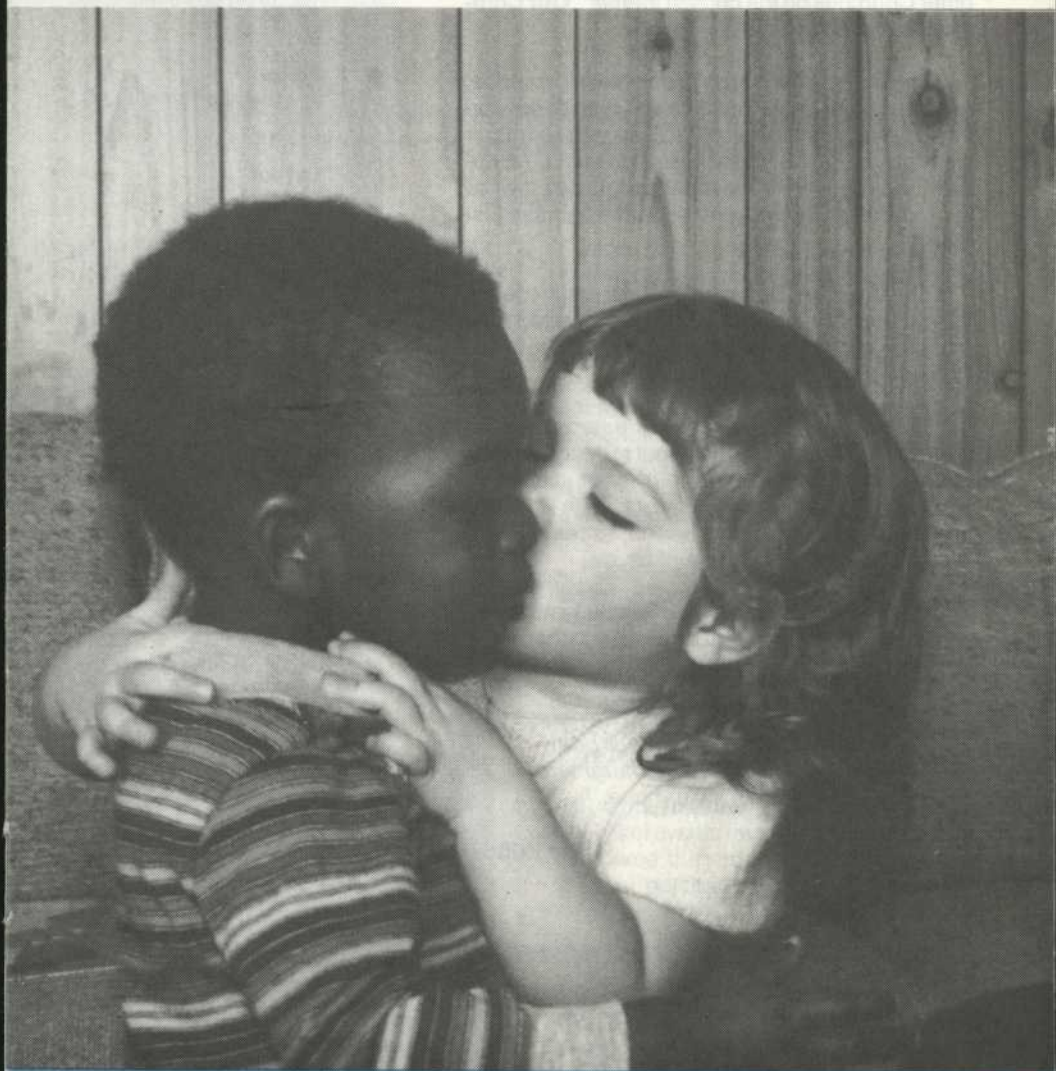


Series 13, No. 5
September-October, 1986

MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

As one of the Christians who had the privilege to attend the Calgary Christian Festival last May, I had time to pray and reflect with my brothers of other Churches on the chosen theme: **"Our Common Journey in Faith"**.

"The Journey Inward" is one that all apostles, missionaries, have to travel if they wish to stay on that road as true disciples. This issue presents us with lay missionaries, associates of the M.I.C.'s, the ASMIC, who have travelled that Journey Inward in preparation for the commitment they have just made.

"The Journey Outward" is well expressed in the missionary work of our Japanese M.I.C.'s reaching out to their brothers and sisters in lands formerly alienated to them by war.

