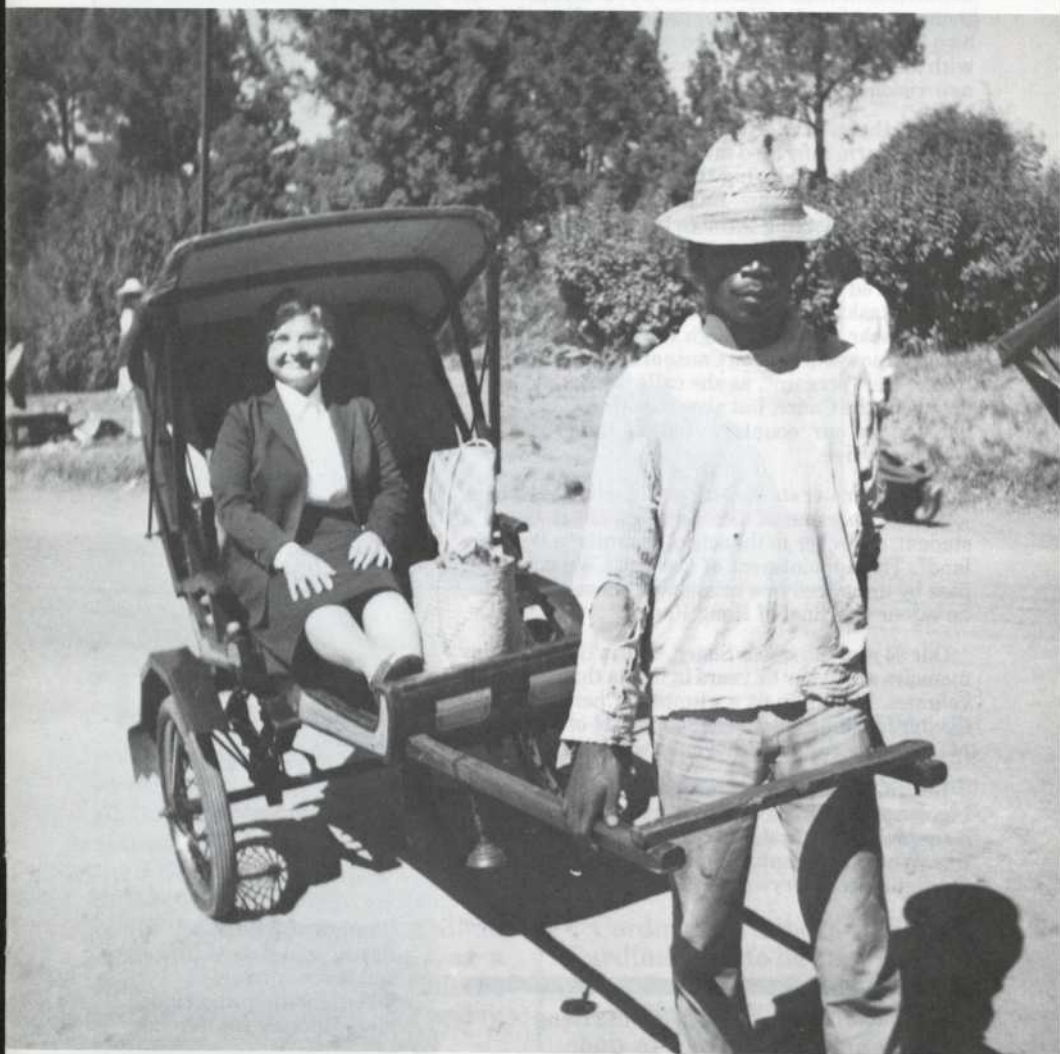


Series 16, No. 2
March-April, 1989

MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

After "Venturing North" in Ontario for a few months of spiritual renewal, I am back at the desk of Mission News. I soon discovered that many events had taken place while I was away, but then, many events occurred in my life too.

I became aware that many missionaries are very active in the home field. I met Sisters and priests and lay people fully engaged in the ministry with our own native people. I prayed with them. I admired their leaders, as I listened to them unfolding their aspirations for a better understanding of their own native culture. I prayed with them, I danced with them at a pow wow. It was good for me to have a new vision of mission.

