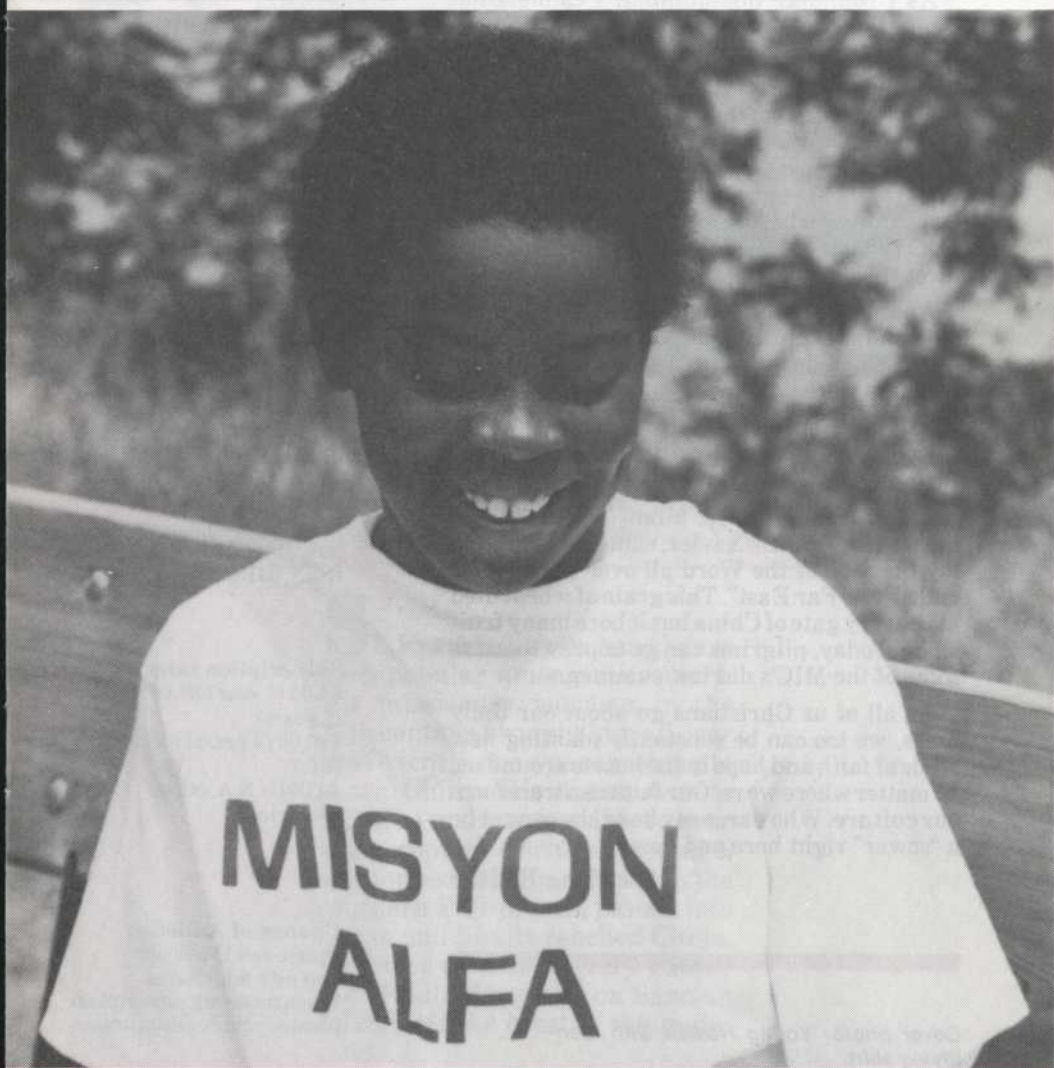


Series 15, No. 1
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MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

Although January and February are hardly months when you think of seeds and planting, this issue is really a compilation of symbolic seeds that either bore fruit or are about to bear some.

As I complete this number, I cannot stop humming the words of one of my favorite hymns: "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground, it remains but a grain of wheat".

Yes, the "seeds of the Word of God" were laid in fertile soil years ago in Manila by the Sisters who gave the best of themselves for the girls they were educating. The grain came out last summer when a group of alumnae of some MIC schools of the Philippines turned out to meet their former teachers here in Montreal.

Another sprout laid in Central Africa years ago, showed up. It was the surprise visit of nurse Chrissie here to see how her former teachers were.

