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MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

Now that summer is all over and that once more we had the chance to touch life in water and wind, around trees and flowers and in one another, we need to stop and let life touch us. We need to feel its healing flow in those we live with. This season brings us all back indoors and closer to one another. We have been restored and enlivened by the warmth of the summer sun. It is now time to stop and reflect on how our brothers and sisters in the universal Church are living. It is time to prepare for Mission Sunday.

This year, Mission Sunday has a surprise in store for us. One of our own, a missionary from home has been chosen as our model all over Canada. It is Delia Tetreault herself! Therefore, from Yukon to Cape Breton, from Victoria to Charlottetown, her name and works will be proclaimed since the Propagation of the Faith has selected her to be known. It means that all of us Canadians will hear how thanksgiving can be a dynamic thrust in our life of faith as it was in the life of Delia. It still has the same driving force that compels young and old missionary women to leave home and country in order to share the faith they have received from families and parishes.

In this issue, you will also meet our newly-elected General Council. Sr. Evangeline Plamondon has generously accepted to take up the task of leading our mission institute in the steps of Mother Delia Tetreault, as Superior General for the next 6 years.

In another article, Aline Dumas will share with you her awe and amazement at the incredible happenings going on in the lives of faith of our Chinese brothers and sisters. She had the privilege to visit convents and seminaries in the heart of China, where young women and men are being prepared to dedicate their lives to God in the service of others.

May this Mission month make you more aware of the precious gift of faith we have, and compel us to share in solidarity with our missionaries.

The Editor

Cover photo: Sr. Aline Dumas with Chinese novices in China.

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He Calls, He Chooses

An interview with Sr. Aline Dumas explains how, in an official visit to China, some Sisters of Hong Kong discovered young religious women being trained to serve their local Church.



Sr. Therese LeBlanc interviewing Sr. Aline Dumas.

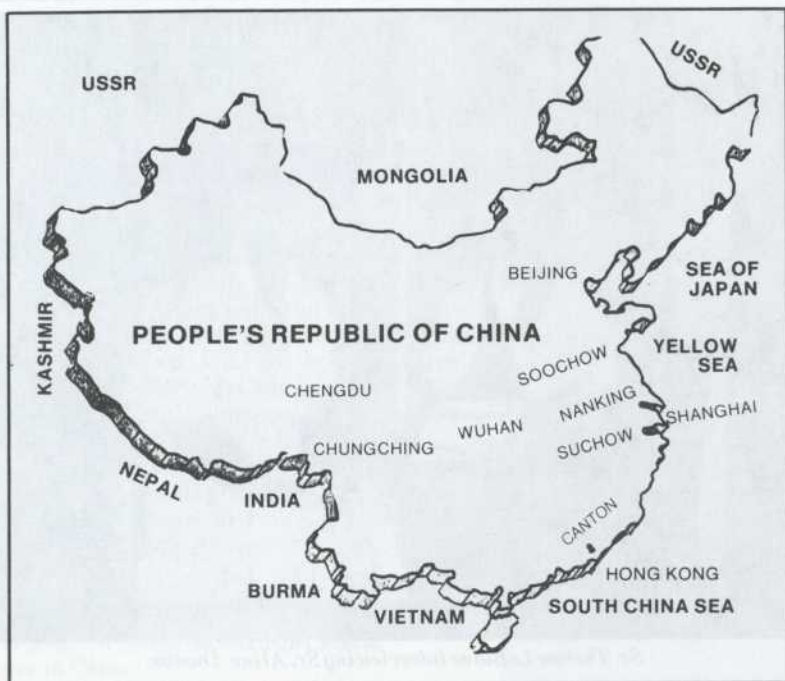
Aline, as a member of the Major Superiors of Hong Kong, I understand you went along with other members of the Association to visit five dioceses in China? How did that come about?

We thought it would be a good idea to meet our brothers and sisters of China during this Marian Year and pray with them. It was a gesture of friendship. As we wanted to dialogue with the members of the Catholic Patriotic Association, (CCPA), who were our hosts in each city, we invited Fr. John Tong, Director of the Holy Spirit Centre in Hong Kong, to organize our trip and to accompany us.

