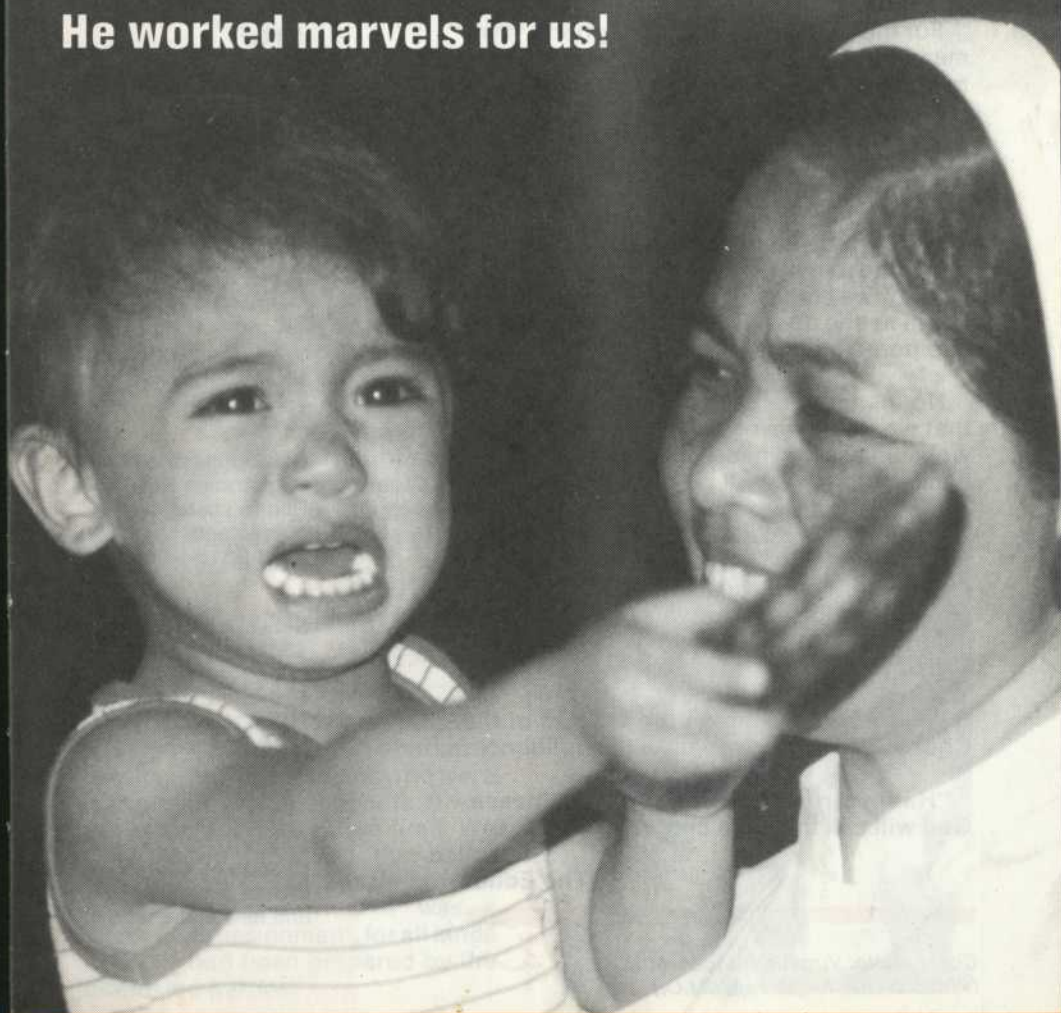


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MIC

MISSION NEWS

He worked marvels for us!



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

Perhaps this summer you have met some missionaries on home leave. Most of us stay on duty while these have a chance to have a well earned rest.

For some, like Sr. Louise and Sr. Françoise whom you read about in this issue, summer is a time to remain on school benches trying to master the intricacies of Oriental languages, in hope of future apostolic work.

For the lay missionary, like Huguette, it will mean additional visits with the M.I.C.'s to mission posts in the bush every Sunday.

No matter where we are, we M.I.C.'s will pursue our work in fostering social justice as a means of apostolate. Sr. Yolanda will continue her struggle for justice in other ways than she mentions in her article. It was one thing to risk her life in a human chain in front of war tanks; it is another to educate youth as she does every day, to live in peace and non-violence.

No matter where we are, we M.I.C.'s feel that we could never carry on our apostolic work unless we had someone like you to back us up.

But as we all go about trying to make this world a better place to live in, we have to thank you. You have always supported our efforts through your prayers, your generosity in contributions. We are very grateful to you indeed.