In Haiti, it is still a time for sowing as Misyon Alfa is explained to us by one of the Sisters.

A few centuries ago, a now world famous missionary, Francis Xavier, came as the first to lay the seed of the Word all over the area he called "the Far East". This grain of wheat died at the very gate of China but it bore many fruit since. Today, pilgrims can go to pray there as some of the MIC's did last summer.

As all of us Christians go about our daily tasks, we too can be constantly planting new seeds of faith and hope in the hearts around us, no matter where we are. Our faith can transform our culture. Who dares say he or she cannot be a "sower" right here and now?

The Editor

Cover photo: Young Haitian with identifying shirt.

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Open Doors



The MIC Scholastics and group.

The bamboo curtain is lifting in China. The doors are opening. Several MIC's were fortunate enough to pass through these open doors to visit the tomb of their patron saint, Francis Xavier.

St. Francis Xavier has always been popular among missionaries. His missionary journeys in the 16th century brought him all over the Orient, as he was searching to reach China. His dream was to bring as many as possible to hear and accept the Christian message. He stopped in India, paused in the southern Philippines, passed into Japan and finally reached China, where he died at the very gate of the Middle Kingdom, on Sancian Island, off the coast of the mainland.



It is not surprising then, that early in their formation program, the MIC's were introduced to this great patron saint of the missions. Delia Tetreault had so much confidence in him that she called him "the dearest friend of my soul" in one of her prayer jottings of 1912. She had begged him to hand down his love for the people in the mission lands to all of her Sisters. She had even gone so far as to ask him to accept her small growing congregation as his own.

All of her young Sisters were fascinated by his biography and dreamt to go to China in his footsteps. Many of them did so, from 1908 to 1952. They penetrated far north into Manchuria; they founded missions in Suchow, Shek Lung, Tsung Ming, Canton and other places. There they served their brothers in many ways until they were forced to leave in 1952.

When they were expelled from the mainland, they settled in Hong Kong, on the border of China. For many years there was no way to penetrate into China until these recent years when the "bamboo curtain" was lifted and visitors were allowed in. This is how the MIC Sisters of Hong Kong managed to make a pilgrimage to Sancian Island, to pray on the tomb where St. Francis Xavier is said to have been buried.

The Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association has renovated the shrine and has turned it into a site of pilgrimage both for their own people and for outsiders.

The first group of MIC's who attempted this pilgrimage were the younger Scholastics from the various Asian countries, now residing in Hong Kong. They were accompanied by Bishop E. Fahy, S.J. of Taiwan and Fr. Ted Collins, S.J. of Hong Kong.

Gateway leading to the church.



"We left for Macao, the Portuguese Colony," says the narrator. "We then crossed the Chinese border, heading for the southern part of Kwantung Province. A ferry brought us to Sancian Island. We Sisters were thrilled beyond words to be able to pray where our patron saint had died. Although the pilgrimage lasted only three days, the memories we carry of the event will last for years. It will keep alive the mission flame in our hearts, that same flame that Francis Xavier had all his life and that led him to die at the gate of China."

"Sisters Theresa Chiao and Theresa Chang of Taiwan prayed for their native land. Sisters Irene Ferrer, Fenecia Dapitanon and Elvira Madolora begged graces for their country in turmoil, the Philippines, where the saint is said to have stopped on the island of Mindanao. Sr. Delia Kesayo rejoiced that she was the first Japanese MIC to make this pil-

grimage. After all, the saint had left traces of his visit in her homeland, Japan, during the 16th century. Sisters Lucie Gagné and Celia Chua, included all the MIC's, especially the ones who would one day be messengers of the Word of God and His love for all men in China."

A few months later, it was the turn of two Canadian MIC's to undertake the same journey of faith. Srs. Marie Therese Beaudette and Louise Bussieres left in the company of an Indian S.J., Fr. Paul Raj. They decided to travel by bus, to sleep wherever they could find accommodations in order to fulfill this pilgrimage of hope.

At the shrine and in the village nearby, they breathed in the atmosphere of peace and tranquility of the area. "We prayed at the Eucharist that Fr. Paul celebrated high up on the hill near the base of the stand for the future statue of St. Francis Xavier," says

M. Therese Beaudette, MIC, at the foot of the monument erected in honor of the saint.



Marie Therese. "We were facing the mainland, with the same view and hope that St. Francis must have had as he lay here dying 400 years ago."

