

Series 16, No. 4
July-August, 1989

MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

When I heard about the two African Sisters making their first commitment in the MIC Institute, it made me reflect on the words of Jeremiah: "Before I formed you in your mother's womb, I knew you; before you came to birth, I consecrated you; I have appointed you prophet among nations." (Jer. 1:1-40).

Then came the report in this issue, of the four young aspirants of the Philippines, also chosen like Jeremiah to be prophets to their people, serving the poor, healing wounds. All of them have given their full trust to the Father, knowing that He loves them, that He will care for them as they give up family, home and country as missionaries in all parts of the world.

They hope that some day, they will be called to care for lepers as Sr. Jeanne Bouchard tells us here; they hope to be life savers like Sr. Jacqueline Vachet in Zambia; they wish to be promoters of peace in a world whose walls are cracking with violence and unjust laws.

They go forward in HOPE. "Do not be afraid, for I am with you to protect you." Like Jeremiah, they know He will put words in their mouth, He will help them build and plant.

These new missionaries need your solidarity and support during their years of formation for the mission work. Why not send them a note in Zambia, in Baguio? They might answer you in Citumbuka, in Tagalog? Who knows?

The Editor

MIC MISSION NEWS a
bimonthly published by
the Missionary Sisters of
the Immaculate
Conception.
Issued August, 1989

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Printed by "Imprimelec"

Second class mail
Registration No. 0358
Return postage
guaranteed
ISSN 0315-9655
Printed in Canada

Subscription rates:
\$4.00 (1 year) \$7.00
(2 years)
\$10.00 (3 years) \$50.00
(life)
\$4.00 (U.S.A. other
countries)

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Be With Us, Lord

In Baguio City, the MIC's have a Novitiate where aspirants to missionary life are prepared for their future apostolate. Four of these young ladies, in the stage of preparation called postulancy, relate some of their initial experiences of formation.



L. to r. Judy Saludes, Aurora Oliva, Florita Galido, Violeta Tutanes.

We, the postulants of Baguio City, Philippines, Judy Saludes, Violeta Tutanes, Aurora Oliva, and Florita Galido eagerly joined the neighborhood Family Rosary Crusade. We became involved in the pastoral ministry by visiting patients at Baguio General Hospital and we facilitated a Basic Bible Seminar at Barrio Tocmo, Itogon. These are all part of our Initial Formation Program and our participation in the thrusts of the local church.



The Pilgrim Virgin in a home.

The Family Rosary Crusade

During October, the month of Our Lady of the Rosary, families belonging to Saint Joseph Parish held a Family Rosary Crusade. The activity was initiated by a group of lay persons devoted to our Blessed Mother. The parish was divided into sectors or blocks composed of neighboring families and a leader chosen to coordinate the activity in each block.

A statue of Our Lady was brought from one house to another where it stayed overnight. There, families in each area prayed the Rosary together as a community.

This parish activity concluded with each block bringing their own statue of Our Lady in procession to the Parish Church where the whole congregation celebrated the Eucharist.

Our participation in the Family Rosary Crusade gave us oppor-

tunity to see and observe how the people, both young and old, were so devoted to Our Lady.

Pastoral Ministry in The Hospital

Every Friday, we visit patients at the Baguio General Hospital, a government institution. Our visits allow us to meet people who come mostly from the northern part of Luzon, specifically the Mountain Provinces. Aurora Olivia relates her pastoral experience:

"One day in the surgical free ward, I observed a patient in a tent-like bed. When she called out to me, I stood beside her and asked what I could do for her. Between her sobs, she related in the Ilocano dialect, her sad flight from Kalinga-Apayao to Baguio City. She was seriously burned. A jealous girlfriend had poured boiling water over her! I looked at her closely and I saw that she was naked. Her shoulders, arms, abdo-

men, sides and one leg were severely scalded. I felt her pain and I was moved to pity for Maria. She poured out her frustrations, pains, worries and longing to get well, as much as her desire to forgive her friend. I held her hand to affirm her and to pray for her husband and her two children."

Listening, paying attention and journeying with the reality of pain and struggle of another person demands courage. This is one of the insights we discovered during our Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) at Makati Medical Center, Metro Manila. Moreover, we had learned that in the process of pastoral care, the patient is the focus of interaction. According to Henry Nouwen, S.J., the greatest compliment a pastoral person can receive is to have it said of himself: **"That person really understands me, and as a result I feel comforted."**

Basic Bible Seminar in Tocmo

Tocmo is a barrio located in the municipality of Itogon, province of Benguet, Mountain Province. It is about twelve kilometers from Baguio City with around 150 families belonging to the Ibaloi ethnic group. The people are peace lovers and live a simple life. Most of them cultivate vegetables and flower gardens for their living. Some are engaged in gold mining, others, in gold panning.

The people's access to the Church for Mass is not easy. Through the initiative and request of the parish priest, the MIC community was asked to help in bringing Christ to them. Thus, every Sunday, the Sisters go to Tocmo and gather together the faithful in the barrio chapel to celebrate the Word and to receive Holy Communion.

On a clear sunny day last October, after the celebration of the



In Tocmo chapel, preparing for the liturgy.

