

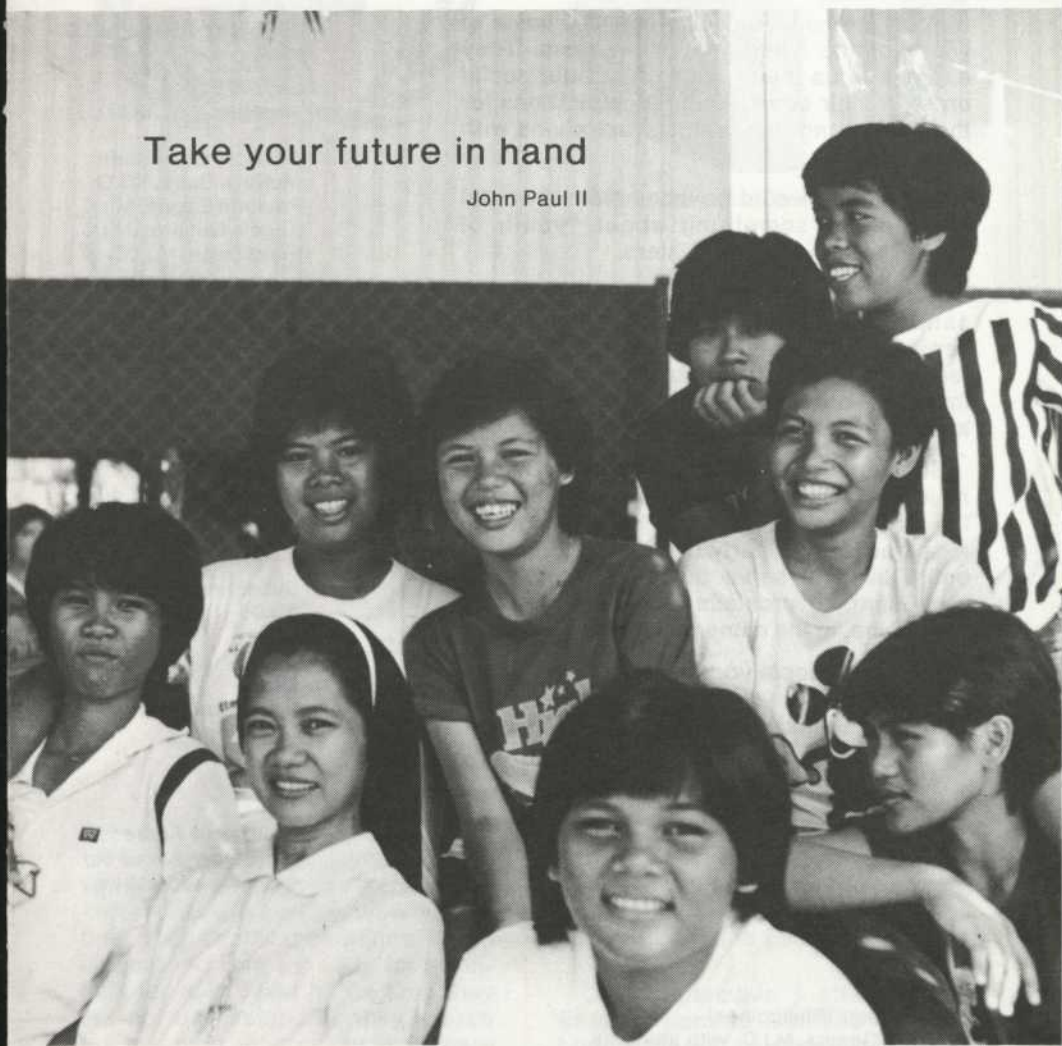
Series 12, No. 3
May-June 1985

MIC

MISSION NEWS

Take your future in hand

John Paul II



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

These days, every time you pick up a publication, you are bound to see articles on youth. M.I.C. MISSION NEWS is following the trend of the day, for we Sisters are working with young people all over four continents.

In our present issue, we hear the voice of youth of the Third World countries. They express to us their hopes of a better social order in their countries, their aspirations for the future, and their actual frustrations with life.

Our edition would be incomplete if we did not include something about "youth of yesterday", our senior Sisters.

Our young African friend in her article, calls youth, "Sun of the Morning", and seniors, "Sun of the Afternoon". Then we feel it is appropriate that both groups meet in this issue to express how each one tends towards the Kingdom of God.