We are all carrying on the mission of the Church and we can repeat with confidence:

**"Happy are those who work for peace,
God will call them his children." (Mt. 5, 9)**

The Editor

*Cover photo: Virginia Biascan, M.I.C.
(Photo credit: Angie Yap, M.I.C.)*

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Faith does such things

"Peace, in spite of the turmoil and confusion we are living out right now", wrote Sr. Yolanda Oducado, M.I.C. from Tondo, Manila, in the Philippines.

(Photo credit: Patricia Youswa)

These were the good wishes Sister was offering me in her first letter of February. There was good reason for this wish for peace. The Filipinos were undergoing a traumatic experience. "The Church, our people, are being purified day by day, hour by hour. Please pray for us to remain steadfast and to persevere as we help the fight for truth and justice".

Then Yolanda explains how the M.I.C.'s participated in this struggle for justice.

"We Sisters joined the NAMFREL Marines. This is a group of priests, religious and seminarians who were assigned to watch over critical voting areas during election time. We were asked to guard the ballot boxes so as to prevent them from being tampered with. It was a worthwhile assignment, for all kinds of tricks had been prepared by the interested parties.





It was at such a voting poll that a young seminarian pleaded with us: "Sisters, don't leave us!" He had heard one of the tall, men entering the compound saying in a hushed tone to the other... "but the Sisters are still here!" Ballot boxes had been distributed in different rooms so as to confuse the volunteers in time of commotion, to switch boxes with completed ballots prepared a few days before elections.

In another voting centre, our Sisters had to hold on literally to the ballot boxes during such a commotion because the chairman had dropped them out of fear.

In some precincts there was a systematic disenfranchisement. The mixing up of voters' lists made it impossible for many voters to exercise their duty of voting. Some names were removed, others were added, the names of deceased persons or others living abroad. (Would

you believe that my dear Papa's name was on the voting list in my hometown, San Mateo?)

Since the Sisters had volunteered as NAMFREL members, they were on call during any emergency moment. So the day after election when all the ballot boxes were supposed to be in, they were called to one of the Public Schools nearby. The ballot boxes had not been picked up. The government trucks had not transported them as required to City Hall. So, the Sisters searched for 2 private trucks and while they were loading them, people formed a human barricade around.

Sisters Angie, Jean, Beth, Josie and I sat with the drivers while the seminarians protected the boxes at the back. When we arrived at destination, the military men just stood there observing in silence, as we unloaded the boxes!"

As events became more and more critical, Yolanda wrote again; "We are living grace-filled days. We feel God's presence among us all the time."

"The night that Enrile and Ramos changed sides in their politics, the Cardinal kept inviting the people to go in crowds to Camp Crame to pray. Since it was already 11. p.m. we stayed home and kept vigil all night before the Blessed Sacrament. The Sisters kept preparing food for the crowds, all that time.

The following day we went to Camp Crame and Camp Aguinaldo, having to walk a long way since cars were not allowed in. I was surprised by the atmosphere of joy all around. People were smiling at one another, all were friendly, unmindful of the impending danger. It felt like a fiesta!

One lady came to invite us to pray the Rosary in front of a war tank. It was stopped there with 30 soldiers inside! We returned the next night and kept vigil there from 12.30 to 7. a.m. We prayed with the people, heard a Mass celebrated on the spot by a Jesuit priest.

At 5. a.m. we were asked to form a line expecting the incoming tanks. The Sisters were in front, then the seminarians, and then the lay people. It seemed like a line-up for execution. We knew we were in danger. After every decade of the Rosary, Father kept blessing the crowd. We were waiting for the tanks. Suddenly somebody noticed them parked in a nearby valley under the trees. They had decided not to attack!

Was it because of our prayers? Only God knows. It seems that they had been ordered to bomb the





Camp that day but the soldiers refused to move. Believe me, we felt the presence of God once more! There were statues of Our Lady and the Santo Nino scattered all over the place. How can you bomb a nation that is praying?

Now that these events are over we wonder where the people found the courage to face such imminent dangers? It was a true Gospel experience and everyone found strength in their faith.

The Church just could not keep silent. As missionaries, we felt it our duty to witness to our country-men that justice and honesty must prevail at all cost. Our people had been awakened and were looking up to the Church for guidance. They still believed in priests and Sisters. They

counted on us. We could not fail them.

It was a challenge we had to face, we, who wish "to bring the Good News to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives, and to the blind, new sight." (Lk 4:18)

As the only Christian country in Asia, the Philippines underwent a moment of painful purification. Many have paid a price for this worthwhile cause. Our country was thirsting for justice and we were suffering with them. We just could not fold our arms. With Nietzsche, I cannot help whispering: "He who had a Why to live can bear with almost any How."

