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March - April, 1984

MIC

MISSION NEWS



Bolivia

It is through kindness that you win persons to God.

Delia Tetreault
MIC Foundress

Dear Readers,

This issue of MIC MISSION NEWS brings out the theme: Celebrating Life. The fiestas of Cuba, the Matsuri of Japan, the festivals of China help us to understand that celebrations are part of the life in each culture. For the Japanese people, it is the various festivals that keep them close to Nature as they search for the true God. For the Chinese, people celebrate life after death as they pay homage to their ancestors whose spirit is kept alive in their families. For the Cubans, new life is propagated by mothers and grandmothers who manage to keep alive a Marian devotion which no atheistic regime can stifle. For the South Americans, it is another type of celebration going on as they manage to shed their chains while they discover new life in their land through their tears and through the tears of their children. They experience the joy of being alive and they manage to express this joy through music and dancing for they believe and hope in Him whom they have met in their sufferings.

Even after viewing "The Day After" on TV, even after reading George Orwell's "Nineteen Eighty-Four" with its terrifying predictions, we are still a people of Hope. And 1984 is bringing additional Hope to Canadians about to welcome Pope John Paul II, this celebrated messenger of peace and hope. While preparing for his visit, we are reminded to reflect upon the theme of his message to us: "Celebrating our Faith". Yes, while facing this atheistic world, it is still time to be a missionary wherever we are, to be a bringer of Faith and Hope to our surroundings so often bogged down by despair and fear. It is really a time for us to be "Celebrating Life", in Faith and Hope, that same life which Jesus brought us and gave us in abundance.

The illustrations and photos displayed by Sister Angie Yap help us to consolidate the theme well chosen and to understand more clearly its meaning in the lives of our brothers in other cultures.

Therese LeBlanc, M.I.C.

The Editor

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(Baures, Bolivia)
Marie-Paule Ross,
M.I.C.
and a Bolivian child.



Ching Ming

by Therese LeBlanc, M.I.C.

China without festivals is unimaginable. Hong Kong and Taiwan have both inherited seasonal celebrations which have become deeply ingrained in the actual way of life of 1984.

Chinese festivals fall on days fixed by the lunar rather than the Gregorian calendar.

So, one hundred and seven days after the winter solstice by the old Chinese lunar calendar, one can feel the first signs of spring. In the countryside, plowed fields are now ready for planting. As the earth revives, men do too; they begin planning to marry and raise a new generation. But in their planning they also turn their thoughts back to family members who have lived and died before them. The special day and period set aside for this is called **Ching Ming**, celebrated in early spring.

Ching Ming, (the sweeping of ancestral graves) symbolizes this concern and reverence for the dead. But to the Chinese, this celebration is not a time of grief... it is rather a time of awareness and of celebrating every aspect of life.

Early on the morning of **Ching Ming**, the whole family sets off for the cemetery carrying boxes and baskets of paper money, incense sticks, firecrackers and special foods as offerings to their ancestors. One member of the family may have gone ahead earlier to trim the grass on the ancestral graves and to clean up the surrounding area. On the engraved stone slabs where the photo of the departed members is inlaid, offerings of incense and food are made to the gods who protect the dead for the entire year. If the deceased is a youth or has been the victim of an accident, or has died prematurely for any reason, these members are not honored at this time. They will have their own special festival and will be remembered during the summer months at "The Hungry Ghost Festival".

In Hong Kong the M.I.C. Sisters live right next to an extended graveyard, well marked with lanes and numbers. Here people flock during the **Ching Ming** period. Burnt incense smoke and smell invade the surrounding area including our house and school. Buses carrying worshippers are jammed; families are never hindered by cold rain, strong winds or any type of inclement weather.

After paying homage to their ancestors, the entire family spreads out a picnic cloth on the ground, on or around the gravesite, to eat roasted pig and other tasty food for the occasion. No one is excluded from the feast, from the youngest baby to the eldest relative.

Now that people can travel in and out of China freely, family members flock to the Mainland in masses of hundreds of thousands to be able to go to the graveyards where the family members are buried. They travel by bus, by train, by boat, carrying with them loads of food to share with relatives there, as they go together to pay homage to their departed family members.

In order to facilitate this popular celebration, schools have extended holidays during this time which always coincides with Eastertide of the Western calendar. Students will accompany the families wherever they must go, to render their filial duties.