"The Journey Onward" are the steps taken by the Haitian Sisters to bring about reconciliation in their country, still in a state of confusion. It is everybody's common journey of faith in Him who has the power to change hearts, to remove the violence found in each one of us.

With the participants of the Festival and in the same spirit of ecumenism let us repeat the words of the Festival Hymn:

*"Come and journey with a Saviour
Who has called us from our birth,
We are all His sons and daughters
In the Spirit we are one."*

The Editor.

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P.O. Box 157,
Laval-des-Rapides
Laval, P.Q., Canada
H7N 4Z4
Tel.: (514) 663-6460

Editor
Therese LeBlanc, M.I.C.

Layout
Angelina Yap, M.I.C.

**Secretariat and
Circulation**
Team of MIC Sisters

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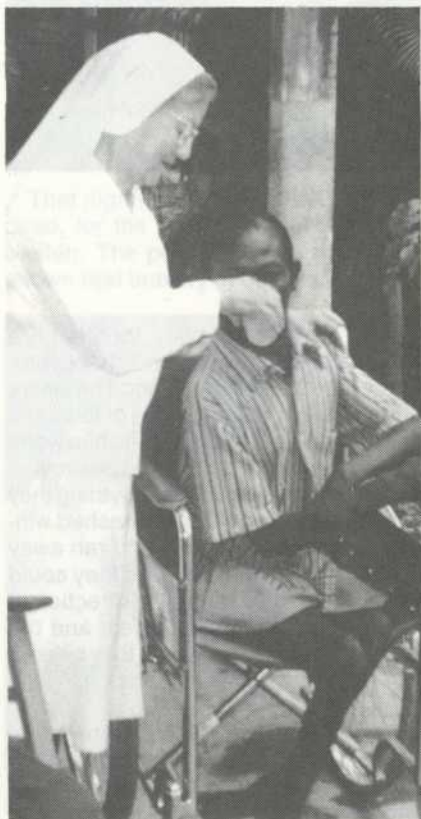
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A Journey Onward

It just had to change in Haiti. People had reached the end of their tether. For the past 29 years or so, the majority had been eking out a bare living.



More than 75% had been subsisting below the absolute poverty line, earning not more than \$75 per year. (The revenue per capita is estimated to be around \$260 per year.) These poor people were the exploited victims of members of their own society, which counted some 200 millionaire families. They were also victims of our larger society—the economic world—which did not encourage enough their production of local goods.

For years the people suppressed their anger, their frustration, until last February it erupted violently in some places. They had seen people around them, including the missionaries, who seemed to have much more than them. They were hungry... they were angry... they had to blow up.

It is not surprising to read then the accounts of events related by some M.I.C.'s who lived there during those turbulent days of political upheaval. The Sisters could understand the feelings of those deprived people with whom they share their lives and their goods. There was fear, no doubt, as mobs do get out of control, but there was hope in God and trust in Him who loves all His children.

LES CAYES

One evening, just as the Sisters were about to sit for the meal, one of the employees of the refuge for the elderly "La Charité S'Il Vous Plaît" burst into the house crying: "Sisters, a gang of looters has just invaded the food storeroom. They took everything away and none of us could stop them. They were armed with heavy sticks and stones!"

The police was called and soon dispersed the group. But another gang showed up a few hours later at the back of the house. Sr. Etienne Guerette was just about to open the garage door to take the car out when a wild mob ran up to her. The girls working in the kitchen started yelling and crying, while Srs. Clemence Trudel and Lucille Gagnon rushed in the midst of the gang itself, holding back the leaders, trying to convince them that they were making a mistake... there was no storeroom in that shed! So they turned around, yelling: "O.K. then let's go to the 'Charity!'" They ran away grabbing two large tubs near the door.

Afterwards, the Sisters wondered who had protected them. Surely, it was not the strength of three weak women but that of God Himself supporting them.

Then, they went up to the chapel to sing a Magnificat to Our Lady, Guardian of the House.

CHANTAL

In the mission, after the decree that all schools should be closed in January, a series of pillaging took place, in all school canteens.

One morning, around 7.30 a.m., two young boys rang the doorbell. They asked the key to the canteen storeroom. The



*Sr. Marguerite Roy, M.I.C.
with young patient.*

Sisters gave it right away, for already a mob was gathering in the school yard, ready to break down the door. The janitor started taking out the sacks of food, but the young pillagers did not find him working fast enough. They started destroying them and breaking down everything they laid their hands on. They smashed windows, broke down doors and ran away with all the kitchen utensils they could carry. Then, they ran in the direction of the house of the parish priest and the convent of the Sisters where they pilfered all they could lay their hands on.