Nevertheless, the letters, neatly piled on my desk on my return, informed me of the struggles that all missionaries have during the immersion process in a new culture. I saw Estela del Bando of the Philippines breaking through the language barrier with her friends in Japan.

I admired Irene Rivet plunging once more into mission tasks in her socialist country of adoption, Madagascar. I read through the article of Pauline Longtin, now working on Cause of Delia Tetreault in Rome. Her "scream", as she calls her article, were not about the Cause, but about another cause being debated in our country, that of unborn babies wanting to live.

Alice, a former student of our Hong Kong schools, jotted down some of her feelings about being a student, a teacher in the school she calls "a Wonderland". The appointment of Cardinal Wu could not pass by unnoticed in a mission publication. For us, he is "our Cardinal of Hong Kong".

Our 94 year old senior Sister, Gratia Blanchet, has memoirs about her 52 years in China that would fill volumes. She gives us a glimpse of her life as she lived it in China where she left a part of her heart. Maybe some day, we'll have the whole story.

Reading about these people will spur us on to become evangelizers wherever we may be, radiating some of that love that God came to share with us one day. We will all venture in mission at home, in the market place, everywhere.

The Editor

Cover photo: Irene Rivet, MIC, arriving in Tananarive

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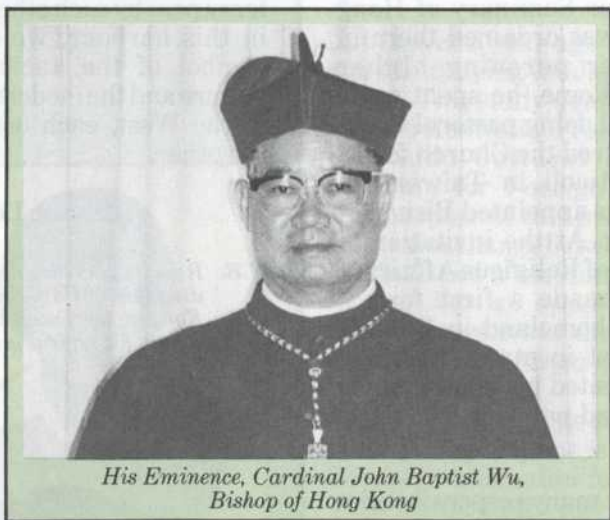
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A Bridge Builder

Among the 25 Cardinals appointed by Pope John Paul II last June was His Eminence, Cardinal John Baptist Wu, Bishop of Hong Kong. Cardinal Wu is a good friend of the MIC Sisters working in his diocese.



*His Eminence, Cardinal John Baptist Wu,
Bishop of Hong Kong*

The Vatican made a significant political gesture towards China by elevating John Baptist Wu, Bishop of Hong Kong to the rank of Cardinal, last May 29, 1988. He then became one of the 161 Cardinals of the Church. Besides the honor bestowed on the Cardinal himself, his nomination was a thrust forward for the Chinese people, both in Hong Kong and in China.

By appointing Cardinal Wu, the Pope truly manifested his loving pastoral care for the Chinese nation at large and the Hong Kong diocese, the largest Chinese diocese in the Universal Church.

Cardinal Wu is the third Chinese Cardinal ever to be appointed. In 1946, Pope Pius XII had named Mgr. Thomas Tien, then Archbishop of Peking as the first one.

After his death in 1967 in Taipei, Pope Paul VI nominated Cardinal Paul Yu Pin in 1969. He was then Archbishop of Nanking but had to reside in Taiwan where he passed away in 1978.

Cardinal Wu Cheng-Chung was born on March 26, 1925 in the village of Shui Tsai, Wuhua county in Kwantung Province of China. He received his early education in the mission schools and later completed his philosophy and theology in the Major Seminary of Hong Kong. He was ordained there in 1952. After pursuing higher studies in Rome, he spent some time abroad doing pastoral work. Then he served the Church for 18 years at Miaoli in Taiwan. In 1975, he was appointed Bishop of Hong Kong. At the invitation of the Bureau of Religious Affairs of China, he made a first formal visit to his homeland in 1985. It was his first in many years; he then also visited his aged mother whom he had not seen for many years.

One of his many responsibilities is to help re-establish links with China so that the Hong Kong Church can bridge the 30-year-old chasm between the Vatican and Beijing. He is adamant in proclaiming that "the principle not to be sacrificed is the article of faith". On the day of his investiture, Pope John Paul II reminded everyone that the task of Cardinal Wu was of a religious and pastoral nature and not a political nor a worldly one.