Although these customs are different from ours in Canada and in the Western world, this visiting and feasting on the gravesites are a deep tradition of the Chinese society. **Ching Ming** is regarded as one of the principal festivals of the year and Chinese people look forward to this festival when they will be able to pay reverence to their ancestors.

So sacred is this reverence for the departed ones, that a few years ago, one Chinese young man coming from San Francisco to Montreal, arrived at Pont Viau, purposely to visit the grave of his former teacher of Tak Sun School in Kowloon, Sr. St. Jean de l'Eucharistie, M.I.C. She had prepared him for Baptism and First Communion as a young lad many years previously. He felt an obligation to pay reverence to a beloved elderly missionary whom he had loved and who had loved him.





Our Lady Remembers...

Sr. Bernardeta, you are a Cuban M.I.C. Sister. What brought you to Canada?

I was invited to come to Canada to pursue studies in languages and to meet my M.I.C. Sisters here. I have been here for three months now and will return to Cuba, my homeland, for Christmas.

The Cuban people are said to be a happy people who like to have celebrations. Do you agree with this statement or do you consider that it is not a fact these days?

It is certainly true that we Cubans are a joyful people loving celebrations of all kinds. This reality has always been so, both historically and culturally. It would be impossible to lose this cultural feature since it is so deeply ingrained within the

Cuban heart. However, this aspect nowadays is not exteriorized as much as formerly.

Are the Cubans today permitted to celebrate religious festivals, such as the feast days of Our Lady?

All sorts of religious festivals may be celebrated within the interior of the church building and it so happens that Our Lady has many feast days on our calendar.

What is the principal feast of Our Lady in your country?

The principal feast in Cuba is without doubt that of "Nuestra Señora de la Caridad del Cobre", (Our Lady of Charity of Cobre) considered the patron of Cuba. This feast is commemorated on September 8 each year.

***How is the feast celebrated?
And how do you prepare for this
fiesta?***

On this very great feast, Our Lady is honoured in all the parishes but mainly in the Basilica of Cobre in the province of Santiago on the east coast of the island. In that shrine we can find the authentic statue of the apparition.

To prepare for this fiesta, a fervent novena of prayers is offered to God in honour of the Virgin, in all the churches.

The Mass of the day is the main celebration; this solemnity is enhanced by joyous music and hymns, by profusions of flowers decorating the church and the shrine of Our Lady. A procession inside the building only, closes the fiesta and the pious manifestation of love to the Virgin. No celebrations are allowed outside the building itself.

Many so-called atheists of Cuba attend these services. On that day they do not hesitate to proclaim their devotion to Nuestra Senora de la Caridad!

***Do the young girls of Cuba wear
any distinctive dress or garb to
identify themselves as consecrated
to Our Lady?***

No, the young Cuban girls have no such distinctive garb for identification. This sort of witness, formerly the custom of students of Catholic schools, has disappeared from the Cuban scene.

However, an association, called "The Virgin of Caridad" has been organized recently. Little by little it is spreading over the entire island. The membership includes men and women of sixteen years upwards. Practicing Catholics may join, even some non-believers are associates.



Sr. Bernardeta Collazo, M.I.C.

***Do the youth in general have any
special devotion to Our Lady?***

We cannot honestly say that the Cuban youth of today have a special devotion to Our Lady since they have never received any Christian formation at all.

However, these last years, it is becoming more and more evident that there is a growing uneasiness as there is an increasing awareness about religion and devotion to Our Lady.

This natural phenomena is happening because of the influence of grandmothers and mothers in the homes. These are quietly transmitting this devotion.

***Do you feel that Our Lady is
watching over Cuba as she did formerly?***

Oh yes, indeed! The Virgin of Caridad has never ceased watching over Cuba, her beloved land. This explains why this deep devotion is still alive in spite of an atheistic surrounding. Instead of decreasing, this cult is slowly being reinstated.

It is not Our Lady who has forgotten Cuba, it is rather her sons who have ceased to manifest their deep love for her.

***The Children
are crying
in Baures...***

***With Christmas barely
over our shoulder, this
poignant letter from Sr. Marie
Paule Ross, an M.I.C. working in
Baures, Bolivia, will certainly
give us something to reflect
upon. She wrote this note to
her parents after their
Golden Wedding
Jubilee.***

It is now already many months that I am living in Baures. I am living out a reality which exceeds my wildest dreams.