Subsequently, two of our senior Sisters have agreed to share with us some of their life experiences. Both of them left for the missions in their early twenties, giving their entire lives to serve the poor where they were sent, to proclaim the Good News in your name, in the name of their local Church.

All these people young and old, remind us that they would want us to be in solidarity with them in life.

The Editor

Cover photo: (Philippines)
Milagros Gomez, M.I.C. with students
of IHMA, Mati

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P.O. Box 157,
Laval-des-Rapides
Laval, P.Q., Canada
H7N 4Z4
Tel.: (514) 663-3698

Editor
Therese LeBlanc, M.I.C.

Layout Editor:
Angelina Yap, M.I.C.

Advisory Committee:
Murielle Dubé, M.I.C.
Paulette Gagné, M.I.C.
Angèle Lemaire, M.I.C.
Edita Telan, M.I.C.

Secretariat and
Circulation
Team of MIC Sisters

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Clare Chan and Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

Youth in Contrasting Worlds

Sr. Cecilia Hong, a Chinese M.I.C. from Hong Kong is actively engaged in youth apostolate in Ottawa where many young Chinese are studying.

The idea of dedicating 1985 to youth has affected me very much, as it aroused in me the awareness of their needs and expectations. Youth is simply crying for help, for attention, for love. Most of the time they are not understood as they search for meaning in life. Let me share

with you some of my personal experiences of the struggles I witnessed in our Overseas Chinese youth here in the Eastern Canada.

Last September, I attended the Eastern Canada Catholic Chinese Living Camp in Ottawa. At this

camp-retreat, I came in personal contact with some 90 young Catholic Chinese youth now scattered over the different Eastern Provinces.

I was deeply touched when they confided to me how they were searching for God in their lives. Despite their difficulties of adaptation in a completely different culture, country, environment and people, they managed to keep hoping. They admitted that being away from family and friends often

these weekly gatherings, we share an agape meal first to create a bond of brotherhood. Then we proceed to study the Bible, or talk about the Sacraments, or go deeper in evangelization seminars or prayer sharings.

I also carry on a catechumen class for 6 students who have expressed the wish to further their studies of the faith in view of Baptism later on. These meet on a weekly basis. Each one has a very special story to relate showing how



Chinese Youth sharing aspirations in Ottawa

brought moments of loneliness. Besides that were difficulties in studies to be overcome.

But they were not defeated; they felt it was a new part of their journey of faith in life. It was often in darker moments that they discovered the presence of God in their lives. And this experience led to an intense thirst for prayer, for a more solid faith, for a deeper knowledge of the Bible.

The Church of Hong Kong has really sown the "seed of faith" in these youth. They learned how to turn from TEARS to TRIUMPH.

Each week - I meet another group at our M.I.C. Chinese Centre. At

the Lord revealed Himself to them in their lives. They have come to realize that Faith is an experience of God and not mere knowledge of Him. And that itself is a real gift already!

Then the Lord gave me a new opening. I was invited by the Chaplain of Ottawa University to join the University Campus Ministry team involved in pastoral work among the students. I was asked to give special attention to the Overseas Chinese students as nothing had been done for them by the Campus Ministry. These apostolic tasks corresponded fully to my inner yearnings of helping youth.

In this part-time campus ministry, I have already encountered some students to whom I gave a listening ear. Many of them are finding that life is empty, void of meaning. They are frightened by the future, they are scared of loneliness and rejection.

I consider myself fortunate to be working with these Chinese youth of today. I have always been fond of young people. I have kept in contact with my past students of Good Hope

School, (Kowloon, Hong Kong). These are scattered in various parts of Canada and over the world.

I see my task as a companion on their journey of life, a friend who can accept them either in **tears** or in **triumph**.

They need our support and not our teaching. They need our love and not our judgement. They need our prayers and presence to help them, to keep the fire of faith burning in their hearts."

Zambia

Youth in the Vanguard



Sr. Jeannine Forcier, M.I.C., reports from Zambia, Central Africa, on the enthusiasm of her young African friends after their Youth Rally in Chipata.

During the past 2 years, the Diocese of Chipata, Zambia, under the dynamic leadership of Bishop J.M. Mazombwe, have held important rallies for youth in search of their identity and their role in Zambian society. These large gatherings were held in summer and had a big impact on the lives of young people.

The main themes were LOVE, as "The Umbrella and Power of Christ's Message to Man". The other topic was discovering the TRUE ME as a potential Christian leader. Besides attending lectures and participating in discussions, the young Africans also contributed to active work, making bricks for their new YOUTH CENTRE in the Diocese.

