God has called us."

This marching towards oneness in Christ was also strengthened by the attendance of an Orthodox Prelate, and six Anglican Bishops at the celebration. On the occasion, Anglican Archbishop, Silvanus Wani, wrote: "It is good to remember that we have one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God... During the persecution of 1885-6, Roman Catholic and Anglican Christians died together, and for those who were burnt to death their ashes were inseparably mixed."

Condensed from the "Newsletter of the Catholic Church of Malawi"

REJOICINGS IN MADAGASCAR

After a month of prayerful reflection, Sister Raivomanana Rosalie was ready to make her final commitment as a member of our Institute in her native village of Anosibe, situated in the fertile plain of Ifunga. The trip to this remote area was an arduous one but she made it joyfully. Who does not enjoy going home, to his or her "roots"? Ifunga is a fertile plain blanketed with lush rice fields, and girdled with mountains in whose foothills nestle several small villages.

Groups of Malagasy and Canadian M.I.C.'s accompanied Sister Rosalie over hill and dale. They travelled by bus on the first leg of the journey. At the terminus, they took to the road and walked for four hours until they reached the first relay. There the French Sisters of Jeanne Lanoue welcomed them for the night and promised to accompany them to Ifunga, the following day, in order to share in the rejoicings.

All rose early so as to be ready to board the vehicles headed for the

market place. It took only one hour to cover the twenty kilometres between the market town and Sister Rosalie's native village. Her brothers, Simeon and Joseph, met their sister halfway; her father and mother waited in front of their home to welcome her with open arms. The village provided generous hospitality to the whole group.

On the great day, Bishop Rajaonarivo Francis Xavier arrived early to preside the celebration. The village church was packed with people who had walked for hours in order to be present. What a unique occasion for rejoicing this was for the whole congregation! One of their very own was about to vow her life to the Lord, in the service of the Church.

When all had assembled, Sister Rosalie was solemnly led forward and presented to the Bishop by the parishioners. She then turned to her parents to ask their consent for her oblation and to beg their blessing. Her relatives surrounded her affectionately as she made her final commitment.

At noon a banquet of local delicacies, prepared by the family and the parishioners, was offered in the school hall. The Bishop graciously accepted to preside. According to Malagasy customs, florid speeches were delivered and merry, appropriate songs were sung. It was a big happy family affair enjoyed by all present.

Her heart overflowing with joy, Sister Rosalie gave her own little speech of gratitude: "A joy lived alone cannot be deep-felt. But the joy I have shared with you in Ifunga is one that can never be forgotten. What a treasure is to be found in family love and unity! We were so closely bound together in our gratitude to God... Never can I forget your kindness. I feel that the good Lord is really standing in our midst. Accept my loving and grateful thanks..."

Sister Rosalie remained with her people for several days after her perpetual vows. When she returned to her mission, she told us how happy she was to be ready to undertake her missionary task in earnest. Before leaving her village, she had shared the family chores of transplanting rice, something she had not done for the past ten years. Her brothers proudly exclaimed, "You haven't changed. You can still put your hand to planting rice. We are proud of you."

Condensed from M.I.C.
"Mini Resaka"

Laval Launches Youth Mission Bike-A-Thon

by Pauline Longtin, M.I.C.

During his home leave from Malawi, C.A., Father Pierre Leclerc, W.F. met the persons in charge of pastoral animation among the young in the Fabreville community (Laval). He had long wished to forge links of solidarity between the youth of Canada and that of Malawi. His principal project at present was the building of a primary school in his mission of Chimwankuku (Dedza diocese). The project met with the enthusiastic approval of Father Pierre Rivard, director of pastoral animation in Fabreville. Preparations started back in September 1978. Everything was carefully planned to ensure the success of the enterprise. A "bike-a-thon" as well as a march would be the main exterior events organized by the students.

To set things in motion, two M.I.C. Sisters from Malawi visited the Second and Third Secondary Schools divided into forty-one groups of about thirty students each. Talks were given on the country and people of Malawi in general and on the young in particular. This gave our young Canadian people a clearer grasp of the situation and quickened their interest. Sisters Marguerite Legault and Gisele Leduc,

M.I.C. spent two weeks in Fabreville, giving talks, showing slides, setting up a mini expo of typical Malawian objects.

