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MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

Golden Jubilees of foundations are occasions to bring people together. These special celebrations revive memories of a golden past. They force people to go back to their roots, trying to recapture the noble aspirations and spirit of the founders and the pioneers. The Golden Jubilee of Immaculate Conception Academy of San Juan did bring back many people eager to congratulate the Sisters and the staff. Our many Filipino readers scattered in all parts of the world will rejoice with us all on reading "Beautiful Bridges".

The M.I.C. Sisters of Vancouver are also happy to share with us on the special event of the year for their large hospital that many of our Chinese friends appreciate so much.

Two of us M.I.C.'s who had the joy to meet many of our former students of Cuba in the U.S.A. recently, also introduce you to another group of readers.

While looking through our files, I noticed that we had readers from the 5 continents. Many of them are old friends of the Sisters who at one point in life, in one part of the world, taught their children.

That is why our mail bag bears tags for the Philippines, Malawi, Zambia, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Cuba, Indonesia, Australia, Europe, North and South America... not forgetting our numerous friends in all the provinces of Canada and many States of the U.S.A.

It is a small world indeed. And it is always a joy to hear from any one of you. Why don't you write today?

The Editor

*Cover photo: African mother with baby
Photo credit: H. Turcotte, M.I.C.*

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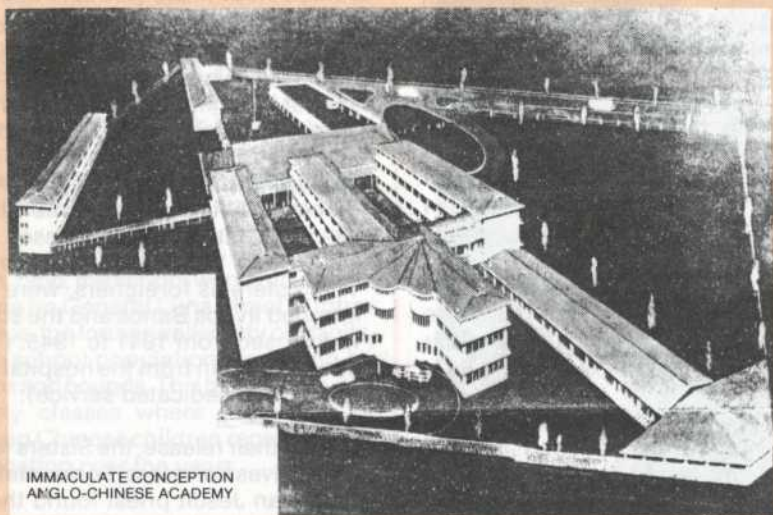
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IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
ANGLO-CHINESE ACADEMY

Building Bridges

It was August 8, 1921, when the 5 Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception first set foot in Manila to open a new mission.

They had been invited by the Archbishop of Manila, Mgr. J. O'Doherty, at the request of Dr. Jose Tee Han Kee, searching for a community of Sisters to assume the administration of the Chinese General Hospital of Manila.

These Canadian Sisters had already come in contact with the Chinese

people in Canton, China. They had learned the language, they had become familiar with the Oriental way of life. They loved the Chinese, so it was with all their heart that they undertook the work in their new mission.

But there was more than language and culture to be dealt with. Those who were not trained had to undertake nursing and related courses to cope with their present assignment of administering a Chinese hospital.

Through hard work and determination, they succeeded and soon they were joined by new recruits from Canada. Their work expanded. Their presence was felt not only among the student nurses and staff. They began visiting the families of the patients and soon formed strong bonds of friendship.

In no time at all, some children of these families asked for instruction in the Catholic Faith. The parents went further. They asked the Sisters to open a Chinese school, so that these children could follow up on their Christian instruction.

And so, the Sisters who had come for hospital work, opened a small school above a hardware store in Binondo, the Chinese section of Manila. Forty pupils presented themselves. In 1936, Immaculate Conception Anglo-Chinese Academy was formally rec-

ognized by the Education Department of the Philippines.

Its beginnings were modest, to say the least; during the next few years new classes had to be added. So, the school was moved to Bienvenidez then to Azcarraga (C.M. Recto today) and finally to Tayuman in 1939. The building was then owned by the Archdiocese of Manila. There the Sisters lived and taught many classes until 1941 when World War II broke out. The Sisters as foreigners, were then interned in Los Banos and the school was closed from 1941 to 1945. (They had withdrawn from the hospital after 20 years of dedicated service).

After their release, the Sisters found themselves homeless. Fortunately, an American Jesuit priest found them a place of shelter in the old badly bombed Knights of Columbus Hall, known as St. Rita's Hall.



