

Series 13, No. 1
January-February, 1986

MIC

MISSION NEWS

Life
is
sharing
joy
with
others



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

As we proceed into 1986, the International Year for Peace, we can well recall the words of Pope John Paul II for the 19th World Peace Day of January 1, 1986: "Peace is that value that knows no boundaries."

For each and every one of us, this year must be one when we will become more and more involved in defending and promoting human rights.

For nations and governments, peace means dialogue with minority groups and respecting their rights as human persons and groups. It means an end to racism and apartheid.

For families and groups, peace means affirming the rights of others, respecting differences, and cooperation instead of competition.

For some of us missionaries it means seeking to be peace agents in our various ministries. In Africa, our Sisters explain how they can bring peace to mind and body, as they care for the sick, listen to those suffering. In Toronto, one Sister brings her own peace to the terminally ill and the dying. In Hong Kong, another Sister finds hope and peace in the uncertain future. The Filipina M.I.C.'s are often the voice for the voiceless in the social struggle going on in their own country. In Japan, a group of selected Asian youth come to terms with "peace" as they realize that all men are brothers, that our world is a global village.

May you bring the peace of Christ to all.

The Editor.

Cover photo: Sr. Blanche Cloutier, M.I.C. at the clinic.

MIC MISSION NEWS a bimonthly published by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.

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Printed by "Interlitho
Inc."

Second class mail
Registration No. 0358
Return postage guaranteed
ISSN 0315-9655

Subscription rates:
\$3.00 (1 yr) \$5.00
(2 yrs)
\$10.00 (4 yrs) \$50.00
(life)
U.S.A. and other
countries
\$4.00 (1 yr)

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Our World, a Global Village

Sr. Louise Sauvé, M.I.C.

By the Cross, Christ has overcome hatred. We are all brothers. We are part of God's family.



Sr. Louise Sauvé with the group.

In 1982, when Sr Andrée Ménard, M.I.C., returned from the World Council of Youth held in Canada, she found herself listening to groups of students eager to organize a similar meeting for their fellow students in their respective countries.

Soon the approval of Mgr. Hamao, president of the Commission for Youth in the Conference of Bishops

of Japan, was obtained, as well as the support of the Apostolic Nuncio, Mgr. W.A. Carew (formerly of Newfoundland.)

This group decided to include youth from 4 industrialized countries of Asia who shared common Asian traits and who could read the same written Chinese characters. So Taiwan, Hong Kong, Korea and Japan were included.

By common accord, they chose English as the medium for communication with simultaneous translations for each district.

The place of the meeting would be Horoshima. It would be held on the 40th anniversary of the atom bomb during International Youth Year. The theme would be **peace**.

Very soon, another M.I.C. became involved in the project. Sr. Louise Sauvé had to see to the immediate preparations and the actualization of the sessions.

This students were aware that youth of the invited countries were still carrying the wounds inflicted on their society by war. In Hong Kong there was the uncertainty about the future after 1997. In Korea, they met a divided country. In Taiwan, youth

were immersed in a nation investing energy in military service and eager to maintain its independence at all cost.

These realities made everyone aware that World War II was still fresh in the minds and hearts of the nations once invaded by Japan.

After months of planning, the meeting actually opened on a hot summer day registering 39°C! The expectations of the participants were high and numerous. They were expressed openly. All of them wanted to become peace agents.

Therefore, in order to come to a greater awareness of the meaning of peace, games and strategies were organized to discover the personal values of each one. This led to further clarification of the social values of their respective milieus. The result was: Money! Power! Honor! Competition!

Japanese youth.





Some of the delegates.

From words, the group went into action. Through role playing, dramatic skits, they noticed how often they lacked respect for the other. But becoming aware of it, admitting their weaknesses gave a feeling of well-being to all and Sr Sauvé claims that all slept more soundly that night, careful not to disturb the neighbor!

Then, they were challenged by the Word of God... that we are all members of the same body. For this, they reflected and prayed on 1 Cor. 12:12-17, where Paul reminds readers that every part of the body is important to the other and each one depends on the other.

The 3 days following were action days. All were exposed to the realities of nuclear warfare, the atom bomb that had destroyed Hiroshima at 8.06 a.m. on August 6, 1945. (It was stated in *Newsweek* July 25, 1985, p. 20, that nations now have a total of 50,000 nuclear bombs!)