*(From letters of
Yolanda Oducado, M.I.C.)*

Changing skylines



Françoise Larouche, M.I.C.

I returned to Taiwan after serving in Canada for 14 years. I had never given up hope of returning for I loved the people and respected them very much.

On my arrival here, imagine the surprise I had. Industrialization has really taken over the country by leaps and bounds. The narrow roads that I had travelled on, have become main highways where all kind of vehicles were circulating. The small huts of formerly have been replaced by tall apartment buildings. The bicycle has given way to the motorcycle.

These outward changes were not the only ones I noticed. The people have changed too. So I kept asking myself, what values do they live by at the present? What will I perceive now in the culture through its history, its evolution, its customs and ways?

These are the factors that an incoming missionary has to rediscover: what is going on in the lives of the people?

The answers will come more easily to me now that I am back in language school. It will be a real opportunity for me to listen, to explore, to penetrate more deeply into the culture of the people with whom I have accepted to live. These lessons will allow me to learn from my professors, not only the language, the written Chinese characters, but the values that people live by.

Meanwhile, my joy, my smile, will become the way to express: "I love you." This will be my witness. The One who called me and invited me to share my life with the people of Taiwan expects this of me."

Françoise Larouche, M.I.C.

Who Cares?



A child has died. While someone is sewing the vest that he will wear forever... someone else is nailing the little rough coffin.

The child lies there under a woolen blanket. At the foot of the bier are lighted candles. At the side, numerous children of the neighborhood stand... worried... surprised... curious... indifferent. They have already seen so many of these young children dying! In the back are mothers, fathers... worried... very worried... They're miners, and the mine has just closed down... who cares?

During that time... outside... men and women are preparing the communal meal. They will share what they have received from welfare agencies or friends.



Who really cares for the people of Atalaya? Is there a "tomorrow" for them? for their wives and children?

Peru



What word of hope would Jesus tell this community? This is what Therese Lebeau, M.I.C. and Agnes Bouchard M.I.C. are searching for, as they try to console the mother.

What is the meaning of hope for the people of Atalaya?

No boredom here

More and more lay missionaries of all ages are saying "yes" to God's call and are willing to plunge into a mutual faith sharing experience with people of all nations.

Talk about a surprise when I told my family that I was leaving soon for Africa as a lay missionary! They just could not believe it that I, their mother, a widow for many years, had taken such a decision. But I felt free. My children were all grown up and I had nothing to lose.

I had read about the problems of the Third World. I had reflected about societies with unequal social rights. I decided to do my little share to improve the living conditions of people who were struggling for survival. I had received so much from the Lord. I just had to go and share some of that abundance with the less privileged.

So I went to offer my services to a missionary congregation of women. I chose the M.I.C.'s. We seemed to have a similar identity of living our lives in a spirit of thanksgiving. So

the prospect was leading me into a faith adventure which I am living out in deep joy and gratitude each day.

I am now in Central Africa, in Malawi, with the M.I.C. Sisters. I help out in all the ways that I can. I work at the Provincial secretariate. I accompany the Sisters when they go out into the bush, when they care for the handicapped and the sick. There is no routine, nor boredom in my life.

I have discovered that these women of all nationalities, these missionaries, are people full of concern for the others and totally dedicated to their work. Their day by day generosity simply amazes me. I often wonder where they get the strength to carry on? They bear



isolation, privations and accept to work in conditions that many of us would find intolerable.

They show such a deep respect for African culture and values. They spend their days training Africans to become leaders of their society. All this with one aim in mind: to build a better world of peace and love. And to witness this, gives me hope. I see that love can conquer all things!

I'd like to share with you one of the many adventures I had recently. Sr. Marie Paul Gaudreau had to accompany 4 handicapped girls on a 12 hour trip by bus to the city. They needed new equipment and treatment. It meant waiting for them 3 or 4 days.

The journey itself was really interesting for me. As we were driving through the valley, we passed one little village after another. The houses seemed to be huge mushrooms. When we finally reached Blantyre, I was reminded of St. Tite in Quebec. Then I thought I was back on Mt. Royal St. in Montreal as I passed in front of many stores managed by Indians of the sub-continent.

When we reached the hospital. I had quite a shock! We left our girls lying down on an extended cloth covering the cement floor where 20 other women lay to spend the night while waiting for treatment. There were several piles of wood stacked in the corner for cooking fire the next day. What seemed an accepta-



Mrs. Huguette Carle, in the marketplace

ble fact to these persons seemed cruel to me.

After 3 days we were ready to return, for the girls had been fitted with orthopedic shoes and braces and crutches. We waited a long time before boarding the overloaded bus. People were sitting on their belongings and I travelled the whole way for 17 hours squatting on mail bags. I thought I'd never be able to stand up straight again! But a warm bath, a nourishing meal and kind greetings soon made me forget all that! I'd even be willing to try it again!