What does it mean to be a missionary in Baures? What is it really like? I am asking myself the same question that you are asking me. All I know is that I am living very far away from this modern world of ours. I live in solitude. Each morning I can hear the rooster announcing that day will dawn very soon. Each evening, I can hear the church bell tolling, reminding me that it is time to pray. Each day and each night, I can hear the children crying!

Time goes by... time goes by... very fast. I spend some of this time with young people, some more time with mothers-to-be, some time with married couples, and a very special time with Our Lord, my God. There is time for the people of the streets, time for sports... but at all times, I can hear the children crying.

It will soon be Christmas. Jesus of Nazareth will lie in the manger everywhere. He knows that these children are crying! He hears them too.

I have lived several Christmas days in Baures. In no way do they remind me of any Christmas that I knew. However, it is still the same Jesus of Nazareth whose birthday we are celebrating all over the world. At home, I could see few children but many gifts; here in Baures, I see many children, and no Christmas gifts. I can see in this humble church in the jungle, a crib... a deformed carton, some banana leaves for decoration and a tattered Child Jesus lying in the manger. It is unappealing, yet, the beautiful

The celebration once completed... no more glittering eyes. While the children are crying at home, the adults are partying in one or other small house of the village. Then it's pop music, dancing, the "boracheras" (drinking).

It's Christmas Eve.. Christmas Day... Christmas Night... and the children are forever crying. They have reasons to cry!



scene at the manger is that of small children... eyes glittering as they approach Him. They know Him,... that is why their eyes are glittering with light. They also know that it is their feast day. What gifts have they to offer and to receive? It is a kiss offered to the Child Jesus. They celebrate this feast with songs, these children sing more loudly than their elders. They know all the Christmas carols by heart! They know that it is Christmas! Their feast day... and His!

But it is not always Christmas, yet the children are always crying! This morning, I met this little child, alone, naked, dirty, perspiring... and crying under the bright sun of Baures. I spent a long time with this child. He, much better than I, knows the real meaning of not having any parents around. It's his grandmother bring-

ing him up. She has so many others at home, how can she tell if one of them is out there crying in the streets? I take his hand and offer him a grapefruit... a fruit grown in his own country, on his land. He smiles and is content; he forgets for a few moments that he has no parents. He is slowly learning also that his land, this earth, bears many kinds of fruit.

The adults of today, his parents, have also done some crying. They are the children of yesterday.

Last July 16 was the Golden Wedding Anniversary of my parents. While the entire family was there at Saint Luc-sur-Mer, I, their so-called "missionary" was right here in Baures. That day I heard, even more distinctly than ever, the sounds of children crying. Yes, the small people next door had just lost their mother. She died on her pallet of straw, totally deprived of everything... just as she had lived. She had made no will since she had no possessions... except her children, of course.



To become a missionary in Baures, one does not learn this lesson through sessions. It is in walking on their land, holding hands with them, eating their own fruit. It is meeting God present in the heart of your own solitude. It is consoling the crying child, drying the unending tears.

What does it mean to be a missionary in Baures while your own family is celebrating the Golden Jubilee of your parents?

It means being here to tell children, the adults of tomorrow, that their earth can bear fruit. And to tell the adults of today to notice that their land is bearing fruit and that their children are crying...

In Baures, it is Christmas each and every day...

Each day I have one child to console and his tears to dry...

Marie-Paule Ross, M.I.C.

(Translated from French)

Matsuri

by Michelle Paquette, M.I.C.

I have always been very impressed by the harmony that is manifested both by the strenuous work and in the pleasant festivities of the Japanese people. The many years that I worked with them in Japan has confirmed for me that even if the people are labelled "workaholics", they are at the same time, a festival-minded one. All year long, whether in the dense urban populations or in the rural villages, one hears about a **matsuri** (festival) of some kind. These celebrations have been going on for centuries already, and are filling the calendar with joyful celebrations and holidays.



祭 The term **matsuri** itself means worship; originally it did imply the offering of food, music and some dancing after solemn services. Some festivals are commemorative of significant historical events. Japan is really teeming with memories that it cherishes in its rich traditions.

Among the principal countrywide festivals that we celebrated with the people, let me bring out only a few of them here.