His motto is "to live the truth in love" (*Veritatem in Caritate*). A

brief description of his coat of arms is interesting. The lower part is a picture-map of his life. On the right hand shore of the two rivers, the plum blossoms signify his home diocese where he studied. On the left hand side, the burning torch represents the natural gas county of Miaoli in Taiwan, where he spent many years of his priestly life. The two rivers coming from different directions, flow towards the "Fragrant Harbour", that is Hong Kong. As the junk and the ferry pass by each other peacefully in this harbour, we can see the symbol of the ancient Eastern culture and the modern technology of the West, each one enriching the other.

Therese LeBlanc, MIC

N.B. It was my privilege to work under the direction of Cardinal Wu in Hong Kong at the Diocesan Catechetical Centre for several years.

The Editor



Coat-of-Arms of Cardinal Wu

Mission Insertion



by
Estela del Bando, MIC

It is over a year ago that I first started studying the Japanese language. This study qualified me to join the Homestay Program of the Hokkaido Cultural Exchange Program for Foreign Students. The purpose of this program is a cultural exchange between foreign students and a host family giving him or her an opportunity for total immersion in the Japanese way of life and language.

I had the privilege to be hosted by a young Japanese couple in Southern Hokkaido for 17 days. That meant that I had to board a ferry with my 268 fellow language students. It took us two days from Tokyo to Hokkaido. It reminded me of the beautiful scenery I often saw on the boat going from Manila to Davao, in my native Philippines.

I knew I was arriving as a foreigner, about to be immersed among total strangers, quite unlike my arrival in Tokyo last year, when I was welcomed by my own MIC Sisters. But I was thrilled with the prospect of a new experience and found I had plenty of courage to face the challenge!

With eight of my companions, I was stationed in a small town called Mori. I discovered a beautiful, quiet, clean and cool community with many trees shading its streets. The people were kind to us students, and we met quite a few of the 17,000 inhabitants living there.

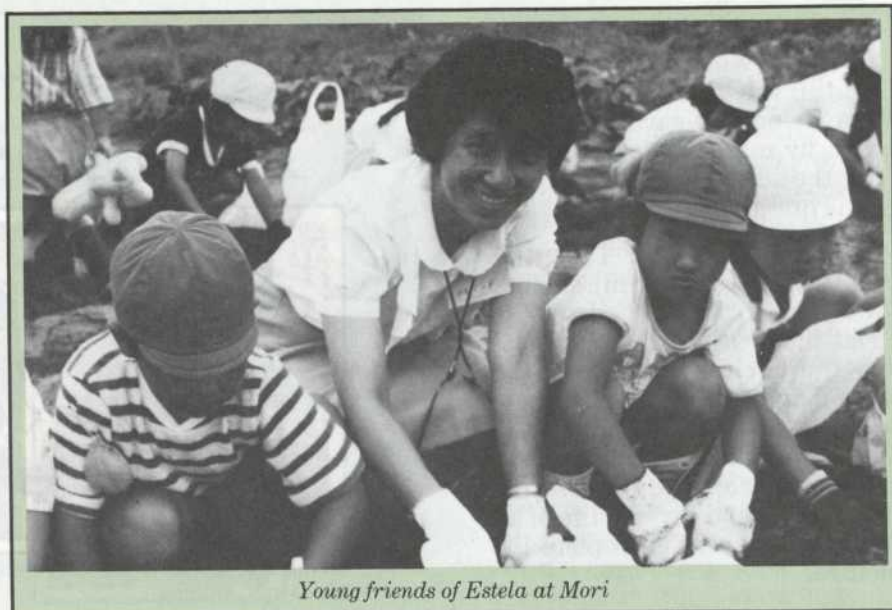
My host family made me feel right at home. I was treated as a member of their own family. This young couple had a small but comfortable cozy home, decorated entirely in Japanese style with "tatami" mats all over the house.

Noriko san (the wife) and her husband did not want me to call them "okasan" (mother) or "otoosan" (father). They asked me to call them by their own name. I soon discovered that neither of them had any religion, but they were curious about mine.