Their topics of discussion were mostly on methods of developing the illiterate people in the villages, finding means to improve agricultural projects, organizing efficient water systems for irrigation and water supply.

Regina Mvula, a young Zambian girl, describes her feelings after the rally:

"I now realize that all of us here are in a developing country. We

would all like to take part in the spiritual and physical development of our country and its people.

In our schools here, we have various clubs to help us to grow. One such association, the Literary Club sends its members to teach the village people how to read and write. Another such group, "The Little Way Association" has a spiritual nature and aims to come to the aid of the underprivileged. These members go out to give practical help. It may be helping a widow build or repair a hut, it could be digging a well, fetching fire wood for the elderly."

Regina adds a sad note to her enthusiastic report. She feels that many of them cannot achieve their ideal in life. As example, she states her case when she went to ask admission at a Teacher's Training Course. She was refused on the grounds that later on she might go working for others in the big cities and leave her people.

Many like Regina cannot manage to pursue higher studies because they have no means to bribe.

Regina ends her article by calling youth, "The Sun of the Morning" as contrasted to adults known there as "The Sun of the Afternoon".

Another young lady, Margaret Phiri, an active participant of the youth rallies these last two years writes: "As a youth I have a lot of aspirations and desires. I wish to become a Sister so as to pray and do something about peace and justice in the world. I also wish to go out and spread the Good News to all the people.

Whenever I listen to radio newscasts, I feel sad, hearing about all the injustices, wars, racialism, nationalism and tribalism. My friends and I discuss these prob-



Sr. Jeannine Forcier with Zambian friends

lems together seeking solutions. Sometimes, I have the opportunity to write my opinions in youth magazines on these topics."

She adds that many young Africans feel desperate because they are not able to continue their secondary school education due to a shortage of places. She claims that many young people become juvenile delinquents or drug addicts. Unemployed, they don't know where to turn for help. Many have given way to modern types of living. They neglect their cultural customs."

She ends her writeup with the wish that IYY will bring hope to Zambian youth. They are totally dependent now on the adults training them in their leadership courses.

Surprise Dialogue

In 1931, Miss Aiko Okazaki lived in our Koriyama Convent as aspirant to religious life. As we were about the same age, we quickly became good friends. Unfortunately, due to ill health, Miss Okazaki could not be admitted to religious life and had to return home.

At about the same time, I was assigned to our mission in China and then to the Philippines. Later, named back to Japan, I tried after an absence of 21 years, to find my dear old friend.

I learned that Aiko had married and had died very young. After years of searching I found her husband. He seemed happy to hear that someone remembered his first wife who had borne him two children. The son had been baptized at birth.

Later, I was able to speak to Tadaomi, Aiko's son, by telephone. He was touched and surprised to hear about his mother. He had never seen her picture. He was living in Tokyo, so we arranged a meeting at our Convent on the evening before I returned to Canada in May, 1984. I had in hand a letter written by his mother, as well as two photos taken more than 50 years before. He contemplated the face of his mother for a long time, and, as I had been told, he had similar features.



As we talked together, I expressed my surprise that he had not pursued his studies. Was not his mother a doctor? and her family well-off? That was true, and he could remember how his grandfather had been good to him, but after he passed away, and according to Japanese custom, the family heritage went to his uncle who gave nothing for the education of his sister's children. Tadaomi then followed his father who remarried and he lived with them. After completing his High School, he found work in Tokyo where he now resides. He has never married. His only sister is married but he has not maintained contact with her. I

invited him to reconciliation. He was willing to listen as he wishes for peace. I gave him the two photos, one for him and one for his sister.

I am returning to Japan in March. I intend to follow up the dialogue with Tadaomi and his sister. I hope that one day he will accept the responsibility of his

Baptism, his mother's legacy.

(As Sr Janet was about to go, she left a parting message to friends of the Missions. S.O.S. Attention People of 78! On March 25, I am leaving for Japan at the age of 78. Some 56 years ago, I left for Japan at 22. I also worked in China, the Philippines. I have been in Japan a total of 34 years.

My. S.O.S. is a plea for your prayers. Help me in my apostolic work that way. Thank you.)



Adding rhythm to the Mass in Nairobi

Ever since their arrival in mission lands, the M.I.C.s' have been promoting life values in young people. In China, it was teaching basic skills of reading and writing, sewing and cooking, always striving to develop the potentialities of young girls given to their care. Today's missionaries, no matter where they are, continue in the same tradition.