"We were impressed by the people who approached us to chat. We could feel that they had faith. This island and its surrounding territory had once been evangelized by the Maryknoll Fathers. It was on this island, at this shrine and chapel, that Mgr. James. E. Walsh of Maryknoll had been ordained Bishop on May 22, 1927."¹

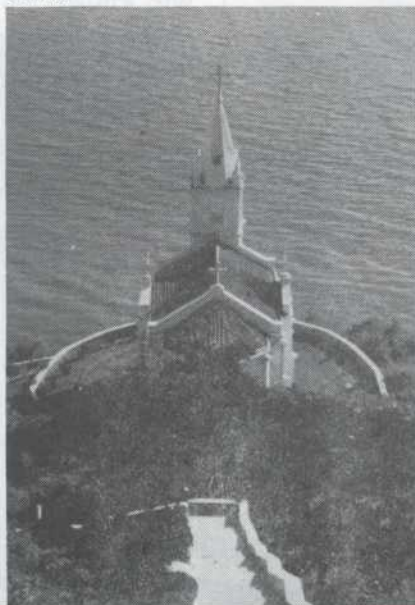
"The young people we met wanted to speak English with us and kept on asking all kinds of questions about the outside world. It was a glorious event in our lives. We never thought that this dream of visiting the shrine of St. Francis could come true."

Delia Tetreault had prayed that her Sisters be fired with the same zeal as that of her "beloved friend", the saint. Her prayers have been answered. For years now, these Sisters have gone from school to school, from parish to parish, from one country to another, burning with the same love for Christ that Francis Xavier had.

They have shared this enthusiasm for the missions with thousands and thousands of people all over Canada, many parts of the United States, the Philippines, Africa, the Caribbean countries, South America, Japan and Hong Kong and Taiwan. They still carry out the motto: "May the Blessed Virgin be known from Pole to Pole" as they meet groups to talk about her Son and His love for all men.

¹ *Tripod, (Hong Kong), No 35, p. 35*

The church wherein lies the tomb of St. F.X. In the distance is the mainland of China.



When Old Friends Meet



A group of former students of our schools in the Philippines

At the banquet... the end of a perfect day!

For many years the MIC Sisters have been educating girls in Manila and suburbs. Through these schools, the Sisters brought the Good News to thousands of them. Many of these girls belonged to Chinese families of different traditions.

The Chinese school soon grew into the large Immaculate Conception Academy of San Juan, Rizal. The girls there never forgot their teachers nor the lessons they learned from them.

All these years they have remained faithful to their Alma Mater, and they bear everlasting gratitude to the Sisters who taught them. As a result of this, last summer, a number of them came to Montreal to visit their former teachers, the MIC Sisters, many of whom are retired in Canada.

For this gathering, they came from New York, Chicago, New Jersey, San Francisco, Toronto and even Hong Kong. They were from the schools of Narra St., Intramuros, San Juan and Gagalangin, Tondo. Together they shared hours of play, recollection and prayer. At the end of the day, they celebrated by attending a Chinese banquet. For all the Sisters, as well as for all of them, it was a happy and memorable event.

It was through education that the MIC Sisters reached out into their lives and subsequently the lives of their families. It was in the day to day, nitty-gritty work of a classroom that they helped these girls become the mature women they are today. It was a planned event that brought joy and thanksgiving in all hearts.

Reunion!

*It's been quite some time since seeing you all,
More years than we'd care to admit,
But isn't the feeling just thrilling today —
Like Opening Night of a hit!*

*We travelled from so many places,
To get together to talk —
From Toronto and San Francisco,
Hong Kong, Chicago, New York.*

*We also would like to say Thank You,
For all you have done for us girls,
Instilling in us moral values,
Polishing us into pearls.*

*We want to say thanks for your guidance,
Not to mention superb educations.
Thank you for caring and showing concern,
Even in tough situations.*

*We'll never forget the wonderful nuns,
Who, sadly, are no longer here.
But their memories will always live in our hearts,
Memories we'll always hold dear.*

*We feel proud of our past and have come a long way,
From our years in the Philippines,
And it's here, in Montreal, that we finally say
We surely were fortunate teens.*

*Here's a toast to the Missionary Sisters,
Of the Order of Immaculate Conception.
Here's to you, our dear teachers, whom we love so much —
Now let's visit and enjoy this reception!*

*By Pam Leibow
For Overseas Alumanae
Immaculate Conception
Philippines*

*Montreal, Quebec, Canada
July 4, 1987*





Dr. Pilar Albano, formerly of Gagalangin, Srs Madeleine Payette, Rhea Bigras, and Claire Fontaine. Two past students standing.