You visited five cities and dioceses. Can you tell us a few points about each stop-over you had in the various dioceses?

We went to Shanghai, Nanjing, Beijing, Wuhan and Guangzhou (Canton). We visited renovated cathedrals in most places and met with the elderly bishops of the diocese.

First, in Shanghai, we met four bishops, including Bishop Gong Pinmei, released from prison in 1985 only. From him and others, we found out that there are 52 priests in Shanghai to serve the 120,000 Catholics immersed in the population of 12 million. About 80 sisters with 20 novices also help. The bishop explained that there is a lot of concern for those





Chinese novices at study.

in training and formation preparing for the pastoral ministry. While the younger sisters go out from the convent to teach in one of the 32 parishes, the elderly remain at home making Church vestments etc. We visited the Regional Seminary, one of the 7 that recently opened. China now has 600 seminarians and there seems to be no shortage of vocations. During our brief stay in Shanghai, we visited the famous Marian Shrine of Shesan, a very popular place for pilgrimages during the month of May.

In Nanjing, we met three lively and well educated novices with their pastor, Fr. Liu Yuanren. We visited the renovated cathedral constructed on the site of a church originally built by Matteo Ricci.

It was there they showed us the gorgeous and well preserved altar vestments which had been hidden during the decade of the Cultural Revolution.

In Nanjing, we also went to the centre for the Protestant Three-Self Movement. This building houses a seminary as well as Amity Foundation serving the needs of society at large. It has educational, medical and social services as well as a modern printing press that has already turned out 20,000 Bibles.

In Beijing, we were told there were 93 priests serving 40,000 people. Twenty sisters live in the cathedral grounds and 12 novices are in training. It was in Beijing that Mr. Liu Bainian, director of the liaison for the CCPA, empha-

sized that many new churches had to be constructed and old ones restored. He told us that the immediate need was to catechize the people as well as to take care of their pastoral and educational concerns.

As questions about the leadership of Rome arose, our leader, Sr. Marie Remedios, explained how she saw no contradiction between being fully Catholic and fully patriotic. To be patriotic, she went on, is to love one's country, to support the government's just policies, while to be Catholic, was to accept the teachings of the Church which includes acknowledging the successors of Peter as the spiritual leaders of the Church.

In Wuhan, we were greeted by the very warm and charming Bishop Dong, a good friend of our guide, Fr. Tong. There was something of a homecoming atmosphere in Wuhan. Some of our religious congregations had previously worked in this diocese. There, as well as in other places, some sisters were able to meet and chat with their own religious sisters who had stayed behind when the congregation had been forced to leave. Bishop Dong has 40 sisters helping him and 16 novices. The local seminary has 116 seminarians despite the selection policies.

Finally, we reached Guangzhou, formerly called Canton. We went to Shameen where some of our MIC sisters had worked. We met with the Chinese sisters of the Immaculate Conception who have a branch in Hong Kong. Their new convent is built on the grounds of the Cathedral. There too, were many novices in training.

You mentioned novices and young sisters in training. How are these candidates recruited and selected?

It seems that periodically, the parish priest in a village invites young ladies aspiring to religious life to write an exam on doctrine. Before this test, the successful candidate is questioned on her family background. Only those coming from old Catholic families can be admitted in the novitiate of their diocese, as this is where their services will be required if they persevere.



Fr. John Tong meeting a Chinese priest.

Aline, you were Directress of Formation yourself. What struck you in their training program?

It was a similarly structured program as we had in our pre-Vatican days. The discipline is rigorous. When we visited them, they held their eyes piously down-cast. No one dared to enter into a conversation with us. While there is a very elderly nun giving them the spiritual formation, the religious doctrine is taught again by elderly priests. We offered to send younger sisters to help in the formation program but they did not seem ready for this yet.

What type of work will these young nuns carry on in China in the future?

Their services will be pastoral and social. They will teach catechism in the parishes to children and adults. They are also trained in accounting, nursing and other similar social skills. Later on, inevitably, some will be obliged to further their studies as most of them have only Middle School education, the equivalent of Third Year High School, as many come from far away country villages.

Do you believe in the sincerity of their vocation, as women called by God for a mission in the Church?