Before my arrival, when they were informed that they would host a "Sister", they decided to find out what kind of person was a Sister. They went by car to a neighboring town, an hour's ride away, to visit a Convent of Sisters they had heard of. Noriko san asked for a brochure which she read carefully. It so happened that this was a monastery of Trappistines cloistered nuns! These explained to her what a Sister was and what work she usually carried out. Now, these nuns of course were in the full traditional religious habit, with a long dress and veil. Imagine the surprise when Noriko san first saw me, in my blue skirt and blouse! She asked me if I had brought my dress, after making sure I was really Sister Estela del Bando! I then explained to her why a Sister today dresses simply as she does to carry on her work in



Takagi san, Noriko san and Estela del Bando



Young friends of Estela at Mori

the modern world. This led her to ask many questions regarding religious life, our Christian faith and Jesus-Christ.

Takagi san and Noriko san, as well as her younger brother and his wife, and some of their English language students, came many times to ask me questions about the belief of the Catholics about God. They assumed that Jesus and Christ were two different men. To them, God was another phenomenon. This gave me an opportunity to share my faith, to carry on an informal pre-evangelization sharing with them.

Like Jeremiah, I begged God to put the right words in my mouth, as my discussions were in Japanese. God really helped me! I was amazed to hear myself, I was surprised to hear the words coming out of my own mouth, as I explained to them

the tremendous love of God for men as manifested by Jesus. The Holy Spirit was really working in their hearts.

Before mealtime, I was always invited to say the blessing over the food. They began viewing tapes such as Ben Hur and demanded many explanations. On Sundays, they became interested in a TV program transmitted by Japanese Trappist monks.

I would have liked to stay on for a longer time in Mori. I became very attached to the place and its people, a town with no churches, no Catholics, yet a place where people hunger to hear the Word of God. When the program came to an end, I left bringing with me memories of this beautiful people of God who will forever remain in my prayers.

These words of Pauline Longtin, MIC, a former nurse in Malawi for 15 years, should be heard by many of us Canadians after the debates and the decision on the question of abortion.

Sr. Pauline goes on: "I spent 15 beautiful years of my missionary life in health care. If I had to write about the gratifying experiences and the exciting discoveries of those long and exacting hours of work, I'd have volumes to fill. I did not mention either learning a new language or slowly discovering the customs and ways of life of an African culture, to complete the picture.

It was in 1950 when we first opened a mission where none had existed before. All remained to be done... I am speaking of the nursing field! What a challenge we had! Caring for the sick, working in health care, educating the women in hygiene. This was part of my program, as it still is today with our MIC nurses in Malawi. The rate of infant mortality then was extremely high. The number of mothers dying convinced us of the urgency to open pre-natal clinics as well as to organize post-natal care programs.

I can still see the attentive looks of those consulting us... their eyes wide open before an anatomy chart of the human body. I recall how carefully they listened to the practical lessons we offered them as they discovered the beauty and the grandeur of motherhood. They realized for the first time that they were collaborating with the Creator in giving a new life, —

I Want to



Young mothers at a maternity clinic at Mzambazi, Malawi

these women, broken in by hard labour and native customs that did not spare them. Yes, it was something to pass on to them the values of human life, the respect one had for it.

This was in the 1950's. I returned there in the '80's. I found a few young mothers calling me "agogo" (grandmother). They told me that their mothers had informed them that I was there when they were born. They understood how I had often saved their mothers' lives in dangerous situations.

Again we spent endless hours, day and night, with maternity cases at the mission. But when the healthy baby arrived, I shared the joy of the mother and the family. In Africa, the heaviest trial for a woman is that of infertility.

You may wonder why I am evoking all these memories? It's

o Scream!



at



because I just received a letter which made me reflect. Then my reflection led me to scream: "Save life! Respect life!" This letter came from a retired missionary of Africa. Here is a brief summary of the contents:

"Today, I was thinking about you. I can't sleep anymore since they have declared that my mother was simply a vulgar "carrier" who did not have the courage to say OK. Someone who could have deposited her "living parcel", who could have gotten rid of it because it was a bother to her.

"I want to prove to you that other mothers are willing to be bearers of a new life. They want to give life to a new human person. I can still see these African women lying on the bare ground, sometimes during the rainy season, simply covered with a cotton cloth. I can see them walking miles and

miles to reach the maternity clinic in time of need.