I arrived here with fancy shoes which I soon had to discard. They were not practical for dirt roads and uneven lanes and paths that will never see cement. I also sewed myself a practical skirt with a hand pedal sewing machine. I ironed my clothes with a charcoal iron. I feel like a pioneer!

I have gone a long way since I first arrived here. I have managed to overcome some disdain I felt on eating food that had been manipulated by many hands. I have closed my eyes when I have seen ants in sugarbowls.

But what is all this compared to the joy and peace I have in my heart as I collaborate with those who dedicate their entire lives to bring about the Kingdom of God in this far away mission in Central Africa.

I don't want you to worry. I am here because I wanted to come. And I'm staying because I want to stay. I'm even thinking of asking an extension. I also want to do my little bit in bringing about that Kingdom of God by sharing what God gave me.

*Huguette Villemure Carle
(Shawinigan, P.Q.)*

A new missionary in Japan, Louise Roy, shares with us her first moments in a strange culture.



Louise Roy, M.I.C.

Lost... a security blanket!

Dear friends,

It doesn't seem possible that I have been here already two weeks. Two weeks in the land of the Rising Sun, Japan. These days were lived in great peace, joy and even enthusiasm. True, there were some moments when I felt some tugging at the heart when I thought of you all. Some days, I felt like a total stranger, a person from outer-space, so to say. Everything is so different... nearly an upside down world for me! But I don't want you to believe that it is very hard... what I mean is that it is very different!

No matter where I look, I see all is written in Japanese. No matter where I turn, I hear Japanese. The stores, the super markets are all lit up with Japanese signs. The boxes and their contents are Japanese! So, I cannot forget I am in Japan.

I am trying hard to be open to all situations... that is not easy either. I find myself continually referring to past experiences with the Chinese, with other nationalities. But none of these references tally. It's always something I haven't seen, I haven't heard, so I cannot rely on any security blanket of the past. It is a marvelous opportunity for me to be patient, to respect the other and to be fully attentive. I find that I am experiencing prayer and solitude in a totally unexpected manner. I have no need to search for ascetical practices!

The day I arrived here, I ran to the chapel. I just had to come and kneel in front of Our Lady who has led me here to come and serve Her Son.



Tears were running down as the Sisters sang the Magnificat with me. I was wishing to be able to lay down all the emotions of the past weeks... and I believe I did, as I confided each and every one of you to that Blessed Mother who watches over each one so tenderly.

Sr. Lucille Prevost accompanied me to visit the Sisters in Aizu Wakamatsu. We arrived early at the station. A young couple that knew Sister, stayed with us until the train arrived, even if they were missing their own train. This is part of the Japanese courtesy that I live with. I have much to learn.

We had queued up for a long time, for the next day was a festival for the elderly people. The crowds were incredible, yet everyone stayed in line. Some had to travel 5 hours standing up as all the seats

were taken up. But people did not seem to mind as it was a family visit and duty to see their senior family members.

Now, for the next few years I'll be sitting on the school bench, learning the Japanese characters, repeating phrases and sounds after my professors, until one day, I hope I can communicate with the people whose life I have come to share. Smiles will become words, and words will become expressed love.

Do not forget to keep me in your prayers as you go about in your own mission work in the family or at school.

Yours sincerely,

*Louise Roy, M.I.C.
(Pain Court, Ont.)*

God is Alive!

Sr. Cecilia Hong, M.I.C. is involved in campus ministry work among the Asian students of Ottawa University. She has organized Faith Sharing Groups where students come together to pray. Not so long ago she met a Korean, father of two children, who joined the prayer group. This gentleman shared the following experience:

Five years ago my son was dying of a throat infection. Kneeling down beside the bed of my critically ill son, I held his hands and cried out to the Lord for help. 'Lord, my son is dying! Please heal him, Lord, please keep him alive, I beg you! You are the only one who can help him at this stage. Please listen to my prayer!'

I prayed and cried for more than half an hour, then went down to the waiting room. Suddenly a deep peace overcame me. I felt calm. Just then a nurse came out of the Intensive Care Unit.

She approached me informing me that there had been a sudden and unexpected change in my son's condition. The fever had dropped his temperature was normal. He was gradually gaining consciousness.

I cried once more. These tears were tears of gratitude as I thanked God to have spared my son. Today, he is a healthy boy in Junior High. I am now convinced *God is Alive!*"



This faith experience of our Korean friend convinced us once more that faith is meant to be shared. Then it becomes stronger and more alive in us. Our weekly faith sharings have really helped us all to integrate the Gospel values in our lives.

Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

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