Sr. Dina Ang, M.I.C., Principal

The Chinese parents soon began bidding the Sisters to reopen their school. This they did in 1947. Some of the classes were on Narra St., others were on Ascarra. These makeshift classrooms served the Chinese children from Kindergarten to Secondary levels for 7 long years. Their quarters were confined, so their classrooms were noisy right on the main business streets.

In 1956, the school went into its new home on General Luna Street in Intramuros, the former walled city of Manila. The school population was rising by leaps and bounds. This building housed many classes where thousands of young Chinese children received their education over the years.

In 1960, the greater school population moved to the new I.C.A. in Greenhills, leaving a part of the elementary pupils in Intramuros.

In 1975, this school population was fused with that of the new Immaculate Conception Academy at San Juan, built next to the Jesuit Xavier School for Chinese boys. For both of these constructions, that of Intramuros and that of San Juan, the numerous friends and parents of the students contributed generously to help the Sisters.

Today, the school is a well known and a high standard school in Manila. It is considered a Filipino school offering the regular curriculum presented by the Education Department. It has as a specialty a Chinese Language and Arts Program, an essential part of the education offered to the Filipino-Chinese students. The school population today stands as follows: Kindergarten: 425, Elementary: 1324, Secondary: 557, Total: 2306.



Last year 1986, the school celebrated its 50th anniversary of foundation. It is now staffed and administered almost entirely by Filipina M.I.C.'s. Among the many activities running into the year 1986, the most important one was the play, "The Beautiful Bridges". It was written by Fr. James Reuter, S.J. and ran a cast of some 300 participants.

The message of the play presented in one of the leading theatres of Manila showed the Sisters doing just that, "building bridges". Yes, bridges between the past and the present, between the East and the West. It brings out sharply the fact that the mission of the Sisters and the school staff is to educate the Chinese girl of the Philippines, to help this Filipino-Chinese girl preserve her Chinese identity with all its beauty and wisdom.

The play also brings out beautifully the joy of the mission of the M.I.C. Sisters as they carry out the wish of their inspired foundress who liked to repeat to her Sisters living out their lives of thanksgiving: "God has given us so much! Even His only Son! What better way of repaying Him than by giving Him children!"

The Superior General of the M.I.C. Sisters, Sr. Monique Prefontaine, with one of her General Assistants, Sr. Felicidad Dacayanan, were present at the opening of the jubilee celebrations. Sr. Monique addressed the assembly during the Thanksgiving Mass, presided by Mgr. Teodoro Buhain, National Coordinator of the Filipino-

Chinese groups in the country. "To each and every one of you, on behalf of the General Administration and the congregation, I say most sincerely: May the Lord reward you bountifully for all you have done and are still doing for the Immaculate Conception Academy. You have always been so generous in sharing with the Sisters, with the school, to offer the Filipino Chinese girl the opportunity to have a meaningful life. May the spirit of ICA's message continue flowing from these words of Delia Tetreault: "God has given us everything. Even His only Son! What better way of repaying Him than to give Him children, chosen ones, who will sing His goodness forever!"

(As we go to press, we have been informed that a generous offering was made to the Cause of Delia Tetreault from the proceeds of the play, "Beautiful Bridges".)



Who is Delia?

Sr. Marie-Marthe Lorrain and myself were quite excited as we started off on our promotion tour around New Jersey. We first went to Carney's Point on the invitation of a wonderful friend of the M.I.C.'s, Mrs Amada Ariz de Fernandez.

Amada had known the M.I.C.'s in Colon, Cuba. She had studied in the boarding school of the Sisters and had kept in touch with her former teachers. She was very delighted to meet her old friend, Sr. Martha. She was eager that the two of us should meet other former students and had planned a full week of activities for us.

Amada, a born leader, had developed a very deep devotion to Delia Tetreault. She had obtained many favors from

the servant of God and she wanted other people to know about her.

Accordingly, she organized meetings with several groups. The most notable one was in Union City, N.J. where a group of former students of the Canadian Sisters met to participate in a Eucharist celebrated in Saint Augustine's Church by a Cuban priest.

After the Mass, Marthe met them and showed them the video on Delia, "Woman Beyond Frontiers". She explained how the Cause, leading hopefully to the beatification, was proceeding. She told the group that Delia had a message for all people and that message had to be spread to glorify God.



Therese, Amada, M. Marthe and Armando Fernandez.



M. Marthe with Horta family in Hialeah.

Amada and her husband, Armando, did not spare their time nor their effort to make the visit a successful one. They are real apostles interpreting the message of Delia to all those they meet.

The second lap of the journey took us to Hollywood, Florida, where another devoted couple had invited us for the same purpose. Dr. G. Bustillo and Dra. Olga Ramirez, his wife, had developed a similar deep devotion to Delia because of many favors received. They lived each day by her message. They told their friends about her. But they wanted us to come and meet many Cuban groups so that we could give further explanations.