For a while, the Sisters feared they would also destroy the dispensary for the poor as well. Luckily, the police arrived and dispersed the crowd.

PORT SALUT

Some of the neighbors informed the Sisters that a mob was on its way to attack Port Salut and burn down the entire South Coast... especially the property of religious communities. Quickly, the Sisters confided their keys to Our Lady. Some prepared handbags. Others tried to hide important documents and place them in safety. Then they waited! In silence, in hope, in fear, in faith.

The Brothers and the Sisters decided it was wiser to open up their storerooms and pass out the food to the people of Port Salut right away. All was passed out and the people were satisfied... the brigands had been defeated! They would not loot any storerooms.

When the so-called army of 500 arrived, the battle between the people of Port Salut and the mob took place only 5 minutes away from the Convent. The vagabonds were driven back by the people armed with sticks only. A few were killed and some were taken prisoner.

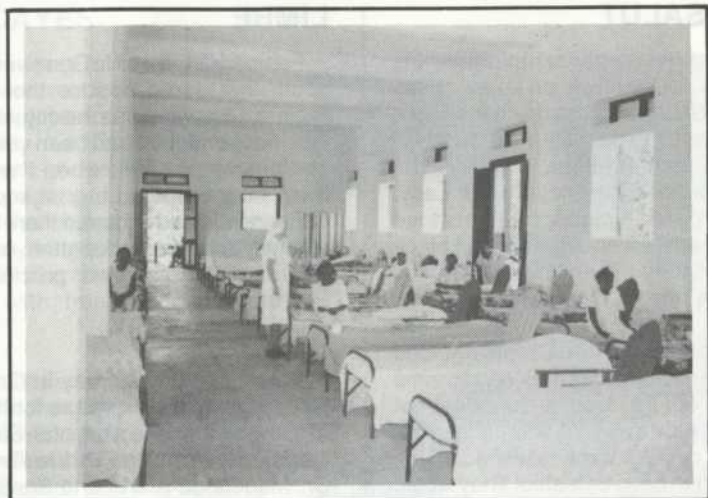
That night, the Sisters prayed for the dead, for the prisoners who would be beaten. The people of Port Salut had shown real bravery in danger.

LIMBE

February 11. It was in Gonaives, where youth first dared oppose the existing regime. Gonaives was the city where the first independence had been celebrated on January 1, 1904, when they broke away from France. Later, a second independence had occurred there in 1934, against American occupation. And now, a third independence was proclaimed on February 11.

It was a real fiesta day in Gonaives. Houses were decorated as for the feast of Corpus Christi, said one Sister. All steps led to Gonaives. Sr. Lise Tremblay, Sr. Madeleine Alarie and Sr. Blandine Masses joined the joyful cortege marching from Limbe to Gonaives. People everywhere were clapping hands and singing in the streets. Two dioceses joined together to thank God for their newly found freedom. It was like a wedding feast... the feast of liberation, independence and solidarity. As people in the diocese met to thank their God, the bishops reminded them that it was now their responsibility to build up a new society. Mgr. Gayot, in his homily, reminded the people that they must all work for reconciliation and forgiveness:





One of the M.I.C. clinics, Haiti.

"Vengeance is not evangelical, but that does not mean that we ignore justice. We must demand that justice be carried out because no peace is possible without justice."

CAP HAITIEN. Good Friday.

The Way of the Cross through the streets of the City was organized by the Pastoral Council of Youth. The theme was: "Justice and mercy in peace!"

The well-swept streets were decorated with posters such as "Mother Mary, Queen of Peace, we need you to build a new Haiti!" The three persons who had given up their lives in the turmoil were well remembered. One of the Stations was posted at the home of a man who had been machine-gunned as he closed his door. A moment of silence was observed there. Another Station, in front of the Cathedral, reminded everyone of

all the sufferings of the many young people who had shed their blood during the skirmish. In front of the Arsenal, everyone joined in, to ask forgiveness for all the injustices carried out in this place and for untold sufferings.

In spite of the intense heat and fatigue, several thousands of people followed the Way of the Cross. Some were even praying on their knees, others holding out their arms in the form of a cross. The prayer lasted 6 hours!