They are trained to be patriotic and serve their country. I do believe they are sincere in wanting to serve God and their Church. Whether they are answering and inner call is not for me to say. This should be verified in the course of their formation. God has ways which we can not fully understand. He calls, He chooses.



Sr. Aline Dumas with young Chinese novices in Nanjing.

I will call you friends,
because I have made known to you
everything I have learnt from
my Father.
You did not choose me,
no, I chose you.

Jn. 15, 16

Last April-May, the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception held its 10th General Chapter since the foundation in 1902. Thirty-five delegates had been elected to the assembly to discuss on the mission aspect found in the 14 countries where the MIC's work. These delegates were women of different nationalities and cultures representing the Sisters of the Malawi-Zambia(Africa), Madagascar, the Hong Kong-Taiwan region, Japan, Philippines, Cuba, Haiti, the Bolivia-Chile-Peru area(South America) as well as Canada and the United-States.

Their goal at the assembly was to deepen the spirituality of thanksgiving, our heritage from Delia Tetreault, as the dynamic force thrusting us into the world to proclaim the Good News of salvation to those who never heard of it. This spirituality would also revitalize our apostolic community life and our entire MIC mission in the Church and in society. It would also be the real source of growth and of apostolic dynamism for each MIC as she leaves home and country to serve her brothers and sisters all over the world.

In her closing address, the newly-elected Superior General, **Sr. Evangeline Plamondon** thanked her fellow capitulants saying: "We entered this capitular experience somewhat fearful, yet

Another Step



The general administration, L. to r. Srs Sylvia D., Evangeline Plamondon, Celia Chua, Jeannette Fanf.

abandoned to the breath of the Spirit of God. Many times while questioning our activities, we had to stop and marvel at God's gratuitousness, at His long and merciful patience. All through the meetings, the Spirit purified our riches and sustained us in our weaknesses. Once more, His grace allowed us to see ourselves as persons and as members of a community, to be Sisters in Jesus, fully involved in the same mission, that mission of the beloved Son. This dynamic thrust, we truly lived out by returning to the spiritual intuition

Step Forward



Sylvia Dupuis, Agathe Durand, Lorraine Levesque, Agathe Fanfan, Françoise Saucier.

of the Foundress. We are women of different cultures, the Spirit uniting us in the dynamism of grace itself."

Sr. Evangeline Plamondon, the Superior General, replaces Sr. Monique Prefontaine who served 12 years. Evangeline, a Canadian, entered the MIC's in 1963. Previous to her entry, she had taught school and was active in Catholic Action movements and the Girl Guides.

As an MIC, she was first assigned to teach in our schools of Granby and Trois-Rivieres. In

1972, she worked in mission animation in the diocese of Longueuil. She became editor of the French mission periodical for children "Amigo". In 1974, she was assigned to Peru where once more, she gave her time to mission animation on the national level in Lima. Then, as Assistant to the Provincial, and later as Provincial Superior, she found herself navigating quite often between Peru, Chile and Bolivia where the MIC's are missioning. In May 1988, she became the 6th Superior General of the congregation for the next 6 years.

Together with her, four new members were elected to serve on the general council while the bursar general and the secretary general accepted a re-appointment in the general administration.

Sr. Agathe Durand, the vicar-general, is a Canadian. She entered in 1956 and first left for Madagascar in 1965. She has a wide teaching experience both in Canada and in Madagascar. For years, Agathe has been in the formation of young MIC Sisters, again in both countries. Her latest assignment in Antsirabe saw her active with the young Madagascar MIC's in formation. She also served on teams working for permanent formation in that country, helping out lay people, priests and religious of other congregations. She has been assigned the two Canadian

provinces as her specific sector of supervision.

Sr. Sylvia Dupuis, an American, joined the Sisters in 1960 at Malboro, Massachusetts. Her first assignment brought her to retreat centres in Outremont, Joliette and Malboro. In 1971, she went to Japan where she served as teacher and directress of schools after completing several years of Japanese language studies in Tokyo. Sylvia was also a member of the Provincial council. Her present assignment makes her the liaison person between Asia, the missions of the American and Canadian, West Coast areas and the generalate.