For nearly two weeks, our hosts, this devoted couple, organized meetings with various Hispanic groups in the Miami area.

Sr. Martha was ideal for the situation for she could entertain her audience with Spanish songs which they sang with her. They listened with the greatest



M. Marthe Lorrain, M.I.C. and Mrs.



Therese LeBlanc, Dr. Bustillo, Mrs. Bustillo



C. and Mrs. Maria Montero (Kuka).



With a group of Cuban friends in Miami.



illo, Mrs. Bustillo and M. Marthe Lorrain.

interest to what Martha explained to them. At the end of the sessions, everybody wanted Spanish books on Delia.

One of the peak moments of our visit was when Dr. and Mrs. Bustillo took us to pray at the "Ermita de la Caridad". This shrine faces Cuba and the Rosary is recited continually for the Cubans.

Sr. Martha and myself were charmed by the warm hospitality offered to us by our Cuban friends in Carney's Point, in Hollywood, Hialeah, Miami, West Palm Beach and everywhere.

The former students were happy to hear about the Sisters they had loved so much during their school days. They all agreed that they had seen Delia's message lived out fully in her daughters, the M.I.C.'s who had taught them.

Now, they too, have become promoters of the Cause of Delia Tetreault in the U.S.A.

by Therese LeBlanc, M.I.C.

In the Heart of Africa



Yvette Caron, M.I.C. head nurse at the clinic.

Last year, Celine Bourbeau, M.I.C., the editor of our French "Le Précurseur", went on a service journey to our missions in Africa. As a missionary of Japan, Celine saw everything through her Canadian eyes and her Japanese heart. Life in Malawi and Zambia was a stark contrast indeed. That is why, in her log book, she noted down September 6 as a most extraordinary day.

That morning, the Sisters took her to Mzambazi, north of Malawi. Although it was a flying visit, she managed to observe some missionaries at work in

the clinic and in the mission. This is how she related her diary to us :

"When I arrived, Sr. Yvette Caron took me around the maternity ward where she serves as head nurse. There, in front, was a whole line-up of mothers-to-be. Alongside them were other mothers caring for their newborn babies. A little bit further on, some of them were standing beside the makeshift incubators where the premature babies were kept. Outside the building, some women were preparing a meal and cooking. Others were washing clothes. (These activities can be explained since the family assumes the services of caring for their sick ones.)

All around them, the children were playing with small pieces of wood or with stones as toys. A few of them sat on their grandmother's knees, for a whole world of life gravitates around a newborn baby. I heard no crying, no noise, except for one here and there asking the mother's milk.

Sr. Yvette is helped in her work by a whole team of midwives, nurses and helpers. At the time of my visit, Sr Celine Lemieux was there to give a helping hand.

Although their means are limited, although poverty can be felt everywhere, there is much love as new life is brought forth. Imagine if you can, helping a birth in the light of an Alladin lamp in 1986 ! Imagine sterilizing medical instruments over a wooden stove ! Imagine again incubators heated with hot water bottles ! And this goes on day after day.

Then it was Sr. Lucienne Gauthier's turn to show me her dispensary. This clinic serves for pre-natal care and tends to tots from 0 to 5 years of age. Sister brought me to the ward where cases of malnutrition are treated. It simply broke my heart to see these poor children staring at me, wide-eyed and silent ! No anguish, no fear, only suffering and a tiny ray of hope that could mean surely life has more than this to offer me.

Then I went to the Convent and met Sr. M. Jeanne Fortin. She plays a most indispensable role in the life of this mission. Hers is a hidden life, like that of Our Blessed Mother, but it is thanks to her services that the life of Sisters can be sustained. She upkeepes a large garden for fresh vegetables. The nearest super market is hundreds of



Marie-Jeanne Fortin, M.I.C. in her garden.

miles away. She cooks and sees to the maintenance of the house. Often, someone claims her services to drive a patient in the pick-up.

In the afternoon, I visited the Pastoral Centre where some 40 women were following a 15 day session in catechetics. These women had walked from 10 to 40 km with a baby tied on the back and a sack of provisions on the head.

Sr. Germaine Perusse was in charge of this group with one of the native Rosarian Sisters, Sr. Rita Moyo. These mothers will become leaders in their own villages in the bush upon their return home. They will help keep the faith alive in their families. They are the ones spreading the Gospel message among their own.

Around 3 p.m., the jeep was waiting for me. I had touched upon the reality of African life. I understood once more that happiness is made up of simple things. Even if life is hard, hope is still there when we believe in the one who came so that we may have life to the full. (Jn. 10, 10)"

(Original in French by Celine Bourbeau, M.I.C.)

Caring for People



Germaine Roy, M.I.C.
Executive Director of the hospital.

In 1921, some 66 years ago, 4 M.I.C.'s of Montreal, undertook the long train journey across Canada to Vancouver. For these women, at that time, Vancouver was no more than a dot on the map.