Several well known speakers were invited to address the group. Among them was Mrs. Yamaguchi who lost her entire family that morning then she was 12 years old. She explained how she had passed through the stages of anguish to resentment, then on to hatred and finally to forgiveness and love. Mrs. Yamaguchi is now a Christian, entirely dedicated to promote world peace.

Sister Sasaki also described how she suffered from severe burns and their effects. She had to wait for more than a month before treatment, so long was the queue ahead of her. Sr. Sasaki admitted that the event had changed the course of her life.

Then a moment of deep tension was felt in the group as a Taiwan student dared raise the question: "Do you know why the atom bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, on Japan, and not elsewhere in Asia?"

The impact of the question was felt throughout the assembly. The silence was long and profound. The student added: "The news of the bomb was euphoria for the other countries of Asia, invaded by Japan.

Many called it victory day!" It had been proved, he said that more Chinese had died during the Sino-Japanese War than in Horoshima!

The Japanese students were stunned! They realize that their school text books had altered facts omitting entire periods of history and misleading them in the interpretation of events.

No one spoke for a long time. No one could speak. They were moments of truth in life. Sr. Sasaki broke the spell. She stood up and admitted in all humility that the bomb had been a moment of grace for the Japanese people thirsting for further conquests! Heads remained bowed for a long time.

In the same place where Pope John Paul II had prayed for peace, the students also bowed and prayed, They asked the Lord to fill the hearts of all men with peace, justice and fraternity. They willingly pledged themselves to become peace agents at home. For them as for all who visit Hiroshima, the very thought of nuclear was is abhorrent.

Their exposure program ended there at the foot of the Hiroshima Tower, a symbol for all men, a true road to peace with God and with fellowmen. The road of truth, not deception, of justice not violence, of love and not of hatred!

The Eucharistic celebration invited all to forgiveness and reconciliation. After Mass, the students joined a huge rally, a winding procession through the streets of Hiroshima, alongside Buddhist, Protestant and Catholic brothers praying for peace.

**By the Cross, Christ has overcome hatred.
God's family.**



Mgr. Hamao gave a remarkable message to all of them before they dispersed. "You mentioned that all of us must love his country... true! Yet, today, one is called to a global vision of the world. It is a global vision we all need, not merely an international one which presupposes that one nation is distinct from another, can compete with the other.

This global vision will enable us to consider the human race as one... one large family of man. In Paul's letter to the Ephesians, 2:14, we read that Christ is our peace. That He has broken down all barriers between Jew and Gentile. By the Cross, he has overcome hatred. We are all brothers. We are a part of God's family!

This is the vision which you young people of the twenty-first century must carry with you and proclaim to all men!"

d. **We are all brothers. We are part of**



Canada

What is Heaven like?

Nancy Vy.-So, M.I.C.

"Is there a God? Is there really a heaven?" Her eyes searched desperately into mine as she finally turned her head to acknowledge my presence at her bedside. For the past week, Victoria had withdrawn angrily into her own world after having been given the final statement from the doctors: "Sorry, there's nothing more we can do for you!"

She wanted so much to live. She hoped and prayed desperately for a miracle... and yet it seemed that God had abandoned her. Turned deaf to her cries and pleas. She was only 38 years old. She had 3 beautiful children, a loving husband. Life was coming along so well until this cancer hit her three years ago.

"What is it like after death?" she asked me, eyes pleading for assurance and affirmation. I held her hands and we were silent for a while. A silence that communicated what words cannot utter.

I listened to her fears, to her frustrated dreams, her yearnings,

her heartfelt desires. I listened to her anger, her screams. "Why would a God of love do such a thing? Why would He give me 3 beautiful children only to take them away from me?" "Why me?"

I faced my own helplessness as she threw all those "whys". Who can explain the mystery of suffering? Who knows the mind of the Lord? Jesus Himself did not explain suffering but entered into it.

I faced my own helplessness as I searched for words to bring her comfort in face of this reality of death that was and seemed so cruel.

Yes, words at this moment seemed so unnecessary. I allowed the silence to convey His presence.

The presence of the One who holds the world in His hands. I allowed the silence to say: "I am with you, helpless though I feel." Deep within me, I know all is not in vain... death is not an end.. our God reigns. He can turn death into life.

