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MIC

MISSION NEWS

CHIPATA, ZAMBIA

*Celebrating
The Year of the Handicapped*

TOGETHER WE BUILD A BETTER WORLD

By Sr. Rhéa Bigras, M.I.C.

This year, Chipata Diocese launched a strong campaign to assist its handicapped members. Activities and projects particularly focused on the needs of boys and girls who are crippled, blind, deaf, etc. The M.I.C. Sisters in the diocese actively participated in the different programmes of rehabilitation for these young handicapped persons.

Although not directly involved in the campaign, my work at the Communication Centre with Sr. Evelyn O'Neil, M.I.C., provided me several opportunities to accompany her in her work among handicapped youth. I am happy to share with you what I have witnessed.

Several months ago, a sewing course was given to a group of eleven handicapped boys and girls. On their return to their homes, the participants managed to earn a small income which has been very encouraging for them. Robert Banda, one of the eleven, tells his story:

"I was three years old when my parents discovered that I could not walk. They brought me to the hospital where I stayed for several months. The doctor then told my father and mother that he could not do anything more for me and that it was useless to keep me in the hospital. My parents brought me back to our village. Unfortunately, my mother died and, later, my father also passed away. I went to live with my grandparents. Some friends asked me,

'Robert, don't you think, as many of us Africans do, that somebody cast a spell on you?' I told them I do not believe in spells; it is God who allowed me to be handicapped." Robert is not a Christian.

Later, Robert was accepted in another hospital and then placed under the care of Sisters working with handicapped persons. After his operation and the period of rehabilitation, he

returned to his village. However, he had no one to take care of him as his grandparents died; he requested to come to Chipata where he stayed with a friend. Having received the gift of a sewing machine from the government Social Welfare department, Robert started to sew for other people. He made a little money, and with the help of his friends, built a modest hut. He

(Turn to inside page.)



Robert Banda recounts his story to Sr. Rhéa Bigras, M.I.C. and a friend.

TOGETHER...

now calls himself a "tailor". He admits, though, that he is not an expert cutter. Moreover, being unable to go to the store to buy his sewing materials, he gives a small amount to neighbours who run errands for him. He also pays those who come to do regular cooking chores for him. Despite all these, Robert claims, "I am very happy to be able to earn my living. I also planted small trees around my little hut and I have a garden plot which I cultivate myself." Besides, Robert has many friends. Anytime we visit him, we meet people at his hut, chatting with him while he is busily sewing!

The sewing course which Robert followed was given by Agnes Yambani, a handicapped person. Agnes is a convinced Christian and she is considered an apostle by people who know her. She lives a life of prayer and makes herself available to anyone in need of spiritual advice or of a garment to be sewn.

Agnes prepares the sewing classes for her handicapped students with a spiritual talk and a short prayer. In her sharings, she tries to convince the boys and girls to consider themselves as ordinary people and not as outcasts, and to accept their disability joyfully as God's will. She tells her young companions: "We may not have the use of our legs, but God gave us other talents and capacities which we should develop; we must make great efforts to help ourselves. Here, you have the opportunity of learning how to sew. Put your heart in this work and you will become good tailors and dressmakers. You will be happy to earn an income and also to help your parents. Instead of weeping because we are lame, let us thank God who loves us as much as other persons."

The last day of the sewing course coincided with Agnes' birthday. Her new graduates were truly pleased to thank her with songs, wishes and gifts. All of them were dressed in the clothes and hats they made. A few days later, Agnes had the happiness of being admitted to a Congregation of African Sisters in Lusaka.

Elizabeth Chulu, who assisted Agnes at the sewing sessions is also a handicapped. After undergoing a period of rehabilitation, she followed a sewing course at the Chikungu Home-craft Centre. Her parents, although quite poor, love her and do all they can to help her. They offered one of the three small rooms of their house as a sewing room where she can do her work and receive her customers. Elizabeth has a sewing machine and a

PHILIPPINES

Glimpses Of the Holy Father

By Sr. Elvira Sibayan, M.I.C.