O Shogatsu

お正月

New Year's Day is really the festival of festivals, solemnly celebrated in a joyful mood. People flock to the shrines to pay homage to the gods they worship, they visit friends and relatives to exchange greetings. Their homes are brightly decorated with pine twigs, symbol of longevity, bamboo branches as symbol of uprightness, plum branches as symbol of courage and sweetness. Special tasty food is spread out on tables for all to eat while beautiful kimonos are worn for all to admire. Time is spent in playing games or in reading and writing greeting cards to friends.

節分

The Lunar New Year is also celebrated as **Setsubun** to mark the last day of winter. In a spirit of purification, roasted peanuts and beans are thrown at the door entrances and inside the rooms, to drive the devil away.

Hina Matsuri

雛祭

The festival of Hina Matsuri or Dolls' Festival is a time when families can go out to enjoy the trees blooming with flowers and to cast paper dolls into the rivers for luck. Branches of peach blossoms are displayed since they suggest desirable qualities for young ladies, such as grace, gentleness and serenity. This festival of Hina Matsuri is a time of sociability for the girls of the family.

Sakura Hana-mi

桜花見

This is the popular Cherry Blossom

Festival, the Spring Festival enjoyed by all, for at that time, the cherry blossoms are bursting forth in their glorious pink shades. Because the Buddhists tend to stress the impermanence of life such as symbolized by the cherry blossoms, the "sakura" (blossom) is glorified, even worshipped and enjoyed as no other flower in the world. During the short period when the trees are in bloom, cherry trees are the topic of the hour all over the land. People everywhere discuss the best places to go to contemplate the flowers. "Sakura viewing" parties are organized where drinks are served, where people may join in singing and dancing.



Kodomo no Hi

子供の日

This festival begins on the 5th of

May and can last for several weeks. Every home with one or more sons has a tall pole in the garden upon which are hoisted carps of assorted bright colored cloth. As these fish fill up with air and billow in the wind, they appear to swim in an up-stream current. They are examples of strength, courage and perseverance. Within the homes, a few warrior figures are displayed in the living room to remind the boys of the bravery of the "samurai" who built up the country.

O-Bon-Lantern Matsuri



This festival was introduced by Buddhist monks many centuries ago. This three-day celebration is observed to show respect and gratitude to the ancestors. In preparation, people clean their homes, and the graveyards; they buy decorations and offerings, and they prepare lanterns for the night. Everyone pays visits to the cemetery and burns incense. In the homes, the family altars are beautifully decorated with flowers and food offerings. A joyous and very important part of this festival is a folk dance that provides spontaneous outlet for Japanese music and rhythm. This dance is performed at night, to the beating of the drums in the light of a thousand lanterns. Fireworks of all kinds fill the sky with beautiful designs that the Japanese call "fire-flowers", for they do appear in the dark sky as a gorgeous garden.



There are many other festivals that could be described. All year long, both national and local events provide opportunities to celebrate festivals. This earnest and hard working nation knows how to relax in the mood of their **matsuri** as each one nourishes their inner lives with symbols, memories and traditions. So, living close to these people, listening to their aspirations has taught me to vibrate to the beauty of Nature as each season rolls in and out, praising the Creator in its own unobtrusive way.

MISSION

BRIEFS



Canada: Vancouver

Sr. Adeline Mead is continuing her missionary animation work in British Columbia. This often brings her to remote places in the Diocese of Vancouver, where she is invited by the schools to give talks about her work in the missions. On one of her promotion tours, she went to Assumption School in Powell River to meet her young friends. The C.C.D. group (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine) of 140 pupils greeted her with a welcome song. One whole day was reserved for the Elementary school children eager to hear about the work done by missionaries all over the world. They had prepared this meeting by a display of posters of all sorts.

During the afternoon, a solemn enrolment of 11 pupils into the Holy Childhood Association took place in church with the parish priest officiating. The entire school was present at this ceremony. Afterwards, since her young audience showed so much enthusiasm about the missions, Sr. Adeline had to give a further chat about Africa where she had served as a missionary.

Peru: Lima

"Twenty years of Faith Education in Thanksgiving with Mary" were the

words that best summarized the teaching and the professional work that the M.I.C.s have been carrying on in Lima for the past twenty years.

