

Series 7, No. 6,
November-December 1980

MIC

MISSION NEWS

JAPAN

SHICHI-GO-SAN FESTIVAL

The charming festival known as *shichi-go-san* (seven-five-three) is observed in Japan on November 15, by families having children who are three, five, or seven years old. Accompanied by their parents the youngsters, attired in beautiful silk kimonos, visit nearby temples. The object of the visit is to give thanks for the children's good health, and to offer prayers for their future happiness.

In the Tokyo area, Meiji Shrine is the most popular temple visited on this occasion. Large crowds throng the compound, watching the arrival of the colourful processions of little ones pouring in all day long. At the shrine proper, a Shinto ceremony takes place and sacred sake (rice wine) is offered.

Usually kimono designers or dyers are among the spectators, on the lookout for new ideas. Many are connected with large and well known silk stores. In former days, *shichi-go-san* was marked with ceremonies of dressing the hair for three-year-old girls, of putting on the *hakama* (divided skirt) worn by men, for five-year-old boys, and of replacing kimono strings with a sash for seven-year-old girls. Nowadays, the pilgrimage to the shrine and the wearing of pretty kimonos are the principal features of the celebration. Some scholars hold that this ceremony originated during the Muromachi period, about 400 years ago.

Condensed from Japan Report



November 15 is an important day in Japan for the parents of children who are seven, five and three-years old.

Christmas

it was necessary for a Saviour to be born. God himself had to come among men that the work of redemption might positively begin.

For two thousand years that work of redemption has been going on. It cannot be accomplished except by, through, and with Christ. Men may ignore the Star that reminds them he is born. But now and then they are moved to search the skies and to believe that God still dwells among them.

God is with men and of men, made flesh in one of our own — a wondrous woman named Mary. Lift up your hearts, all you who believe, you continue the work of restoration launched by Christ 2,000 years ago. Through you, the Good News of salvation, of love, of human hope goes forth to the ends of the earth.

Come to Bethlehem! Therein lies the world's hope, because in Bethlehem its Saviour is born. Christmas is not a long-ago-thing. It is an eternal present. Christmas marked a certain fulness in time — a period at which

MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Box 157, Laval Branch, P.O.

Laval, P.Q. CANADA

H7N 4Z4

1981

Year of the Handicapped

JANUARY

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DECEMBER

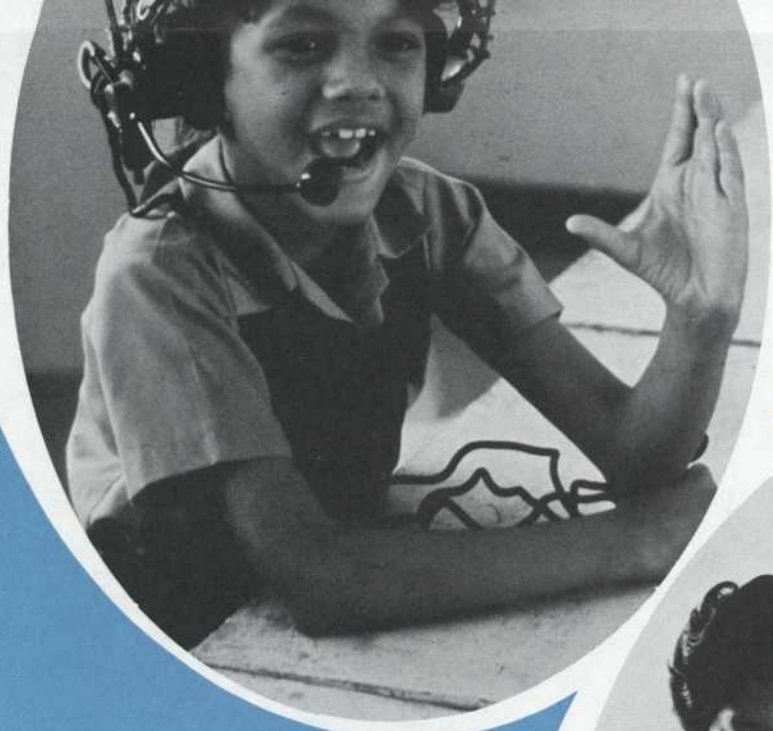
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When the angel's song is stilled,
when the star in the sky is gone,