For his part, Father Pierre Rivard saw to the practical side of the project. Thanks to him, the Laval police force began in January last to plan traffic in such a way as to allow for an orderly march and bicycle race.

April 30, a day of study sessions for the teachers, was chosen as the "great day". The students would then be free. Instead of enjoying this holiday in other perhaps more pleasant ways, 1,100 boys and girls in high spirits gathered as early as 8:30 a.m.: seven hundred cyclists and about four hundred marchers. The President and Vice-President of the Laval school board came on purpose to encourage participants.

Two of Father Pierre Leclerc's sisters as well as a brother-in-law represented the missionary himself in the cavalcade. Sisters Marguerite Legault and Pauline Longtin, M.I.C., wearing the traditional Malawian costume and carrying the national flag, represented the students of Malawi. Large posters were carried by groups of marchers. One caption read, "A few steps here may mean many more for Malawi..." Another, "Onward, onward for Malawi children..."

At a given signal, the seven-hundred cyclists started the race while the four hundred on foot followed in orderly fashion. The cortege was escorted by Laval municipal police agents. Thirty miles was the distance allotted to the cyclists and fifteen miles to those on foot.

* * *

While the sun was setting in distant Chimwankuku, the children of that remote region in Malawi, could not guess what was going on in Laval. Thousands of hands were being lovingly stretched out to them, laden with gifts to ensure the building of their badly needed school. Father Pierre Leclerc was overjoyed when told that all of \$10,000 had been donated through the students' bicycle race and toilsome march. Witnessing this generous solidarity of the young, we make ours the wish once formulated by John Littleton, "Ah, if men all over the world would but join hands..."

Thank God

Thanksgiving Day
is a day to remember
that every day
is Thanksgiving Day

Thank God for the comfort of ordinary things — an interesting book; a cup of hot tea shared with a friend; flowers that brighten up the room; friendship and laughter shared; pain that passes bringing blessed relief; houses lived in and loved in; work to be done and the strength to do it; lovely gardens and tall shady trees; light rains that make the earth fruitful; the unexpected visit or letter of a dear one; keen eyesight and good hearing; rosy dawns and radiant sunsets; and last but not least the promise of sunrise beyond the setting of life.

WHY I AM GOING BACK

by Janet Delisle, M.I.C.

I was 22 years of age when, on May 3, 1929, I arrived in Japan, happy to begin my missionary career. Today, 50 years later, I am happy to return. Though I am no longer venturing into the unknown, I feel I would do the same thing were I to start my missionary life all over again.

Studying Japanese and teaching English occupied my first seven years in Japan. Then, as English teachers were in greater demand in China, I was assigned to Canton. The city of unwanted baby girls was to become my new home for a number of years. Can you imagine the joy of a missionary who has the privilege of baptizing fourteen dying babies on the day of her arrival? These little girls had just been brought to the Foundling Home, in a dying condition, from distant villages. They may have been unwanted here on earth but what a welcome awaited them in heaven!

I worked among the orphans, the students, and the adults at our Canton mission for 13 years. Two years after my arrival war was declared. The fact that I could speak Japanese was of great help during the occupation. Soldiers and officers of the invading army were frequent visitors. I found out then that knowing a language can help break down many a barrier. One Japanese officer, interested in religion, often called at the orphanage to hear about God. When he was assigned elsewhere, he left the orphans all he could get his hands on in soap and various other

necessities. Our suburban Foundling Home had temporarily been taken over by the invading army. Before leaving, the Japanese soldiers carefully planted the vegetable garden and arranged to evacuate ahead of time so we could re-occupy the premises before the Chinese troops entered the city.

By the end of the war, American soldiers occupied Canton for a short period. They were the instruments of God's miracles in helping us feed 180 orphans without any fixed income. How did we do it? Miracles! Miracles! My heart is still full of vivid memories recalling the great number of miracles it was given me to witness in Canton, China. Miracles — unexpected gifts of food supplies at a moment when we were in greatest need to keep our large family fed; spiritual miracles in the conversion of many students, of many fallen-away Catholics... There, more than anywhere else, I realized that the hundredfold Christ promised his followers is a hundredfold indeed.