Now, Haiti is still struggling in its newly found freedom. The Church and the missionaries are fully aware of their role of healing and reconciliation. There is a "long journey" before them as everyone there needs the support of our prayers and a comprehension so that they can move forward at ease.

(Information M.I.C., 1986)



Members of the ASMIC on Commitment Day.

A Journey Inward

by Thérèse LeBlanc, M.I.C.

Last June 14, 1986, a memorable event took place in the chapel of the M.I.C. Sisters at Pont Viau, Laval.

Thirteen lay persons made their pledge as Associates of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Five others made a promise of fidelity in view of later admission. These Associates are now members of an autonomous group having the same spirituality as the M.I.C. family.

All of them, both the Montreal and Quebec City groups had a period of initiation into the thanksgiving spirituality and have proved that they are eager to be missionaries in their own living milieu. They are members of the association known as ASMIC, Association of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception.

The solemn ceremony took place at the Mass before the community of the Sisters. One of the major superiors accepted the pledge in the name of the others.

Strange as it may seem, as way back as 1905, the foundress of the M.I.C.'s Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit, had organized a similar lay association working in close collaboration with the missionaries. This grew, and many ladies of Montreal and other cities of Canada and U.S.A. worked later as volunteers coming regularly to give a helping hand. These members either sewed, prepared packages, layettes for babies, and made clothing for the poor in the mission lands. They were part of a project known as "charity workshops" and "groups working in cooperation with the missionaries". They held bazaars each year, forwarding the funds to the China missions or Haiti later on. Gradually, these groups broke off as times and methods of approach of helping others in mission lands, evolved.

And so, now, according to the wish of the Church advising such associations and in the tradition of Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit, the M.I.C.'s are happy to greet their first brothers and sisters associates, the ASMIC, as they begin their "Journey Inward".

OTTAWA

Sr. Noella Brisson, a former missionary of Japan, has been very active in missionary animation work in the Ottawa Archdiocese. One day, she was accompanied by Sr. Chieko, M.I.C.

Stillpoint

Last January, Sr. Noella was invited to St. Mark's High School in Manotick by the Grade XI catechist, Miss Paula Durham. Her topic was Buddhism and Shintoism. The students showed great interest and asked relevant questions.

Sr. Chieko Uchimara, M.I.C. of Japan, afterwards gave a demonstration of the Japanese Tea ceremony for the 3 classes of Grade XI assembled in one classroom. The students, visibly impressed, watched every gesture in dead silence. Afterwards, Sr. Chieko explained everything in detail.

In a lighter vein, she delighted her audience with some Japanese folk dances. The students clapped their hands and swayed to the rhythm of the music. Two Japanese songs closed the visit: one about Cherry Trees in Blossom and the other about a Red Dragonfly. These high school students will long remember the visit of the two M.I.C.'s, one from Canada and one from Japan.

(Information M.I.C., 1986)





St. Mark's High School students
Tea Ceremony with Sr. Chieko.

A Journey Upward

(A recent letter of Sr. Clemence Trudel, M.I.C., dated May 10, informs us of further mishaps in Les Cayes.)

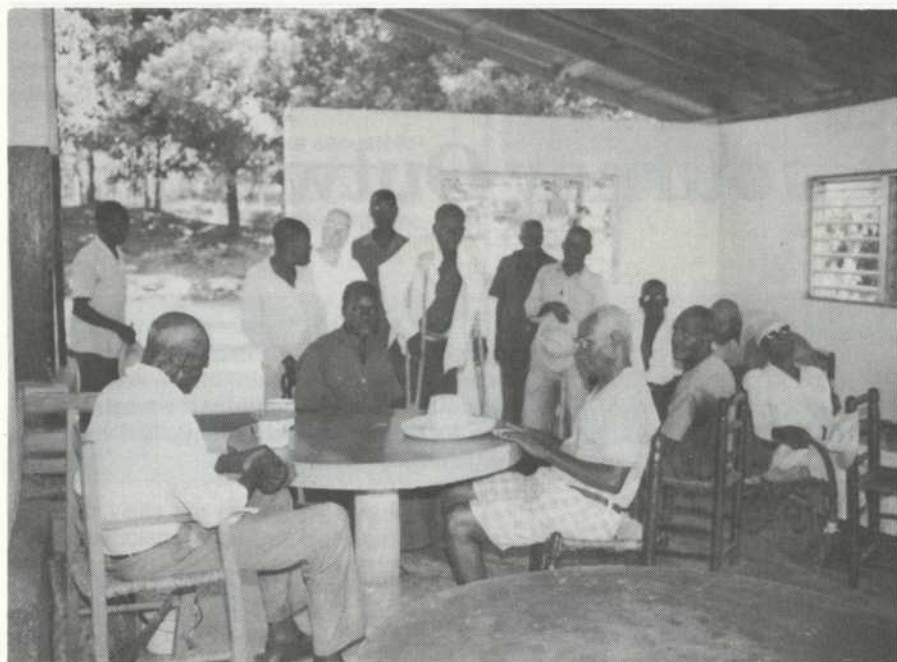
“What traumatic events did we live out these last months in Haiti! First of all, let tell you in all simplicity that not one of us M.I.C.'s has given up her option to work and bring the Good News to the poor! That means we are by their side on sunny days as well as on rainy days, in prayer as well as in action, in the search for daily bread as well as in the search for justice.