Sr. Jeannette Fanfan, a Haitian, entered the congregation at Port-au-Prince in 1965. She has a wide teaching and administration experience both in the schools and in various other projects in Haiti. She has pursued her studies in Europe and served at the Arche near Paris; she was still on the Executive Committee of Administration of the Arche-Haiti while also serving as Provincial Assistant. Her designated sector of supervision is South America and Haiti.

Sr. Celia Chua, a Chinese, entered the congregation in Pont-Viau, in 1968. Her first mission send-off was in 1974. Celia has been serving on the Formators' Team in Taiwan and in Hong Kong. She has been very active in the Association of Major Superior in Taiwan and Hong Kong. These last 6 years, she was also Executive Officer of the Asian Service Centre, AMOR, of the Asian Religious Women Association. Celia will be the liaison person between the

sectors of Africa and Madagascar and the general council.

Sr. Françoise Saucier, a Canadian, has been re-appointed Secretary General. She entered in 1957, than was assigned to Malawi, Africa in 1963. She has both teaching and administration experience having been Provincial Superior in Africa (Malawi-Zambia) for 6 years previous to her present assignment since 1984.

Sr. Lorraine Levesque, a Canadian, entered in 1952. She taught science subjects before assuming the tasks of bursar general. She has held the responsibility for the past 18 years and will continue in her present assignment.

Each member brings to the council a rich diversity of mission experience, having served the Church and the Institute in so many ministries. The task facing them is formidable, the scope of territory is vast.

Their leadership will consist in guiding the Institute in an animation movement that will help the members to deepen their spirituality of thanksgiving as a source of growth and of apostolic dynamism. They will chart with them the course of mission in our contemporary world, always alert to the signs of the Spirit at work in people and in events. Their work will be made easier by the generosity and the prayers of the numerous benefactors, the friends of the community and the relatives of the Sisters all over the world.

The 10th General Chapter was truly another step forward in the mission of the Church!

Therese LeBlanc, M.I.C.

Loneliness, Their Greatest Poverty



Sr. Evelyn O'Neill with an elderly friend.

For the elderly, living alone, whether in care homes or in other facilities, a visit from a friend or someone who cares can mean very much. Sr. Evelyn O'Neill spends her days reaching out to those whose poverty comes in the form of loneliness, lack of identity and being forgotten by their own.

Sr. Evelyn O'Neill, MIC, left Toronto for Vancouver in 1987. She had spent 25 years previous to her Toronto work, in Zambia, Central Africa. As a pastoral worker in Toronto, she became increasingly aware of the deep suffering of the aged and so she turned her attention to them.

Today, in Vancouver, she gives much of her time to the elderly of Mount Saint Joseph Hospital as well as in the private care homes near St-Patrick's Parish. To the Catholics, she brings Holy Communion, to all, she brings comfort by her presence and her words.

"It is a meaningful time of their lives", she says. "They realize they are aging, that life is coming to an end. They hear God calling them home. All I can do is to try to lessen their loneliness and moral suffering. We would need many volunteers to help us."

"The elderly may be well cared for but unless they have someone showing them love and care, they lose interest in life. Their loneliness is their greatest poverty. I try to bring a message of hope to them. I listen; they have much to say especially when you listen not only with your ears but also with your heart. I try to be that caring person for them."

Sr. Evelyn uses her musical talents to bring them joy. "When I start a song, some of them immediately join me with a smile. I know then that something has been stirring in their hearts. They begin to hum along with the music, beating time with their hands and feet. Their eyes begin to sparkle with joy as the music takes them back to their youth. They become completely transformed and are no longer old, sick or poor, no longer lonely. "Blessed are the poor for they shall be comforted".

Philippines—Manila

A Different World

A Church-based organization feels that evangelization of the soldiers in our country is a vital element to bring about change in the Philippine society.



by Sr. Angelina Yap, MIC

The big iron door swung open. A man in military uniform signaled for us to come in. We taxied on the rough unpaved open space that served as the main road connecting the camp with the outside world.

Not much to boast about here. Low unilevel buildings bursting with soldiers. Behind them are rows of hovels for the families of the 5th GHQ Battalion, with its 700 to 900 soldiers only 10 kilometers away from the center of Manila.

We got off the taxi. We went inside one of the low buildings where the officer in charge of the strike force of the National Capital Region, (Manila) has his office.