Hardships we had in plentiful measure: four lonely years cut off from our own country and our family; worries over not knowing what the morrow would bring... But God's grace sustained us in all our trials.

In 1949, I returned to my homeland after 20 years of absence. It felt like being born again! The affection showered upon me by both my natural and spiritual families was so great, that this was like a new world to me.



My only ambition now is to mellow into a loving and lovable "Granny" before the final call which will mean Home.

Meanwhile Canton had fallen into Communist hands. There could be no question of returning there. My superiors asked me to go to Davao, P.I., where our Sisters were opening a new mission. It took the warm, loving hearts of the Filipino people to keep me happy away from my beloved mission of Canton, China. A dormitory was inaugurated for girls from distant areas who attended college in the city; it proved successful from the start. Next, a Home for children in need was set up. I found the work interesting and exhilarating.

Then, in 1958, I found myself uprooted once again and transferred to my first mission field — Japan. To say the least, this was no easy transplantation. Yet, the will of God, manifested through my superiors, always gave me spiritual joy. What more could I ask for? I have been working in Koriyama ever since 1958. The children of my first pupils call me "Granny"! I don't mind because I believe grannies must be close to the good Lord.

In March 1978 I returned home on leave. Now, after many pleasant meetings with my dear M.I.C. Sisters, my natural family, and my numerous friends I am returning to my mission, hoping to teach as long as I can, and to carry the Good News of God's love to as many persons as God will allow me to get into contact with.

Like everybody else, I have made mistakes. But on the whole my life has brought me few unhappy moments. God has been good to me and how I appreciate the precious gifts of health and happiness! My only ambition now is to mellow into a loving and lovable "Granny" before the final call which will mean HOME.



Sister Janet with Japanese students

THE JAPANESE CHILD

by Michelle Paquette, M.I.C.

Like children all over the world, little boys and girls of Japan are lovable sprites, full of life and ready for mischief. From early childhood however, they bear the stamp of their nationality. Although they are loved and at times pampered, they soon learn that certain rules of politeness may not be infringed. They are taught how to bow gracefully, to sit, to acknowledge gifts, to endure pain without fuss... Proper manners are drilled into them almost as soon as they can toddle around the house.

Although Japan has gone modern in so many ways, the traditional family pattern holds good in many families. Thus, the eldest son still lives with his wife in the old homestead in order to take care of his parents. But, as modern young women tend to seek employment outside, the care of the little ones is often entrusted to the grandmother. Her opinion, as well as that of her husband, weighs heavily in the choice of a school.

The chief characteristic of children in Japan is their zest for study. Indeed, the whole of society seems to revolve around the school. The choice of a career, even a successful marriage, may depend on the university from which one has graduated. In order to obtain entry into the best university, children must study hard. The school year extends over eleven months. School hours run from 8:15 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., from Monday to Friday. Even Saturday comprises at least three to four hours of study in the classroom. Of late, the curriculum has been considerably expanded in order to ensure as complete a development as possible. Japanese children are very proud and very fond of their respective schools. They like to loiter in their classrooms, lecture halls, or playgrounds long after school hours. It is their second home.

To a certain extent, Japanese children are the slaves of a system which decides everything for them. Even before they have started attending school, the parents or the family clan may have planned ahead what career they should take up, what university they should attend. In order to reach this goal, they are made to follow private lessons taught outside the

school programme; music, languages, calligraphy, mathematics... This is not the exception but the rule. The result of such a system is that, left to their own devices, many children feel disoriented and put out.

Brought up in a country where space is at a minimum and where cities are overcrowded, Japanese children are sociable and responsive. They learn to participate in all family gatherings, in local festivals, in sports, in school competitions. Problems and projects are discussed and settled in common. Pupils seldom consult their teachers singly. They prefer to do so accom-



Pupils of our Xaverio primary school wearing the school uniform and insignia.



Hope of the future...

panied by three or four friends or classmates. I have found that they compete better as groups than as individuals.