"I come to you in the name of Jesus Christ, whose servant I am." Thus Pope John Paul II formally started the pastoral visit to his flock in the Philippines. We had known it would be a very special event. Our country, being the only predominantly Catholic one in Asia, attaches great significance to a Papal visit. We had known, too, that the Holy Father would perform an unprecedented rite – the first beatification outside Rome, of a Filipino martyr, Lorenzo Ruiz, thus conferring a great honor on our nation. It was not surprising, therefore, that a special religious fervor began permeating the local atmosphere the day the schedule of the visit became definite, gaining momentum as the visit drew nearer, reaching its climax during the Pope's presence in our midst.

I had looked upon it as a gift from His Holiness himself and from the Lord, joyfully anticipating the opportunity of seeing the second Pope in my life in the flesh. (The first time was in November, 1970 at the Manila Cathedral when, from afar, I saw the late Pope Paul VI as he entered to offer Mass.) I had prayed that his journey be safe and his mission fruitful, encouraging my students and

choir members to do the same. I also nurtured the desire to see him at close range. As things turned out, Our Lord had more in store for me than I had hoped for.

In mid-January, I was asked by the archdiocesan director if our High School choir could sing for the Holy Hour during a Triduum at Sta. Cruz Church as part of a spiritual preparation for the Pope's visit. I accepted readily. Then, on January 29, the district supervisor informed me that our children's choir was among those chosen to sing at Malacañang Palace (the President's residence) during the Pope's visit there. Costumes would be lent us by Folk Arts Theatre, transportation and snacks would be provided by Malacañang. Thereafter followed a two-week medley of phone calls, auditions, rehearsals, follow-up of schedules, relaying of information, complying with requirements on security, seeing to costumes. We had two general rehearsals, the second of which was at Malacañang under the personal supervision of the First Lady, Mrs. Imelda Marcos. Performance schedule was February 17, 4:00 p.m. That day, all choirs were brought to Malacañang at 1:30 p.m.

wheelchair given by a Secondary School in Quebec, Canada.

At the Communication Centre, we have a small studio where Sr. Evelyn and I, with the help of our good associate, Miss Anastasia Mwanza, interviewed some of our handicapped friends and sent the program to the Zambia Broadcasting in Lusaka. Many people now own a radio. Hopefully, this program will reach them and make them more aware of the handicapped members in their villages.

Such projects now being undertaken for the handicapped are challenging, but meet with various financial problems. To send handicapped persons to the hospital of Lusaka and to see that they meet the doctor and or later follow a program of rehabilitation are made easily possible with the co-operation of generous members of the community. But when they return to their homes now knowing how to sew, for example, the problem focuses on

the purchase of a sewing machine. Presently, only four handicapped persons in Chipata have their sewing machines. Among them, there are also some who cannot walk and would need wheelchairs. A young volunteer from Switzerland has accepted to make wooden wheelchairs... these, like the sewing machines, are expensive, – especially here in Zambia. Crutches and boots which are urgently needed by some are costly too.

Dear Readers, if any of you are interested in helping these handicapped youth, you are most welcome! On my part, I will be very happy if this sharing has awakened your interest and concern regarding their plight. Being in Zambia for only a short time and not knowing the language, the best way I may help is to take photos and turn the keys of our recording machines in the Communication Centre. Hopefully, too, I continue to assist Sr. Evelyn who gives so much of herself to our handicapped friends.



All eager and set to welcome Pope John Paul II:
Sr. Elvira Sibayan, M.I.C. (center) and ICAM Children's Choir.

The choirs and chaperons, attired in various types of Philippine-costumes, assembled in their assigned places on the *rotonda* and driveway. The waiting was made short and light by joyous expectation, so evident in the happy faces around us. At 4:00 p.m., the First Family and members of the cabinet went to the gate to meet His Holiness, and ten minutes later the Pope, with the President and the First Lady, came on a special float, his arms extended in greeting, his face full of affection for all of us. We, in turn waved Papal flagettes while singing "Christus Vincit" over and over until the Pope entered the Palace.