But they "were sent", as the apostles had been "sent" by Jesus one day. They were sent by Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit, the foundress of their community, at the request of the Archbishop of Vancouver, Mgr. T. Casey.

He had seen the plight of 500 Chinese children who needed someone to teach them. The Sisters soon assembled the children in a small school on Keefer St.

Luckily, one of the Sisters could speak Chinese as she had spent a few years in China, previous to her assignment in Vancouver.

A few years later, in 1924, the Sisters saw the need of opening a dispensary on Campbell Ave. Soon afterwards, they bought the old Woodward House on the same street for a convent, as well as for a small mission hospital.

There, they admitted their first 18 patients, all of them of Chinese origin. The space soon became too restricted. It was only in 1941, that they were able to purchase a piece of land, a former sheep ranch and orchard on the corner of Prince Edward Road.

The Chinese Hospital was built at the expense of their Motherhouse with some help from the Canadian Chinese community and the B.C. Provincial Government. It then contained 87 beds. The patients were served by the Sisters with a staff of lay nurses and aides, besides the 6 doctors.

The building had all the characteristics of a regular Chinese Hospital. The patients were cared for by a Chinese staff. Chinese cooks prepared their food, and everyone around spoke Chinese. The patients felt at home in such an environment. That is why it bore the name "Chinese Hospital".

When it had to expand its services, its clientele grew into a real Canadian mosaic. It became the hospital for many nationalities. There the Chinese as well as the Japanese, the Hindi as well as the Pakistani, the Italian as well as the Polish found a place to go when they were sick. But today the Chinese are still the majority; they occupy 40% of the beds regularly.

Since 1977, the hospital has doubled in size. It now has 321 beds with 151 in the acute care unit and 150 in the extended care. The hospital is under the guidance of Sr. Germaine Roy, M.I.C. Executive Director of the Hospital.

Sr. Germaine has long been recognized as the inspiration for the Board and the staff members. She well knows that their unique staff speak 42 different languages between themselves and their patients. One can hear English and French, Fukien, Cantonese, Mandarin, Amoy, Shanghainese, Hindi, Punjabi, Tagalog, Japanese, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, etc. You name it and someone will understand you !



*Olga Antosz, M.I.C.
Coordinator of Pastoral Services.*

Anyone visiting Mount Saint Joseph soon becomes aware that the aim of the staff is "People Caring for People". The motto well represents the Sisters' deep conviction that each individual is a person in his own rights. His dignity must be respected, for each one is created by God in His own image.

In all phases of life, from conception to death, the Sisters are around to show their love for their brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter what religion or race.

Sr. Olga Antosz serves the patients in pastoral ministry. Sr. Teresa Fung is often seen dispensing her love and care to her Chinese brothers. Other elderly Sisters offer volunteer services in all possible ways.

Canada—Vancouver

Last November, Mount Saint Joseph organized a campaign to raise funds for the expansion of the day care surgery unit, the radiology and ultrasound facilities. For this purpose, a well known troupe of Hong Kong TV stars were invited to present a program. These stars gave their time and benefit of their show, turning all the proceeds to the Fund Raising Program of Mount Saint Joseph Hospital.

It was the first time in 65 years, in the history of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Van-

couver, that the Sisters looked for financial support from the public. These did not disappoint them.

The Sisters are very grateful to many groups and individuals who helped or pledged to help them in their effort to offer better services to the patients. They will continue with the staff to be "People Caring for People".

(Edited from notes in M.I.C. Archives, B.C. Catholic Supplement, Nov. 30, 1986, S3, Folder of Gala Night Performance).



Dr. Jane Sproul, Lynne Holden
(Photo credit: Marianne Hamilton)

Teach me to Pray



In Cuba, the Sisters often have to prepare celebrations in the parishes as the number of priests is low.

During Holy Week, Sr. Claire Carrier had a unique experience in Los Palacios, Cuba.

"On Good Friday evening, the community of Pilotes assembled in the parish church. The celebration had just started when a group of 15 young girls entered the building, unexpectedly, and for the first time.

After explaining to them the points of reflection that I had prepared, I asked them if they wished to say something.

"Yes," answered one of them. "May we get closer to see that God on the

Cross?" I invited her to come forward. The whole group followed. Then they began raising all sorts of questions.

They admitted that this was the first time they had ever spoken with a religious woman. This went on for some time.

Then it was time to resume the celebration, so I invited them to join us. To my great surprise, they accepted. They even approached the Cross to pay their reverence with the congregation. The words of Jesus were being actualized: "I shall draw them to me..."

We invited them to come to the next celebrations. Some of them did show up for the Paschal Vigil. A few children also came in. Most of them expressed the wish to learn how to pray. Some even wished to be baptized."

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