Sr. Lilia Frendoza has been coming to this Camp for the past several months, ever since September, to minister to the spiritual and sometimes the temporal needs of the soldiers and their families.

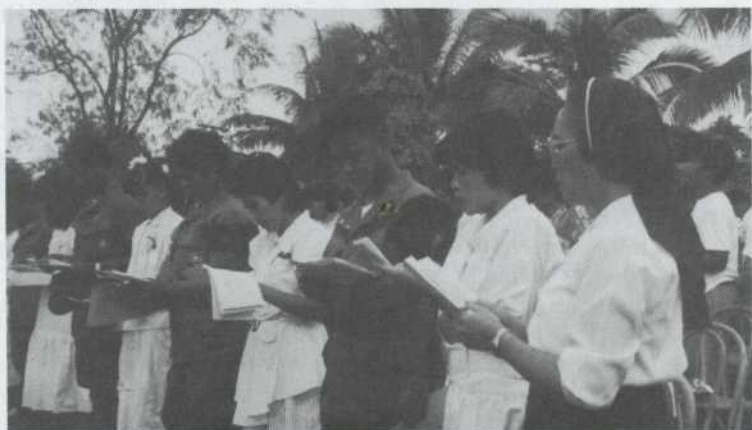
Today, we are going there to witness with her the baptism of 17 children, ranging from one month old to 8 years old. These are the children of the soldiers living within this Camp. We will also attend the wedding of several couples as well as the marriage validation of 6 couples.

This is part of the program for national reconstruction after the famous February Philippines Revolution. It is geared toward the spiritual upliftment of the military. A Church-based organization for national reconciliation feels that evangelization of the soldiers and their families is a vital element to bring about change in the Philippine society.

Some of us Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception are doing this particular type of apostolic work among the soldiers, not only in Camp Bago Bantay but also in Camp Aguinaldo, a much larger and sophisticated compound, housing the Philippine Army.

The wedding ceremonies were of the utmost simplicity. The sun was beating strong on our heads as we joined the volunteer choir from V. Luna Parish. For the baptisms, as is customary with the Filipinos, a crowd of sponsors milled around the mother and child.

A few rich ladies from Villa Verde Subdivision have donated a statue of Our Lady of Fatima to the Camp. As we prayed, we could imagine the Mother of Jesus as the silent witness to all these ceremonies. Again, she must be pondering these events in her heart, interceding for the soldiers and their families, asking her Son that they become instruments of the peace which she advocates.



Sr. Lilia Frendoza at the wedding ceremony.

A Woman From Home!



Each year the Propagation of the Faith Office selects a person who has contributed to the mission cause to be a model for all of us. Last year, it was Pauline Marie Jaricot, who had been designated. She had founded the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in France in 1817. This year, it is none other than one of our own Canadian holy women, Delia Tetreault, a woman from home!

Mother Delia Tetreault may be well known as the foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. She may be remembered as the one who helped to prepare hundreds of young Canadian religious women for the missions. This she did as early as 1909 until her death in 1942.

But what may not be so well known today is that Delia Tetreault is the one who pushed things in Canada so much that the Propagation of the Faith and the Holy

Childhood were revived in French Canada and elsewhere. Then as ever, she was a trail blazer. She dared to contact the Bishops one by one to persuade them of this responsibility. She then sent forth her Sisters to animate the Canadian Catholics and remind them of their responsibility in the mission cause.

Hundreds of these MIC Sisters went about school to school, bringing the youngsters in contact with their brothers of all lands. Some Sisters went to meet and discuss with adult groups in the parishes or in the colleges. This work is still being carried on by the MIC Sisters and other communities not only in Canada now, but in the mission countries where the MIC's work.

No wonder that this woman of action has been selected to be our model on Mission Sunday and all through the year.



Some members of the Tetreault family who attended a family gathering in Pont-Viau recently.

L. to r. Sr. Primitiva Panesa, MIC, Mrs. Diana Moultroup (distant niece of Delia Tetreault) Deborah Moultroup Buck Heather L. Buck (front) Sr. Patricia Blanchet, MIC. (Taken in Pirtleville, Az.)



Searching for our roots in Pont-Viau.

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