While we waited outside for over an hour, the Holy Father talked privately with the President and the First Lady, listened to choral renditions, watched deafmute children "say" the Lord's Prayer in sign language, and delivered an address to the Filipino People. It was dusk by the time he came out on the balcony as over a thousand children's voices burst out with the "Hallelujah" by Handel amid lighted candles and lanterns. Our group was providentially placed just in front of the balcony, about six feet away from the Pope. We sung with our eyes fixed on His Holiness who listened with deep

concentration, giving the impression that he was following the words closely: "Hallelujah!" For the Lord God omnipotent reigns! Then he thanked the president and gave us his blessing.

This is an account of only one of the lavish welcomes accorded the Pope here. What did it show? It presented fervor combined with Philippine hospitality, a deep esteem and reverence for the Papacy, and more important, beneath the trappings of protocol, costumes, flags, music, Pope John Paul II was brought closer to the people and the people to him. Through his reminders, he has brought all closer to the mind and heart of the Church.

The Holy Father's visit brought a strong and gentle breeze that unleashed the spirit of generosity in all sectors of Philippine society, the like of which has never before been seen. The same can be said of the spirit of cooperation between Church, the State, and the private sector as he was truly everyone's Holy Father. As Jaime Cardinal Sin explained: "Pope John Paul II among us, with his Filipino flock gathered around him, has given us a spiritual vitamin, a much-needed shot in the arm. Because of him, we have a stronger faith; we are more prepared to accept the tenets of the Gospel." *Totus tuus.*

HONG KONG

A Long Search For Roots:

AFFIRMATION OF GOD'S FATHERHOOD

By Sr. Colette Soucy, M.I.C.

Sr. Colette Soucy interviewed Sr. Louise Tang, M.I.C., on her return from a trip to the Chinese mainland.

Colette: Welcome back to Hong Kong. Tell me, how was your trip to China?

Louise: Wonderful! My heart overflows with joy, thanksgiving, and praise. I wanted to visit my family whose members were still unknown to me. I was a stranger to them and they were strangers to me.

Colette: What do you mean?

Louise: Since my childhood I did not know what it meant to belong... I completely lost track of my family. I was raised by the M.I.C. Sisters, - they have been father and mother to me. Now I have found my family. Yes, I have found my brothers and sisters and what a happy discovery this proved to be!

Colette: How did this discovery happen?

Louise: It all began after I left China for Hong Kong in 1950. When I arrived in Hong Kong, I worked with the M.I.C.'s.

At that time, there was a lady closely associated with the Sisters who at once surmised I was her niece. She showed special interest in me but I felt no particular attachment for her. In 1959, I entered the novitiate to become a Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception. As there was no novitiate in Hong Kong then, I had to go to the Philippines. The lady who identified me as her niece continued to visit the Sisters. In 1974, this lady died and Sr. Helena Fung, M.I.C., invited me to accompany her to the funeral services. A sister of

the deceased lady approached me and asked if she could come to visit me together with a niece. During their visit, I learned that the deceased was actually my aunt. Her sister revealed to me the circumstances surrounding my birth. I learned about my mother's death and how I came to be given away to the Sisters, – not out of a lack of love but due to certain strong beliefs which caused my relatives to fear I would bring bad luck to my family since my birth caused my mother's death. My relatives had to give me away to save our family. My aunt was a witness and she confirmed my identity.

The following year, I was given the opportunity to go to Canada for a spiritual renewal session. On my way, I stopped in San Francisco and met one of my brothers. Much to my happiness, my brother gave me a family name: **Lohk Yih**. What a joy to meet him, to look at him... it was a beautiful dream which became a reality! From this brother I learned I have four other brothers and one elder sister. I took each one's address. Since that memorable trip to the United States, many other beautiful dreams became realities.

Colette: Would you explain?...

Louise: In 1978, one of my brothers who lives in Indonesia came to Hong Kong with his whole family. Once again, I experienced a deep sense of joy which is quite difficult to describe. Moreover, I felt just as much happiness when I met

my other relatives in Canton and Shanghai.