YOUTH



In Asia the large number of students attending our schools testify to the fact. In Africa and Madagascar, youth leaders are being trained, as are those of South America, Cuba and Haiti.

But youth in Third World Countries are becoming more and more frustrated as they witness what is going on in the world around them. One young man of Haiti and two young Zambian ladies voice these frustrations and hopes to us. Some Overseas Chinese students admit their difficulties in coping with life in a new culture so alien to their own.

Missioners all over the world greet International Youth Year with enthusiasm, rejoicing that these persons are recognized for their future potential. They accompany youth in all mission countries, youth searching for meaningful work, lasting family relationships, justice and peace, and enduring faith in God.



Filipino workers in Taipei

on the Move...

The Third World is young. The needs of youth in Africa, Haiti, Asia and other countries are really stragging. Youth is awakening to its potentialities, to its power, as International Youth Year focuses on the themes of development, participation and peace. United Nations has claimed that 857 million of the world's citizens are in the age bracket of 15 to 24.

Time for a Choice



Sr. Marie Paule Sansfacon has seen many of her dreams come true. The latest one was one she had cherished for a long time: to help Haitian youth find their way in life, in their own country.

So, a group of Haitian priests have organized a postoral committee for youth in Cap Haitien.

The aim of this group is to bring about unity among other groups throughout the country, to help young people discover the face of Christ and then take up their responsibilities in their own society. Their motto is: LET YOUTH REACH OUT TO YOUTH!

What means could be taken to get youth working towards that aim? The answer seemed clear. First to organize large assemblies several times a year to give young people a chance to reflect and pray and chosen liturgy themes, on their own life situations.

Haitian youth need these gatherings for solidarity, for building up hope in their somewhat hopeless situation in life. This is the reflection of one young man describing the actual situation:

"As our Haitian society is going through a period of crisis, there is conflict between the wealthy and privileged classes and the poor, so often the victims of crying injustices and abuses of all kinds. In one word, the social structure of Haiti is crumbling. While the rich ones are basking in their luxury, the poor are wallowing in direst poverty and abjection. Unemployment is rampant. There are simply no jobs available to youth often left on their own without adequate formation or leadership.

But thanks to the religious congregations running schools in our country, some of us Haitians have managed to get a good education. No one here is satisfied with the public school system.

Young people here have but one dream: to leave Haiti for better pastures elsewhere. They know that they have very little chance to be admitted to the one university of the country. You need money for that, only the son of Mr. X can enter.

Our country has been bled dry. A tragic brain drain has occurred. Something must be done to save the situation. Youth must begin believing once more in this society and all it could offer them. Facing this situation, the Church of Haiti is now

helping us to search for new orientations, new paths of hope that will lead to a new society."

There is a certain note of despair in his article. He has seen, he has judged; now he needs help to act. And so the Church is giving him this opportunity during IYY.

That is why the Bishops in a concerted effort have thought of setting afoot a National Youth Committee to study the situation and alleviate it. The structures are falling into place and representatives from the various dioceses have been convoked for initial meetings. The main themes of discussion will be prepared.

IYY will go through three main phases: MOTIVATION, REFLECTION and PARTICIPATION.

In the third step on involvement, a Gospel night is planned where all will be invited to reflect on "YES, TO LIFE" theme.

Sr. Marie Paule feels optimistic about the new awareness that youth has been presented. Young people want to be heard. They want to take positive action. Sister also wants from them a conversion of the heart to the light of the Gospel as they search to follow Christ in 1985.

Life Marches On...

1900 - 1985



Irene after graduation — 1918

It was 40 years ago, February 10, 1945, that Sr. Irene Pinsonneault was released from prison at Mandaluyong, Philippines.

It all happened during World War II. The Canadian Sisters in Manila were in charge of a school. Ever since the Japanese had invaded Manila in December, 1941, the Sisters were under surveillance by the Japanese.

First, one Sister was interned and then it was Sr. Irene, then known as Sr. Marie-des-Lis, who was escorted one day to Fort Santiago, in downtown Manila. As she and another Sister entered the dark prison corridors of the old Spanish Fort, they whispered a prayer of confidence to the Lord, knowing that their fate was entirely in His hands.

The days that followed were days of suffering since they had to undergo interrogation after interrogation. No answers could satisfy their captors.

At night, Sr. Irene was huddled into a damp cell harboring already many other women prisoners of different nationalities. All of them became sisters as they shared the same privations, the same anx-



Irene with her parents — 1920

ieties. The sentinels did not allow them much sleep as they paced the corridors in their heavy military boots all night.