"Your work among them was beautiful! But even today, how much remains to be done to give them more security, some comfort. And to say that the young mothers here have so much at hand, so much comfort in these circumstances. Yet, so many still lack that courage and love. I feel very upset when I think of all that. I feel like screaming! I feel a big lump rising in my throat!"

These cries express the revolt, the call that millions of silent voices are uttering! The cry of the unborn expressing their right to live! Human life is so sacred and calls for our respect and protection at all stages of growth. There is so much to be said on the matter. But let me thank all the mothers who have accepted to carry life, to care for it in its tender age and afterwards.

In solidarity with our Canadian Bishops and Bishops all over the world, besides the multitude of men and women of all ages, the staff of MIC MISSION NEWS hope that our readers will work together to protect life and the freedom of the unborn, thus assuring the welfare of everybody, including those who are not yet born.

Thank you all you mothers, reading this article! God loves you for your courage and His love which you gave to one of His own children!

Pauline Longtin, MIC

(translated from a French article)

Alice in a Wonderland

Good Hope School in Kowloon, Hong Kong, has seen many thousands of young pupils and eager girls attending classes. Ever since its foundation in 1954, many MIC's have staffed its classrooms or the administration offices, educating these Chinese girls. Alice Kingman was once a student where she is now a teacher. She shares with us some of her feelings and memories.

After spending almost 25 years here at Good Hope School, first as a student then as a teacher after graduation from an American University, it is both easy and difficult for me to write about my school. Easy because I feel I know it inside out. We've witnessed each other grow in many ways, so that today I have become a part of that school.

On a sunny, breezy day in September, way back in 1959, I disembarked from a 28-seat Good Hope school-bus and was led by a young and lively teacher into the Primary I-A classroom. Believe it or not, it was this young and lively teacher who gave me my English name Alice, as my parents had never given me one. I still remember her handing me the slip on which my name was written. She made a casual comment that somehow, I reminded her of Alice in the story of Alice In Wonderland.

And hasn't Good Hope been my WONDERLAND! Here, just like Alice, I've shrunk and stood tall, acquired wisdom through the owl and fought my dinosaurs millions of times. From a seven-year-old little girl who knew no more than a few English letters, and yet was curious and eager to learn what life would have in store for me, I've metamorphosed into a teacher, a wife, a mother of two beautiful girls, and above all, a woman fully alive.

Here at Good Hope, I've had opportunity to relive scenes of my good old school days, from sitting for examinations to performing dances on the stage. And rising from troughs of disappointments and frustrations, I've ridden on crests of enlightenments and truth.

There was a time when I was naive enough to see the good grades attained by my students as the

only proof of my ability as a teacher. I would feel so proud of myself as I bragged about Jane or Susan getting so many 'A's or 'B's. But time has taught me to appreciate my students as they are, and Amy, who has graduated with no 'A's or 'B's, is just as important and unique in her own ways.

Perhaps this can explain why no longer do I get over-anxious about Robyn, my eight-year-old daughter's examination results at school. It's not that I'm not concerned about her academic performance anymore. It's just that I strongly believe that she has had enough pressure with a mother who is a teacher at the same school. More important, I'd rather see her grow from a child to a person who is generous in giving and sensitive to the needs of others. Right now, she will hand

me a hot towel when I sit down on the sofa to relax after a whole day's work. She will also share her candy with children she doesn't even know in the park or ask about the health conditions of some old relatives.

I keep telling myself that if I were to be a demanding mother, I would ask that my children never stop growing to be warm and caring persons who will reach out and touch others and make this world a better place, if they can.

Thanks to Good Hope, I am who I am today. I surely hope that my two daughters, Robyn and Steffi, will have the same luck as I have had to experience the Wonders within the walls of Good Hope.

Alice Kingman
(Good Hope School teacher)



Steffi, Alice, Robyn

Baby Boom Days

In a society where we hear of children being abused, where some babies are unwanted, it may be the time to remember that Canadian Sisters did so much to save the lives of dying babies in China.

The MIC Sisters first took the Creche at Canton in 1909 from a French community. Until 1951, the Sisters kept accepting over 3000 babies each year. These were brought to them for care and survival when possible.