I spent a lot of time with Victoria during the last 6 months of her life. We shared a bond and an understanding. I cried with her. I laughed with her. I searched and questioned with her. I shared my own convictions and beliefs. I listened to her awakenings and realizations. I prayed with her, and together we felt a warm Presence carrying us beyond our tears and hopes.

I have seen her on happy days and on days when she felt like throwing everything and everyone out of her room... including me!

Each week, Sr. Nancy brings her own peace to the patients of a Toronto hospital.



I journeyed with her. Most of the time we were quietly present to each other. What was most meaningful to her was when we prayed and held hands together with her children and husband. When we all partook of the Bread of Life which I brought to her each time I came.

After 6 months, her body wasted. She was flesh and bones. She then surrendered and gave her final yes and went home peacefully to meet her Lord and God.

Now, as I walk along the hospital corridor, past the room where she had been hospitalized, I often throw her the question: "Victoria, what is heaven like? Is it the way we had visualized it together?"

My ministry with those who are ill, with those who are dying have taught me how to live. Life is a precious gift which I often take for granted. Each day I wake up is a thanksgiving to be offered to the God who alone gives life. Each day is to be lived fully. I often myself upset by so many petty things... in the end, what is the difference? Only one thing matters.. that I have loved. For to love is, to live fully.

I have learned to let go of many things that clutter my life. I try to live for essential values only. But this letting go is an on-going process and struggle. Yes, my patients have taught me to live the present. One day at a time, they keep telling me.

As I go from room in the hospital, a song rings in my heart **"When the sunset of our lives comes, it is not how much we have accomplished or acquired that really matters, but the clarity and care with which we have loved one another."**

Yes, life is a relationship with Him who first related to us!

Zambia

What You Give, You Get...

A Report

*by Laurette Gauvin, M.I.C.
Blanche Cloutier, M.I.C.*



You have probably never heard of Kanyanga. Not many people have. Nevertheless, the M.I.C. Sisters have been living in this mission post of eastern Zambia for many years. The district counts 60,000 inhabitants, with a Catholic population of 960.

The Sisters live together in a native brick house and serve the people in medical and pastoral services. Sr. Edith Faucher and Sr. Laurette Gauvin are practically in charge of the parish since the priest comes only once a week for the Eucharist and once a month for the Sunday celebration.



Kanyanga is about 35 kilometers from the next mission. It is about an hour's drive during the dry season and practically closed during the rainy season when the roads are washed away. Then there is practically no way out.

In the mission parish, the Sisters find themselves busy meeting people who come for consultations on family or marital problems. Others come to make applications to join the catechumenate. Some even come to pay their parish dues! The Sisters are secretaries, accountants, counsellors, social workers, all in one!

However, following the catechumens is the priority work of the Sisters. In the 16 outposts attached to the main mission, volunteer catechists prepare the people for Baptism. These volunteers need guidance and encouragement. And future Christians have to be given personal help as well.

Each week-end, on Sundays, Srs. Laurette and Edith take off in their small truck to go to one of the missions to lead in the community prayers, since the congregation gathers in the chapel to pray together at a given hour.

They are expected to give homilies in Citumbuka when no one among the leaders can do so.

After the Bible service, they must attend parish council meetings organized and managed by the lay people of the parish.

At certain times of the year, they offer sessions and intensive courses to the teen-agers or to those preparing for First Communion. When they find time, they also direct renewal sessions for others.

Naturally, these Sisters working in out-lying mission posts receive no salary. The mission could never afford it. It is a gratuitous service and the Sisters are supported by their own M.I.C.'s through donations.

The two Sisters working full time at the clinic find themselves with even heavier schedules day after day. Sr. Louise Lefebvre and Sr. Jacqueline Vachet are helped by two qualified Zambian nurses, and twelve auxiliary attendants, trained at the clinic.

Each month more than 60 babies are delivered by the nursing staff. The ante-natal clinic group meet with 125 patients each week. Each day, the nurses come in contact with 450 to 500 patients coming to be treated at the out-patients clinic. Every week 400 mothers come in with babies who need check-up or care.

As there is no resident doctor at the dispensary and clinic, the staff cares for 45 to 60 hospitalized patients needing bed care. Urgent cases are referred to the Government Hospital 35 kilometers away. The truck serves as ambulance and one of the nurses accompanies the patients.