Sr. Irene leaving for Rome — 1926

The days were long, the nights were longer. The hungry stomachs rumbled for food. The sole occupation of the detainees was prayer, and silent prayer at that. One prisoner would quote a Bible text and all would meditate for hours on the Word of God. After liberation, Sr Irene wrote to a friend:

"It is in such time of suffering that people return to their Creator. The good Lord is the centre of hope and joy in the hearts of man. In Fort Santiago, the moral strength of the victims was in their prayers. Those who didn't pray fell into despair. Non-believers envied the faith of those who prayed and asked for instruction. One day, I had the rare privilege to teach the Our Father to one such lady who recited it with her whole heart afterwards."

Sister was transferred to Bilibid Prison, after being sentenced to two years. It meant sitting down all day long, on the floor, back to back with other prisoners, facing a stone wall. It meant a silence that was only broken by personal prayer.

*Sr. Irene
celebrating her
Diamond Jubilee
in Pont-Viau
1985*



In the third prison, at Mandaluyong, life became somewhat less harsh. Their immediate guards were Filipinos. Food was a little better, but the greatest privilege was that prisoners could attend daily Mass.

When the Americans arrived to liberate them on February 10, 1945, Irene and the other prisoners thought they were dreaming. In spite of the danger, of the excitement, they all managed to attend a Mass of thanksgiving that morning!

Sr. Irene had become so weak, that she needed help to walk. Her praise for the brave American GI's is boundless: "It seemed that these good boys had nothing else to do but to care for us in the first few days."

Sr. Irene recovered, but has always suffered of weakened eyesight since then. She continued her apostolic work in the Philippines and returned to Canada in 1982, at the age of 83. Now at 85, she had the joy to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee of religious life on February 10 of this year, 40 years after her liberation.

She is still the prayerful woman she was. She is often among the team of Sisters that go around the parishes for promotion work for the missions.

(Lately, she received a letter from an old Japanese friend, a lady she had met in Manila and with whom she has resumed her friendship.)

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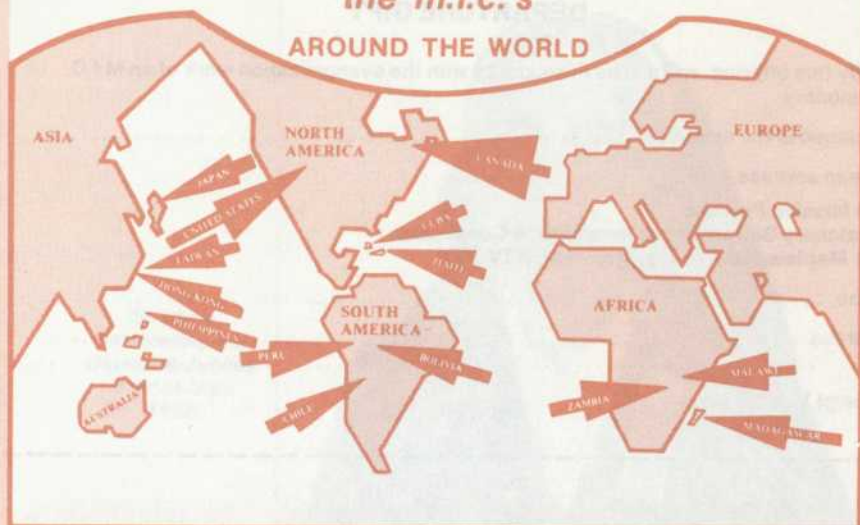
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The Generalate
121 Maplewood Avenue
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
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Chinese Center
30 Goulburn
Ottawa, Ont., Canada
K1N 8C8

MIC Sisters
56 Indian Road Crescent
Toronto, Ont., Canada
M6P 2G1

2950 Prince Edward St.
Vancouver, B.C., Canada
V5T 3N3

1417-38th Avenue
San Francisco, CA
U.S.A. 94122

Provincial House
P.O. Box 47
Mzimba, Malaŵi
Central Africa

Provincial House
13-16 Fukazawa 8 Chome
Setagaya-ku, Tokyo 158
Japan

Provincial House
Mount Good Hope School
Clear Water Bay Road
Kowloon, Hong Kong

MIC Sisters
30, Lane 148, Section 2
Fu Hsing South Road
Taipei 106, Taiwan

Provincial House
P.O. Box 466
Greenhills, Metro Manila
Philippines, 3113