Sr. Gratia Blanchet, a veteran missionary now 95 years old, spent 52 years of her life in China. She has statistics to prove that some 124 562 babies were brought to their Creche at one point or another. She claims that due to the frail conditions of the newborn babies, they managed to save about 20-25% of them. Many of them were dying already when they were deposited in their care.

It was a time when infant mortality was high in China and in many other countries. Various sociological reasons accounted for this custom of giving up dying baby girls in a country where there was so much poverty.

Our 94 year old Sister Berthe Dufresne still remembers that it was her task to receive these babies. How many lives she saved from 1917 to 1940, only God knows! At the age of 5 or 6, the tot was transferred to the adjoining orphanage. Here it was Sister Marie-Anne Rompré, now 83 years old, who took them under her supervision for education. She did this from 1933 to 1951.

These three elderly missionary Sisters are now residing at Pont-Viau, Laval, where they spend their days in prayer, work and reminiscences about the "little girls" they left behind them when they had to leave the country in 1951.

Recently, they received a letter informing them that some 20 or so "orphans" (now most of them grandmothers) had assembled in Canton to offer a Mass for one of their deceased schoolmates. This was also a Thanksgiving Mass for all that they had received from the MIC Sisters when they were young and helpless.

This news touched the hearts of our dear Sisters. They wrote



(l. to r.) Sr. Marie-Anne Rompré, Sr. Gratia Blanchet, Sr. Berthe Dufresne

immediately to 150 of them through a channel in Hong Kong. With the accompanying photo, they identified themselves by their three names, — the baptismal one, the religious name and the Chinese name by which they were known to these girls. Sr. Gratia became Lin Sau-Neuih, Sr. Berthe was Ho Sau-Neuih, and Sr. Marie-Anne was known as Gnan Sau-Neuih.

Sister Gratia showed me statistics of 1948, when they had a total of 658 children at the orphanage. (The babies at the Creche are not counted here.) She knew that 119 of them went back to

their families, 14 were adopted, 22 were moved to other orphanages, 16 of them are unheard of, 31 are married, 6 emigrated to Canada, 27 became religious women, 187 of them died between the ages of 6 and 20.

How these Sisters managed for so many years with the little funds they were allotted is nothing short of a miracle of faith and hope. Like Sister Gratia says: "We were both mother and father to these children. We gave them all we could and had. It was certainly Baby Boom days for the MIC Sisters of that area!

Don't Worry, Be Happy



Irene at her desk

Last June, 1988, some of us MIC's accompanied Sr. Irene Rivet and her companion, Sr. Alma Couture to Mirabel Airport where they were to board a KLM jet, bound for Amsterdam, Nairobi, and Tananarive in Madagascar. With us were numerous members of both families bidding the missionary Sisters "good-bye" for the next 5 years.

I knew Sr. Irene well. We shared many a secret during that one year when we lived together. Mission had drafted me to Asia, mission had sent her to Madagascar; we had never met before, yet we were Sisters at heart in many ways.

We shared our mission experiences together: hers in a socialist country unable to rise up from its poverty, mine in Hong Kong, in an affluent society which is searching for the true God, as well as in the Philippines which I saw rising from the ashes of World War II.

Irene told me how hard it had been to say good-bye to her 90 year old father. He knew he'd never see her again, yet he was happy to see her go off where the Lord was calling her. As he kissed her good-bye, he whispered: "We'll meet in Heaven! Be happy!" He could not accompany her to the airport as he had done on her first home leave.



Irene with a group of Malagasy Sisters and novices

Today, Sr. Irene is busy in her task as Assistant Directress of Novices in Antsirabe. She is assisting a Malagasy Sister who is the Directress. She lives with a group of Malagasy novices and Sisters as she shares her faith, her education with her MIC companions. Her latest letters tell us how

she feels fulfilled in doing her work there among her beloved people of Madagascar, directing young novices in the spirit of thanksgiving and mission bequeathed to us by Delia Tetreault.

Therese LeBlanc, MIC

In Memoriam

We invite our readers and friends to join in prayers with us for Sr. Madeleine Loranger, MIC, who passed away peacefully at the community infirmary on January 4, 1989.

Sr. Madeleine held several responsible positions in the community, being one of the pioneers who first set up our missions in Malawi, Africa in 1948. Later, she served for 12 years as Superior General of the Institute, from 1964 - 1976.

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