An "ad hoc" Festival Committee of lay persons organized for the occasion saw to the smooth functioning of the cultural and sports activities. Many young mothers, alumnae, returned to give positive testimony to the lessons they had learnt at Mary of Providence College under the guidance of the M.I.C.s. They realized that these teachers had always tried to inculcate the real values of life.

The Sisters also welcomed the parents of the present students and invited them to join in the sharing of ideas and problems about the upbringing of children. After the Mass, celebrated by Bishop Gustave Prévost, P.M.E., they assembled with him to further discuss this problem faced by all parents of today. He graciously accepted to answer some of the most pressing questions that were raised.

Africa: Malawi, Mzimba

When our Superior General, Sr. Monique Préfontaine and one of her Assistants, Sr. Gisèle Leduc, visited

Africa, some of the M.I.C.s from Madagascar came to attend important meetings with them. These Sisters from The Great Island (Madagascar) had the privilege of witnessing a Feast of the Harvest in Mzimba. They saw how the people of Malawi rejoice in this festival by giving thanks to the Lord for His spiritual as well as His material gifts of Nature. But this feast had additional meaning on this occasion. It was a formal welcome of the Christian community to all the newly baptized persons of the year, as well as to the catechumens. They were presented a film explaining the various rites of initiation into the Christian community. The full religious significance of the ceremony was explained in detail to the neophytes as well as to the catechumens preparing for Baptism.

The Madagascar M.I.C.s shared some of the religious experiences of their country with their African brothers. This was carried on, in spite of the language barrier, with a warm current of communication going through the group. These African persons were all ears to the stories of Sr. Rosalie Raivomanana, M.I.C. No doubt in a few years time, when missionaries will ask some of these newly baptized persons what year they were received into the Church, they will answer: "It was the year when the Wamayi of The Great Island were here." This event has so marked their lives, that they will remember the year 1983 just like that.

Bolivia: La Paz

The M.I.C. fraternity of La Paz, feeling the need to continue their formation in social awareness, agreed to hold a rigorous fast in solidarity with their Bolivian brothers. These do not fast by choice but by force of circumstance in their lives.

As the Bolivians have the same temptation that the Israelites had, that is, to murmur, to search for solutions in the past, to become discouraged, they need enlightenment and guidance to go through their present-day crisis. For the Israelites, the solution to their problem would not have been solved by returning to the Pharaoh of Egypt; for the Bolivians also the solution does not come from the desire to see the very people who caused their crisis return to power. These Bolivians need help to reflect together to find collective solutions for their present state of affairs.

This fast, says one of the Sisters, did not merely contribute to sharpen our social awareness on the meaning of an empty stomach, but also helped us to understand the urgency for peace and justice throughout the land. Another Sister mentions that it made her realize that she, together with all the world, need to be awakened to a keener sense of moderation in the use of this world's goods. A third one claims that the Gospel message of sharing with the less fortunate ones became much clearer to her. Moderation was her answer as well.

***You will show me the path of life,
the fullness of joy in your presence.***

Psalm 15

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION MISSIONARY ASSOCIATION (ICMA)

In 1902, Délia Tétreault founded the first Canadian Missionary Congregation.: **The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.** Since 1923, at the launching of a missionary publication "The Precursor," she invited her compatriots to participate more directly in the Mission by becoming ASSOCIATES and BENEFACTORS of the Congregation.

Today, we offer you in her name a means of personally collaborating in the missionary service of the Church: **Immaculate Conception**

Missionary Association (ICMA). The bimonthly magazine, MIC MISSION NEWS, the link between the MIC's and their Associates, is sent to all the members.

Your affiliation gives you share in the prayers and apostolic works of all the MIC's. Every week, two masses - applicable to the deceased - are offered in one of the MIC houses throughout the world. Moreover, a stream of Marian prayers flows in the Congregation for the intentions of the Associates and Benefactors.

Schedule of Masses for our Associates

March 1984

Kaseye (Malawi)
Joliette (Canada) 2
Rosal (Philippines)
Tokyo (Japan)
Colon (Cuba)
Trou-du-Nord (Haiti)
Longueuil (Canada)

April 1984

Cap-Haitien (Haiti)
Pont-Viau (Canada) 8
San Juan ICA (Philippines)
Ambohibary (Madagascar)
Cikungu (Zambia)
Lima, Prov. House (Peru)
Louis Colin (Montreal)

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