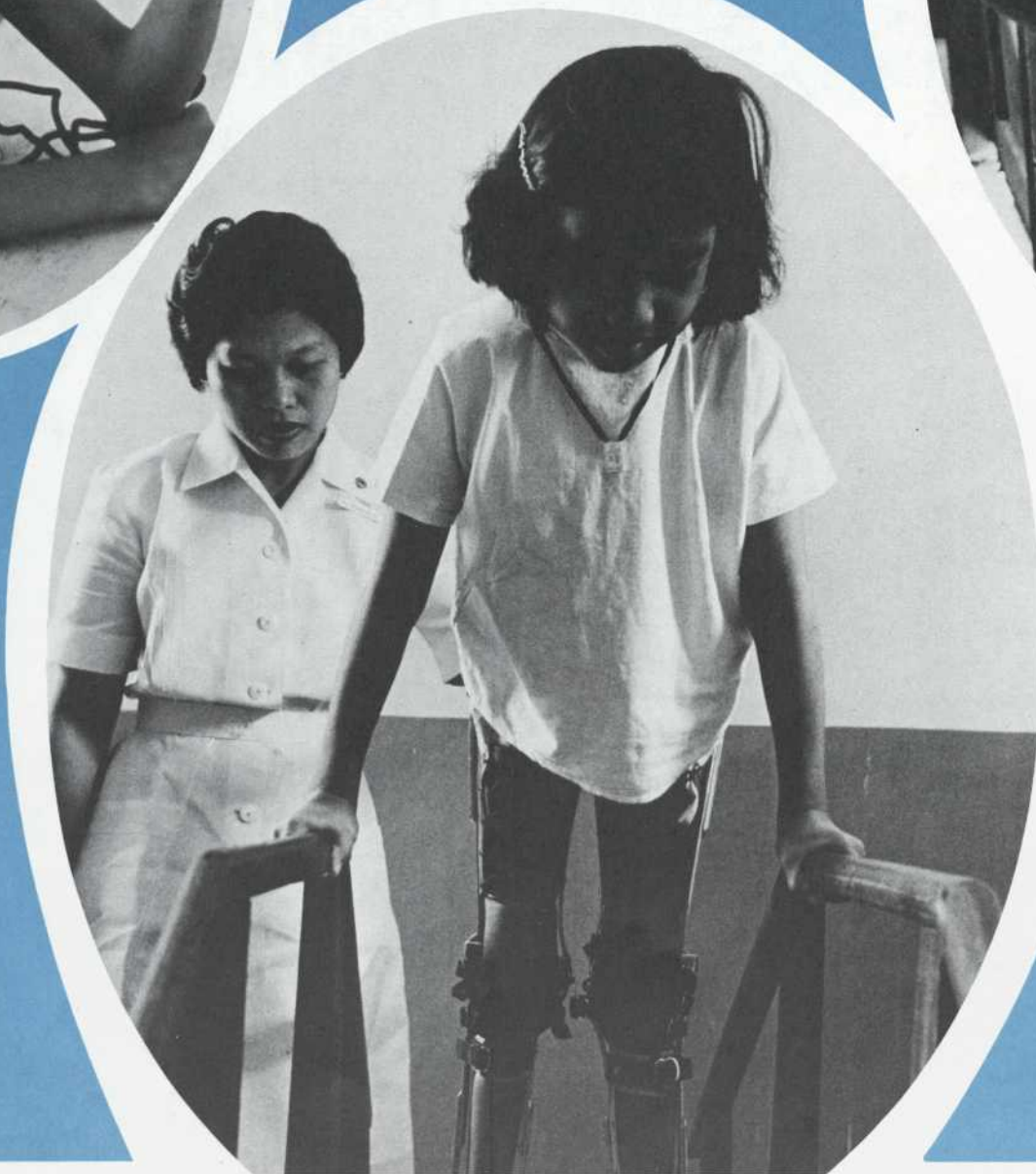
then the work of Christmas begins.