Such a system turns out children who are eminently compliant and adaptable to prevailing customs and standards. They have learned the social values such as responsibility for the common good, loyalty, sincerity or zeal with which one undertakes to do whatever is expected. These qualities explain the national character and bind Japanese society together. But, however compliant and adaptable they may be, the children of Japan can also prove aloof and inscrutable. There are secret depths in their nature which it is very hard to plumb.

Even in the Japan of today, man has priority. From childhood, girls are taught to give way to their brothers. The latter are treated more or less as little gods and their sisters usually take this for granted. But as boys move further along through the school system, increasingly heavy pressures are brought to bear upon them to study diligently in order to score high on examinations. At home they may still lord it over the girls; at school, they are on equal footing with their classmates and no favouritism is expected.

Japanese children are the hope of their nation. When I look at row upon row of bright eager faces in the schoolroom, I secretly recall our Saviour's words, "Let the little ones come unto me..." There is hope in the child because like the Spring he is rich in promises of growth, of joy, of wonder. Unconscious of the evil around him, as yet unprepared to assume the heavy responsibilities of the future, he holds out pleading hands, begging for guidance and protection. He needs our help to grow, to be given an ideal, to be made free and capable of reaching to the full stature of what Christ expects him to be.

MONTREAL, Canada

In Our Mailbag

Dear Sister Huguette,

Some time ago you kindly inquired about my work among Vietnamese immigrants. Here are a few facts which may prove of interest to you. Of course, my main activities concern the Chinese among whom I have lived for so many years. But it often happens that Vietnamese cross my path; I then do all in my power to be of some help.

My first encounter with the latter occurred at the Legion of Mary assemblies. I found out that many among these immigrants are fervent Legionaries. Next, on my frequent visits to the Chinese Hospital, I met a Mrs. Kim Nghien Hwan who lived close by. She needed a friend in whom she could confide. Happy to find that I was willing to listen to her, she offered to teach me the rudiments of the Vietnamese language.

Two months later, Mrs. Hwan fell seriously ill and had to be hospitalized. It was then that I was really in a position to be of use to her in her troubles. I visited her as often as I could and was able to interpret for her and to make sure she received the sacraments for she is a staunch Catholic. She is 47 and the mother of seven children, the youngest being only five years old. Married twice, she lost her first husband, an officer in the Vietnamese army, who died in prison. Her second husband was arrested by the Communists as he was preparing his wife's and children's flight from the country. No news of him have since reached her. The wealth of the family which was once considerable has been confiscated. It is not easy for her and her family to get used to a new country, new customs, new surroundings. When she was in trouble about the settlement on her modest apartment, I went to court with her on three different occasions, not as a witness but as a friend. "I feel more secure when you are with me," she explained.

She is very grateful for the kindness shown by Canadian benefactors, among whom a priest who sent her a Chinese pot for cooking rice as soon as she arrived in Canada. Although she has been through so many trials of her own, she is open to the woes of others. For example, she exerted her influence in favour of a Chinese who is at present in a concentration camp. She is my good friend and counsellor in the visits I make to several Vietnamese families in need.

Another friend of mine is Mrs. Thivan Vuong. She is 37 and the mother of 10 children. Although she is unable to have news of her husband who is still in Vietnam, she has reason to believe he is in prison. She and her children escaped thanks to the protection of a kind friend. After three years spent in the Philippines, they emigrated to Montreal where her eldest son and a daughter found suitable employment. The mother and younger children go to school every day in order to learn French. Mrs. Vuong is very grateful to the government for these free courses given in the French language. As their apartment is close to ours, I visit them on Saturday afternoons, when I am sure to find them at home. The mother is pleased to practise French and the little ones try to teach me Vietnamese.



Facing an uncertain future, these children of a Viet refugee camp are still lucky compared to thousands of others.

You are probably wondering why, at my age (73) I am trying so hard to learn Vietnamese. My answer is — in order to help those who cannot yet speak our language. Exiled from their own country often living in poverty, sick and lonely, they need someone who cares, someone who can say a prayer with them in their hours of discouragement or when illness strikes. This is my only ambition in learning this new language.

Marie Anne Rompre, M.I.C.

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