I'm sure that you have realized that on certain days, we were the poorest of the poor... our provisions of food had been looted, our schools pillaged and emptied of their contents such as books, desks, chairs etc. Robbers came and took away with them whatever they could lay their hands on, in the classrooms, in the Centre, in the hospital. And... to top it all, this week, floods destroyed what had been left! What is the Lord trying to tell us, was our question after all that.

Yes, we have been victims of the recent floods. For years now, scientists had been warning us that it would happen since our trees on the hills had all been chopped down. Erosion was inevitable. So, when the heavy downpours occurred, for several days, floods of muddy water invaded our whole territory.

We had to ask help from the Red Cross to evacuate our elderly, blind and the crippled patients. They were carried into the Church and there had to lie down in the pews for the next few days for safety measures.

We kept the elderly ladies, thinking that things would improve the next day. But flood waters were rising steadily, and soon tables and beds were under water. They too had to be evacuated and carried into the church. We covered them with whatever we could save. For two days,



Elderly and handicapped patients.

the employees worked day and night to help them, along with the Sisters. They served them whatever was left of hot soup and other food that had been salvaged.

As we looked outside, we noticed a sea of muddy water. At our gates, some fifty women and children, waiting in fear to be admitted. I ran out in the water over my knees to admit them holding their meager possessions. They were all shivering with the cold, so we Sisters disposed whatever we had on hand to warm them up, and served them hot soup. Soon, their panic subsided, and I proposed that we all recite the Rosary to ask Our Mother of Perpetual Help's protection.

Now, like Noah, we went to survey the damages done by the floods, a few days

afterwards. It was beyond anything we could have imagined. We know many lost their lives. Thousands lost their homes and possessions, all carried away by the force of the cascading waters and mud.

Our houses, our classrooms, our dispensaries, were all literally covered with mud. So, with the employees, volunteer helpers, students and others, the Sisters turned up their sleeves and started the scouring of floors, furniture, clothes, and everything.

But, you may think we are discouraged. We are not. In spite of all this, we and the Haitian people maintain our optimism, and our faith in the most powerful God! In Him we trust!"

A Journey Outward

Tourists going to Japan are given much information on the culture, the economy, the history of the country. Never does anyone give information on the Catholic Church. No doubt, the tourist-guides themselves, know nothing of the Church, except for the occasional building, lost amid the others in Tokyo and other large cities.



*Sr. Catharina Hongo, M.I.C.
leaving for Haiti.*

Japan, with its 120 million inhabitants has an economically poor Church. The statistics can explain why this is so. Last March 1986, it was shown that 996 out of 1000 persons had never heard of Jesus Christ. It means that only 4 in 1000 have heard the Good News of Salvation.

But the Japanese Church is moving forward in spite of being lost in a mass of non-Christians. It is now sending its own missionaries to other countries, thus participating in the mission activity of the universal Church.

Among the 15 missionaries preparing to go overseas this year, was Sr. Catharina Sachiko Hongo, M.I.C., who has just left to serve in Haiti for the coming years.

Sr. Hongo was given a 5 week preparation course with other missionaries. This session was organized by the Committee for International Cooperation under the auspices of the Conference of Japanese Bishops. She will be one of the 243 women missionaries working in 5 continents, in Asia, the Pacific, Africa and the Middle East, Latin America and Europe as well as U.S.A. and Canada.

Another one of these Japanese missionaries, is Sr. Kesayo Sato, M.I.C. Recently, she wrote something about her own activities in Metro-Manila.