When the star in the sky is gone,
then the work of Christmas begins:
to heal the broken,
to bring peace to all,
to make music in the heart.



BOLIVIA
United Nations



Philippines
United Nations



Africa
Maryknoll

PHILIPPINES

The Filipino Family in Perspective

by Felicidad Dacayanan, M.I.C.

Today, more than ever before, the family is the focus of attention, concern, and assistance on the part of influential sectors of society, especially on the part of governments and churches. This arises from the common universal conviction that the family is the very foundation of society.

For the Filipinos themselves as well as for many social scientists, the family is a fascinating subject of study. Articles, speeches, discussions disclose many apparently different opinions and contentions. A number of scientists praise and at the same time blame the Filipino family, while others go so far as to call it a double-faced unit. Recent researches affirm that the Filipino family, although basically nuclear, is clan-nish by nature. How can such seemingly contradictory contentions be accepted? In order to understand the Filipino family one must first gain insight into the nation's socio-cultural value system.

In its basic structure, the Filipino family is nuclear. It consists of the father, mother, and unmarried children. Although basically nuclear, it is not an isolated and independent social entity. This is concretely discovered when one takes time to know who lives next door in an apartment or who lives in the houses close by in a compound or on a farm. One's next door neighbours are either one's married brothers or sisters, cousins or uncles, from the first to the third degrees. Thus, from birth, the child is welcomed and surrounded by a host of relatives. From early childhood, he is exhorted to behave with loyalty and respect towards all these relatives. From

them he may expect security, protection, and support during his lifetime.

This extended Filipino Family which becomes the world of the Filipino child may either put him in difficult situations or save him from trouble. For instance, relatives on the father's or mother's side do not always have the same value orientations, so that conflicts may early arise. When this happens, the child finds himself in a difficult situation. Siding with one set of relatives may make him lose the potential assistance of the other; taking no sides, may cause him to lose both. On the other hand, this extended family provides support and protection — material, psychological, and emotional — especially in times of need. This is common among Filipinos who are looking for jobs or even for a chance to go abroad.

The Filipino family, with its wide range of relatives vertically (grandparents to grand-children) and horizontally (cousins, uncles and aunts, nephews and nieces from father and mother sides) develops and maintains reciprocal friendly relationships. This creates solidarity, a "help-one-another" attitude, a sharing of emotions, joyful or painful, an apportioning of material goods. In such a context, everyone has a place among one's kin and is given necessary care and help. This extensiveness of the Filipino family makes the "aged citizens' homes" of Westerners even insulting to the Filipino extended family mentality. Is it any wonder that sociologists qualify the Filipino family as clannish? It might be compared to a saving net enfolding even wayward members.

In spite of poverty among the people, nobody dies of starvation. No matter how meagre resources may be, there are always some available to any relative who may seek food and shelter within the clan. No matter how crowded the room or house may be, if a relative arrives, he or she will always find a nook

to squeeze in for shelter. Sociologists affirm that this state of things promotes graft, corruption, and nepotism. It may even stunt the economic growth of the family because of the great number of dependents. At the same time it encourages laziness among relatives and children.