Colette: I am sure this family reunion must have been a great event for you...

Louise: I have my family and I thank the Lord for this extraordinary gift. Meeting my loved ones has brought new dimensions in my life; – I know more what it means to be a child of God.

Colette: Can you tell us more about this?

Louise: At the start, upon receiving my relatives' addresses, I felt a bit confused. Then, when I was given the opportunity of going to China to meet them, I felt afraid. It was such a long time since I left Canton – more than thirty years ago! I was scared to make this long trip on my own and I did not know how to find my relatives. Moreover, I knew nothing about their dispositions. Again and again I examined the pros and cons of the venture. After a long discernment before the Lord, I decided to overcome my fears and undertake the journey. Providentially, I received a letter from a friend in China. She proved very helpful and gave me many practical indications regarding my visit.

Colette: When did you leave and how long did you stay?

Louise: I left on June 30, 1980 and stayed a fortnight. To my joy, I did not have to look for my relatives... They

came to meet me. The Lord was my WAY all the way! When I arrived in Canton that evening, one of my nephews and one of my nieces were already on hand to receive me. They approached me asking, "Are you **Lohk Yih**?" Eagerly, I replied, "Yes, I am!" and that was it! Who but the Lord has arranged this easy identification and meeting? My young relatives took me to their house where, with other members of the family I discovered a new dimension of the reality of "being at home". With them I visited Shameen where the M.I.C.'s used to stay. I met many of my old friends and I even had the chance to visit my former school.

Colette: How would you describe your experience?

Louise: My heart overflows with joy! This is a new beginning in my life. I feel the need to give more... the discovery of being loved by people who are my own flesh and blood transforms everything. Life is truly more meaningful, more colourful! I believe that this discovery of the gift of my family makes me better aware of other dimensions of God's Heart. I would certainly need another lifetime to thank Him the way He deserves. That He should have preserved this sacred gift until now makes me sing **Magnificat**. For all this I would like the whole world to join my song of praise and gratitude. Yes, the Lord is wonderful! Miracles happen... I have lived one. **Magnificat!**



"What happiness to meet my brother and my sister-in-law in Shanghai!"



Sr. Louise Tang, M.I.C., spends a joyful reunion with her sister in Canton.

EVANGELIZATION...

Some classes are given at the Centre, another given at our home every Tuesday evening.

Before I go any further, let me share with you one of the most rewarding experiences I have had this year in this new Evangelization work: Three of the parents who have been following my inquiry classes, **Mr. and Mrs. Guy Wong**, and **Mrs. June Kwan**, were received in a simple ceremony for the reception of catechumens and were baptized during the Easter Vigil.

The important factor in the call and response of these fine young people is that, like many others, they have been drawn to Christ and His Church through their own children, all students in our school. There are at present two families taking instruction at the Centre on Wednesday evenings after work. One young couple has a three-month-old little girl who has to be brought along. The other mother has four children from second grade to high school, all of whom I am in charge of preparing for their great day. Another gentleman who attends that Wednesday evening class comes all the way from Daly City, about eight miles. He has two boys, now in high school, but who both went through St. Mary's. Thus again, through the children, we reach a parent. The other member of that class is a gentleman not connected in any way with the Centre or the Mission School. He heard about the classes from a friend, and now he comes faithfully every week, all the way from the city of Oakland, over the Bay Bridge, a good twelve miles.

Yes, definitely a flame has been lit and it is spreading. In all I have, at present, twelve different religion classes. What prepared me for this work? The only answer is that I have been gifted by God with enthusiasm and the ability to teach. With these gifts, I can

hope to succeed, but above all, it is only because God Himself is working in and through me that I can truly pass on the Good News. Each class turns out to be a personal religious experience for me. What riches we have in our God! What a priceless gift is Faith!

There is no end to the work of Pre-Evangelization and Evangelization here in Chinatown, San Francisco. This city is a tourist city, one with a touch of beauty, a touch of class, and even a bit of mystery, but it is above all a city of immigrants. Immigrants from Mainland China, who were coming in at the rate of over 1,000 a month last year, are still coming in at the rate of about 800 to 900 each month. Refugees and immigrants from Vietnam and Cambodia are streaming in at the rate of 700 to 800 a month. According to experts, the Chinese population in San Francisco alone has reached over 76,000.