"As I grew more and more accustomed to life in the Philippines, I was able to go out of the convent and see for myself something of the life of the Filipino people.

I participated in a team carrying out a "mission" in my parish, Immaculate Conception Parish, Q.C. Twice a month this group goes out to visit one of the slum areas of Manila.

These visits are meant for pastoral home visitations. We seek for persons who are not yet baptized, we arrange to have marriages blessed, we give premarriage courses, marriage counselling. Besides that, someone in the group provides for medical services to those in need.

In one of these "missions" we quickly put up a makeshift chapel of nipa in a vacant lot. Nearby, were 45 families living in the most squalid conditions.

Accompanied by their leaders, we visited each household to reassure the people about our objectives. We listened to them, and we agreed to their wish of having a procession. Along the way, they placed their statues, crucifixes and other religious articles. Each station was marked with burning candles.

I was deeply touched by their profound expressions of Faith. Walking between these poor huts in this prayerful procession, I felt my heart being enlightened. I realized that these people, living in such poor conditions are really in our midst. We must do something to bring up their dignity.



Kesayo Sato, M.I.C. with members of the team and participants.

At the end of the three-day mission, we had a party with them even if it was mid-Lent. They had to spill out their joy and their faith: "The Risen Lord lives! My heart is filled with joy and gratitude!"

They were grateful to be able to approach the sacraments. They had kept away from the Church because of their poverty. Now, there will be some follow-up in Bible courses, regular Masses etc. The mission will go on!

Through my participation in several of these missions, I have been given a glimpse of the evangelical role of the Philippine Church. I saw the reality of the words of the Gospel: "The Son of Man came to serve those who were lost, to give them new life!"

It was Vatican II that first asked the young Churches to participate in the universal mission of the Church even if they were short of clergy and religious themselves. The Church of Japan has understood this message. It is a sign of hope. It has started its journey outward!

A visit to Delia's family

by Therese LeBlanc, M.I.C.



Antoinette Castonguay and Therese LeBlanc, M.I.C.
Mrs Rose Hood and Sr Angeline Tetreau, a.s.v.
(nieces of Mother Delia)

Some of our friends were asking recently how things were standing in the study of the Cause leading to the beatification of Mother Delia Tetreault, our Foundress.

Last winter the ecclesiastical tribunal conducting the canonical inquiry into the life and works of Delia Tetreault, were sworn in. This team, presided by Mgr. A.M. Cimichella, Assistant Bishop of Montreal, heard more than 50 witnesses, the vast majority of whom had known the Servant of God personally. A few others testified, because they knew her through her writings or her works. A team of theologians is presently studying her written works such as letters to her missionaries or other documents.

In March, 1986, at the Plenary Assembly of the Bishops of Quebec Province, a statement was issued forth which reads:

"The Assembly of the Bishops of Quebec gives its approval for the advancement of the Cause of Delia Tetreault. Proposed by Mgr. A.M. Cimichella, seconded by Mgr. Louis de Gonzague Langevin and unanimously accepted."

Following these events, two M.I.C.'s of Montreal, Srs. Antoinette Castonguay

and Therese LeBlanc went to Edmonton to visit members of the Tetreault family. One of Mother Delia's brothers had settled in Alberta years ago and raised his family there. Her nieces, Sr. Angeline Tetreault, an Assumption Sister, and Mrs. Rose Hood remember their aunt Delia very well. The younger members did not know much about her.

A large number of relatives were invited at the home of Mrs. Rose-Marie Klassen, a great-niece, to attend a presentation of the life of Delia shown on video, "Woman Beyond Frontiers". The M.I.C. Sisters met another group of family members and friends in Vegreville. All of them were surprised and pleased to hear and see how much their Aunt Delia had accomplished. They marvelled at her fidelity to follow God's call to found a congregation of missionary women. They all agreed with the Sisters that she had been inspired by the Holy Spirit as nothing of her enterprise could be explained in human terms. Now, they too, are enthused about the Cause and are eager to hear further developments. This journey is heading upward!

Our Secretariate is hoping that you will not be inconvenienced in receiving your future issues. We are now transferring our mailing system to the computer. Your date of expiry will be on the label as well as your file number from now on.

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For further information, please contact The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception at any of the following addresses.

The Generalate
121 Maplewood Avenue
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
H2V 2M2

MIC Sisters
28-30 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 468
Greenhills, Metro Manila
Philippines, 3113