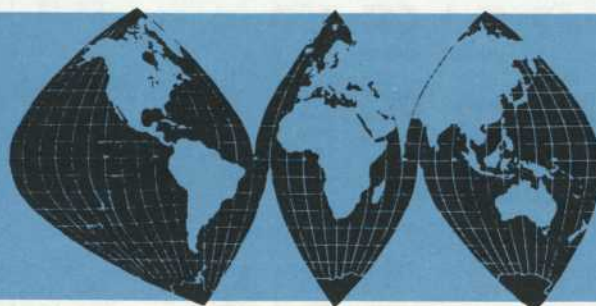
Many working mothers or fathers are bringing up not only their own children but also their grandchildren who live either with them or in separate households. Not only do they support them but they also spend for their education with the hope that some day they will be in a better financial situation than their parents. How may parents lament over their financial difficulties because some of their married daughters whose respective husbands have no jobs have to stay with them. It may be touching to hear them say, "If I drive them away, I am driving out my own flesh and blood..." But this closeness becomes emotionally loaded and prevents many to get rid of these self-imposed responsibilities. Such clannishness has its good and bad consequences. Filipino families therefore deserve the praise of observers but at the same time, cannot escape legitimate censorship.

What does this Filipino family phenomenon reveal about our society? If a Filipino feels safe only among his relatives and can trust only the members of his kin, what kind of society exists in our country? Since the late 1960's, experts on Philippine society have openly declared, "Philippine society is an anarchy of families." If the Filipino family does not find security, protection, and support from society at large, it re-enforces its security system among relatives, and if this situation prevails then anarchy really does exist. The Filipino family is the focus of concern and attention of the Philippine government and of the Catholic church, since it is the key either to progress and development or to retrogression and destruction of society.

*The Filipino family
is the key
either to progress
or to regression.*



Mission Briefs



Chiloe, Chile

We observe the old local custom of visiting close neighbours on New Year's Eve. Houses remain brightly illuminated until long after midnight. Good wishes are exchanged, then every guest is invited to sit at the family table, even if only for a few minutes, to sip a delicious drink called *cola de mono*, "monkey tail", served with cookies. The recipe for this traditional New Year's drink has been handed down from mother to daughter for many years. Its chief ingredients are milk, coffee, eggs, sugar, a little alcohol. Served piping hot, it is a comfort against the cold winds that so often whip the Island.

Lorette Goulet, M.I.C.

Mzimba, Malawi, C.A.

In early February I received an extraordinary gift of K 3,000 (one kwacha is more or less equivalent to our dollar) from the Apostolic Works Fund. I

immediately decided to buy supplementary rations for the 645 cases of malnutrition brought to my attention at our mobile clinic. Then, I remembered an unexpected government grant of K 3,000 recently forwarded to us. It would be good to share with our M.I.C. Sisters of the Mzambazi Health Centre in need of funds. It so seldom happens in my work with destitute children that I am able to share... I sent my offering without delay and received an enthusiastic response.

Gertrude Paré, M.I.C.

Ontario, Canada

During the last school year, it was my privilege to present missionary awareness programmes in several primary schools in Ottawa, St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Port Colborne, Sudbury. In all, I met 5,335 pupils and gave 119 talks. In every one of these schools, I was given a cordial welcome by teachers and pupils alike. I think this is a very

important work where one can sow good seeds in the hearts of our young people. Much more could be done if I only had the time. Besides these extra missionary activities, I have several regular tasks to perform at our Chinese Centre in Ottawa: teaching of the doctrine, preparing catechumens for baptism; interpreting for Vietnamese and Cambodian refugees, etc. Who will give me a helping hand?

Odile Malboeuf, M.I.C.

*Our wish
and our prayer
is that Mary
will bring you
closer to her Child.
A blessed Christmas!*

Christmas Prayer

My God, let the gracious spirit of the Child enter my life and bless it. Let my ear hear the cry of the needy and my heart feel the love of the unlovely. Let the gentle Christmas spirit touch my life. As the old year ends and the new begins, grant me peace in my own heart, that those whom I meet may have sweet joy and loving trust. Amen.

Our newsletter MIC Mission News keeps you tuned to missionary doings around the world. Nothing could awaken missionary interest more effectively than your winning new members to the cause. How about asking your friends to join our missionary association ICMA? Use coupon below.

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