When the Sisters return to Canada they do take a well earned rest. They love to talk about their mission to friends and relatives. But they have only one dream... to return to their people as soon as possible.

You and I may wonder that is the driving force behind all this? They are aware that life at the best is relatively short. That life at the service of others knows no limit when you go out in a spirit of thanksgiving eager to share the riches you have received.

Thanksgiving for them is an abiding attitude. They actualize the words of Paul when he wrote to the Philippians, 4:6:

"Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need always asking him with a thankful heart!"





Do You Hear Me?

These were the feelings that Ellen, a young aspirant to religious life among the M.I.C.'s, found deep within her heart. She had decided to join her other companions in this event, shouting against injustice.

In their training program, personal and social development is encouraged. Different types of studies are pursued. Occasionally, by free option, some of them wish to participate in socio-political activities. These are all integrated with their prayer life and community service.

And so, Ellen had mixed emotions that morning as she left the convent for the protest march.

"When I joined the rally-march, I was confronted with questions. Would this march of protest be noticed by the authorities? Would it be fruitful and meaningful? Or would our time and effort be wasted?

As I marched on, I was touched by the solidarity of feeling among the

marchers. We were manifesting a common feeling. We were protesting together against militarization and military abuses, against unjust arrests, detentions and even killings of innocent victims. We were rallying for human rights. We were denouncing the military forces harassing Church workers, priests and religious.

As the speakers voiced out their feelings of solidarity with our downtrodden brothers, oppressed by so many forms of injustice, the awareness that I am a Filipina became more clear to me. I am one of the hundreds of thousands made victim by the present regime. I was praying deep in my heart that the evil brought about by certain parties would come to an end, one day.

Then, I realized that my participation in the rally was not wasted effort and time. Maybe I won't be heard. But my solidarity, my active cooperation with the marchers may be a little voice added for the poor, the oppressed and the voiceless people."

(From the MIC Philippine Newsbits)

My solidarity, my active cooperation with the protest marchers may be but a weak voice crying for the poor, the oppressed, the voiceless people.

Filipino man, one of the voiceless.



Can Hong Kong Make It?

Mary Olga Lam, M.I.C.



Can Hong Kong make it?

Yes. Yes, affirms Sr. Mary Olga Lam, M.I.C. Principal of Good Hope School in Kowloon.

With the signing of the Anglo-Chinese Treaty, the question of the future of Hong Kong has to a certain extent been clarified. In 1997, Hong Kong will become a special economic zone with special laws under the rule of China. Hong Kong will keep its stability and continue to be prosperous on condition that the Hong Kong residents live up to their trust in Hong Kong and become more personally involved in their civic commitment.

With the setting up of the District Boards, with the new and functional constituencies, a big step forward had been taken towards providing means for fostering a greater sense of belonging and involvement in building up a better Hong Kong. Hong Kongites are known for their ability to adapt to various demands

and situations. They are hard-working and have the know-how to build up Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan city - a "show window" to the world of a "two system one country policy".

As an educator, I see that we have a great responsibility in inculcating a sense of loyalty in our students NOW as they will be the ones to make Hong Kong what it can become... there is hope and promise in Hong Kong as your youth are generous and dynamic. They need guidance and challenge. If our young people are helped to realize their potential and are trained to think clearly and speak up and stand for their human rights, we will certainly have a prosperous and stable Hong Kong for the world to see and admire for many years to come.

Did you know that—

...the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception have 92 houses in 14 countries?

...the M.I.C.'s now have Sisters of 14 different nationalities?

...they have 13 postulants asking admission in 7 countries?

...they have 20 novices in missionary and spiritual formation in 6 countries?

...there are still 420 M.I.C.'s working overseas?

And did you know that the Church has celebrated many anniversaries in Asia?

Indonesia: 451 years, Korea: 200 years, Philippines: 464 years, Taiwan: 126 years, Hong Kong: 144 years, Japan: 436 years

And did you hear that the major seminaries of Asia are preparing many young men for the ministry of the priesthood?

India: 2,594, Korea: 909, Indonesia: 697, Philippines: 88, Thailand: 157

Sources of information: M.I.C. Report, June 1985, Peuples du Monde, June 1985, Ste Anne de Beaupré, June 1985.

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