The group at the Motherhouse in Montreal.

One More Stone



Josselaine Audate, MIC and Antonine in one of their courses.



Haitian people are presently undergoing an intensive literacy program. One of the Sisters has prepared a dossier explaining how the MIC's are involved. We have here extracts of this lengthy dossier.

On March 7, 1986, 30,000 people assembled at the Sylvio Cator Stadium at Port-au-Prince. They were there in answer to an appeal of Radio Soleil for the official launching of **Misyon Alfa**. This vast campaign was intended to help 3 million Haitians to read and write during the next five years.

This was considered a priority for the country to establish a democratic society. How could one ever participate in a public debate without a minimum of instruction? How could one understand fully the new Constitutions without reading them? How could one possibly vote in the same condition?

In May, 1986, the MIC Sisters met to discuss among themselves how they could participate in this development program. They were unanimous in their decision to become fully involved in **Misyon Alfa**.

The first months meant intensive preparation. This was an adult

education program. New methods of teaching and means of instruction had to be provided. Coordination and supervision were also essential.

They asked questions such as: What ways could help the people achieve a certain level of instruction in a minimum period of time? How could the Sisters reach those in the farthest districts? Where could the classes be held? These questions needed direct answers. And they were soon found.

By May 1987, the education program was already in full swing. Let us now take a quick flight over the different Haitian missions to find out what the MIC's have done in the **Misyon Alfa**.

In Trou-du-Nord, Josselaine Audate, MIC, and 2 postulants are teaching 35 children of poor families. They give them 6 hours a week of instruction. During the holidays, the Sisters met with several groups of illiterate adults.



Sr. Rita Pageau, MIC.



A group of MIC's planning the program.

In Cap Haitien, Sr. Marie-Josephe Simard and Sr. Marie Paule Sansfaçon have joined forces with the diocese to bring in the cooperation of young people. During the holidays, a four-month intensive course session was offered by these youth for **Misyon Alfa**.

At Limbe, Lise Calixte, MIC, explains her work: "I meet 150 children and some teen-agers in 5 of our classrooms. I help the monitors to prepare their courses. I supervise the entire program. I also belong to a team of 12 working on the parish level. Each month, we evaluate our work and organize for the future. We have more demands than we can fill out right now."

In the southern part of the country, Lise Doucet, MIC, finds herself fully involved in the program. With a technician, she is responsible for the southern zone. Besides representing this region on the Diocesan Committee of Les Cayes, she too is on a parish committee, forming monitors and supervisors.

At Les Coteaux, Anita Dubé, MIC, supervises 13 literacy centres. She is treasurer as well. Each group is expected to cover

one-third of its expenses.

At Port Salut, the Sisters have opened classes for children of the poorer districts. They provide the classrooms and manage to pay the expenses for the monitors with donations received from benefactors.

At Chantal, one class has 10 adults and 10 children. In this district, it was difficult to convince the people of the need for the literacy program.

Where the program has not yet been implanted, our MIC schools are opening their classrooms for the purpose of adult education, paying the monitors and helping them prepare their courses. This work is always over and above all their other mission tasks.

In their solidarity with the people in building up a new Haiti, the efforts of the Haitian and the Canadian Sisters are a small and modest contribution. But it is another stone added to the building up of a country where human rights will finally be recognized. It is one gesture of solidarity that brings brother closer to brother in the large Haitian family.

(From a dossier compiled by Jeanne Guinois, MIC.)

Here at Last



Chrissie (standing) (left to right) Pauline Longtin, MIC, Helene Labelle, MIC, and Françoise Poirier, MIC.

A young Malawi nurse, raised in Central Africa, found her dreams come true last summer when she visited her MIC former teachers and friends in Canada.

It all began on September 13, 1987 when Miss Chrissie Chirwa, a former pupil of the MIC Sisters of Malawi, Central Africa, landed at Mirabel Airport, on the outskirts of Montreal. She had boarded an Air Canada Aircraft in Drogheda, Ireland, where she is studying to become a State Registered Nurse at the International Medical Training Hospital.

As a child, Chrissie attended school at Mzimba and resided in a thatched roof hut not far from the MIC Provincial Headquarters. She often came to ask for help when she encountered difficulties in her studies.

When asked regarding the purpose of her visit to Canada, she simply responded that she had always dreamt to have the opportunity to visit with her "amama muchoko and her amama mulala", (little mothers and older mothers) whom she had known since childhood.