The M.I.C.'s whose primary goal is spreading the Good News to those who do not yet know Him can find themselves at home here also. Each day, we all thank God for each in our own way we are working towards that goal. **Sister Alice Carrier** who works in the school library full time, and who teaches religion to our little first graders - 40 students and only 3 Catholics - is Evangelizing not only with them, but everywhere through her smiles, her kindnesses, her readiness to be of service at school and at home.

Sister Carmen is invaluable in the work she is doing. Assuming tasks that leave others free for direct Evangelization, she thus shares in the joys and fruits of our classes. **Sister Mary Tan** who works at the Archdiocesan Religious Education office also fulfills a dream of Delia Tetreault. She prepares Catechists, a work in which she excels.

The four of us make up the group of 1417-38th Avenue in San Francisco.

One last important news item. Since February 1 of this year we have a new Director at St. Mary's. **Father Patrick R. Leary**, a young Paulist Father, has taken over the job after spending two and a half years in Hong Kong studying the language and the culture of the people he is now serving. Father Pat is highly gifted for the many responsibilities of this job, but above all he has a missionary zeal that would delight Delia Tetreault. His main goal for the Centre and the School is **Evangelization**. Otherwise, as he says, we have no business being here. Our good friend, **Father Charles Donovan, C.S.P.**, is now enjoying a much deserved rest after 27 years of service to St. Mary's. We rejoice with him!

What is left to say? The most important of all. Since I am addressing myself to my Sisters and to friends everywhere, I want to say to you, my dear ones, you who are retired, or sick, or who, for some reason or other are unable to work at our common goal directly, would you include our San Francisco apostolate in your prayers, your daily sufferings, your loneliness perhaps, your daily giving of yourselves? We feel a great need for your support. Please share your love with us by sharing in our Evangelization work. With you we can do much more than we would do on our own. Some day, when the Lord calls me back to Him, and I stand before Him with my meager deeds, I shall tell Him what He already knows that whatever I was able to do for Him was because of **YOU**. - Because of your caring, your sharing, your sufferings, your prayers. It will be all yours!

Thank you, dears, and God bless you!

Patricia Blanchet, M.I.C.

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SAN FRANCISCO, U.S.A.

EVANGELIZATION IN CHINATOWN

By Sr. Patricia Blanchet, M.I.C.

*Sr. Patricia Blanchet, M.I.C. joins students
at St. Mary's School in a Chinese festival celebration.*

Dear Friends and Sisters Everywhere,

I come to share with you today a long overdue account of the joys of our work at St. Mary's Chinese Catholic Centre in San Francisco where we are all working towards the first proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ.

When I left the Philippines in 1972, I took up the difficult job of being principal of the Chinese School, doing all my own secretarial work, acting as receptionist, etc. It was different from that for which I had been trained, during my 20 years of active duty in the Philippines. Now I was dealing with a school and parent population which was always more than 80% non-Christian. After six years on that job, my physical well-being made me take the decision to give up administrative responsibilities and give myself totally to teaching English as a second language to adults. As soon as possible, I wanted to begin adult inquiry classes for those interested in becoming Catholics. This dream started becoming a reality only two years ago. At that time, I was doing secretarial work for the Director who happened to be alone and to help out I did much work that was needed. However, I did manage to begin one inquiry class for adults, as well as many English classes.

During that first year, we saw no results coming from our inquiry classes.

Later, after much praying and deliberating, I decided it was time to do more for the parents and other adults who might be interested. This was made possible only because Sister Carmen Castonguay willingly gave up a highly satisfactory apostolate in Van-

couver to come and do all the office work. Thus, through her zeal and generosity, she has left me free to devote all my time to pre-Evangelization or Evangelization as the case may be. Since her arrival last October, I have seen the number of parents and other adults come in larger numbers each week.

(Turn to inside page.)

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