She wanted to become familiar with their homeland which she emphasizes, "is precious to me and which I'm eager to see."

During her two weeks in Canada, Chrissie travelled by bus. She toured the nation's capital in a sight-seeing bus, and was fascinated by all she saw in Ottawa. She did the same in Montreal. She went as far as Rimouski to meet with the relatives of a lifelong missionary friend. As a native of Central Africa, Chrissie had never seen the glory of the Canadian woodlands "afire with their foliage" as she mentioned.

Chrissie spent many happy hours with the Malawi MIC's now residing in Canada. They had much to share with her as she expressed her enthusiasm and admiration for all that she saw.

She is now back in Ireland, in Drogheda, completing her nursing

post graduate studies, attached to orthopedics wards. Her warm letter expresses part of her deep appreciation:

"As you know, I was in my glory in your country, especially in the company of friends who cared so much for me and loved me first as a child and as an adolescent. I have no proper words to express my gratitude. I know that God will reward your kindness by granting you many blessings!

It was great for me to see where all the Sisters I have known come from. I now understand better what they had to give up to come to Africa to help my people!

God love you! Merci beaucoup! Yewo chomene! Zikomo kwam-biri! In other words, thanks a lot! Paweme!

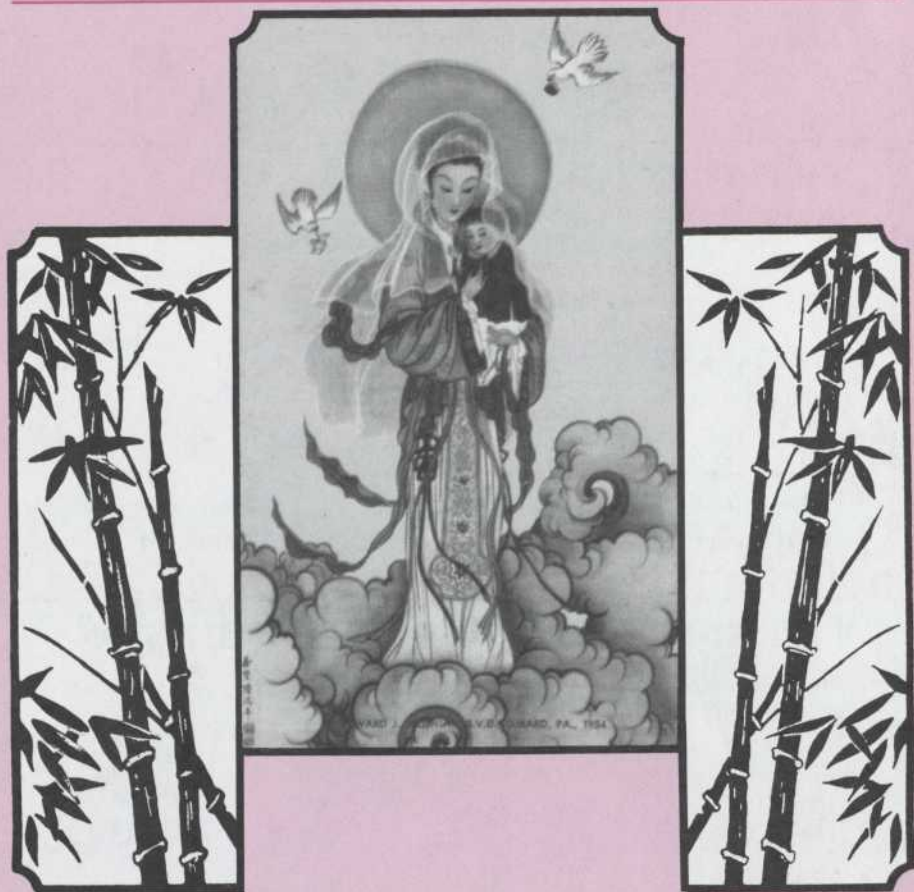
God bless,
Chrissie

(Contributed by Helene Labelle, MIC.)



Chrissie Chirwa and Helene Labelle, MIC.

OUR LADY OF CHINA



A PRAYER TO OUR LADY FOR CHINA

Mary, you are blessed! Through you, the world's salvation has come. Be present to us, helping us to treasure and ponder all things in our hearts. Teach us to see and sympathize, to wait and rejoice, to act in trust and without fear. As you come walking down the road of our lives, please know that our door is open and that there is always room for you. Hail, Mary! Alleluia!

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