Word and the reception of the Eucharist, about 12 women of different ages stayed behind to attend the Basic Bible Seminar (BBS). This was organized in response to the expressed need of the people to understand the Gospel message and apply it in their life. (The BBS is a course on the basic study of the Bible.)

Aurora Olivia and Judy Saludes, with Sr. Felicitas Tobias, MIC, facilitated the seminar. It was given in the form of a lecture in the llocano dialect. Every conference started with the enthronement of the Bible followed by scripture reading and a concluding prayer.

The seminar culminated in November with a Mass. Certificates were distributed to the

participants. It is hoped that they will form the core group in the deepening of Christian faith among themselves through Bible sharing and group prayer.

We are experiencing a growing involvement in these various apostolates. All we find around us calls for our active participation: our own neighborhood, the hospital in the city, as well as the village of Tocmo where many people of God have kept the faith truly alive. As missionaries, there will be more work to be done, yet with joy in our hearts, we welcome the challenges knowing that we bring the Lord everywhere we go.

Florita Galido
Aurora Olivia
Judy Saludes
Violeta B. Tutanés



Mothers in a Bible sharing session.

Life is so Precious!

A few days after Christmas, someone rushed into the dispensary with a message. They were requesting the help of Sr. Jacqueline Vachet, a midwife. A woman had just given birth to a baby in the bush as she was on her way to the clinic. Her only companion was an eight year old girl.

Immediately, Sr. Jacqueline picked up her midwife kit and left in the company of Sr. Suzanne Leclair and an aide in the pouring rain.

They found the mother leaning against bunches of tall grass and the newborn baby lying in the rain. After examining the mother, Sr. Jacqueline found that another baby was on the way! Meanwhile, Sr. Suzanne hurriedly wrapped the first born in a woolen blanket taken from an emergency pack. She placed her umbrella over it to protect it from the rain. When the second baby was born, she did the same. Luckily, Sr. Jacqueline had picked up a second blanket as they had left the dispensary! Sr. Suzanne managed to keep the baby warmly tucked on her against the penetrating cold.

The two Sisters returned to the dispensary, drenched but happy, each one carrying a newborn baby, well protected against the rain. The mother followed behind, eager to change her clothes and warm

up in a soft bed. These little twins may never know how their lives were saved that rainy day. Incidents like these do occur when you are far from the large Centres, and working close to people in Zambia. Jacqueline and Suzanne were both happy that they saved two young lives that day. Can you blame them? New life is so precious!



Jacqueline Vachet, MIC, with sick baby.

Together in

Little did Delia Tetreault suspect that one day there would be MIC Sisters of so many nationalities in her small missionary congregation. She felt then that Canada was called to go forth to share its faith in Jesus our Lord. Today other young ladies share the same aspirations in corners of the world such as Zambia, and thanks to Delia's prophetic dreams can see them come true.

Two young aspirants to religious life, Theresa Katongo and Pascalina Mpundu found an answer to their yearnings as they read about Delia Tetreault and the MIC Sisters in a vocation pamphlet published by the SEASC (South East African Study Conference.)

Theresa and Pascalina, both members of the Bemba tribe of Northern Zambia, joined the first group of aspirants in the novitiate of Chipata. As their initial formation was completed, they knelt before His Lordship, Bishop Medardo Mazombwe, to pronounce their first vows of chastity, poverty and obedience as missionary Sisters.

Yes, both Pascalina and Theresa know and accept, like all MIC's, to go forth and bring the Good News of salvation to all people in any part of the world. It is one thing to accept religious life, it is quite another to commit oneself fully to missionary life... and they know it... after three years of formation and study.

That is why they answered affirmatively and firmly the Bishop when he asked them: "Is it your desire to serve the People of God in the Institute of the Mis-

Last February, in the cathedral young African MIC Sisters made their native land, to be full time



L. to r. Theresa Katongo, MIC, and



Bishop M. Mazombwe signing the register

in Mission

thedral of Chipata, Zambia, two
made their first commitment in
time missionaries.



MIC, and Pascalina Mpundu, MIC



the register. Pascalina (left) Theresa (right).

sionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, are you resolved to go wherever you will be sent to be witnesses to the universality of salvation and to be a visible sign of God's love for all and of communion among the Churches of diverse continents?"

After a prayer for the Sisters and the signing of the register, the celebrant gave them the crucifix, the Bible and the Constitutions of the MIC Sisters.

Many priests and religious witnessed the ceremony. But Pascalina had as special guests her aunt and uncle, Mr. and Mrs. Bobo. Theresa had her mother and twin sister who had travelled a whole week to be present on the day she would offer herself to God. For African families, as for any family, the gift of a daughter in religious life is an event in life.

Yes, Delia's dream is extending far and wide, much farther and wider than she would ever have anticipated in 1902 when she founded the Institute. Today, there are still 870 MIC's of all nationalities working in different countries side by side, sharing their lives of faith and thanksgiving. They may be Cubans, Haitians, Chileans, Peruvians, Bolivians, Canadians, Japanese, Chinese, Filipinas, Zambians or Malagasy. They are there because they believe in a dream, they believe in sharing their faith and their lives with brothers and sisters in all sorts of ministries. This will be the life of Sr. Pascalina and Sr. Theresa.

Marie Leclair, MIC

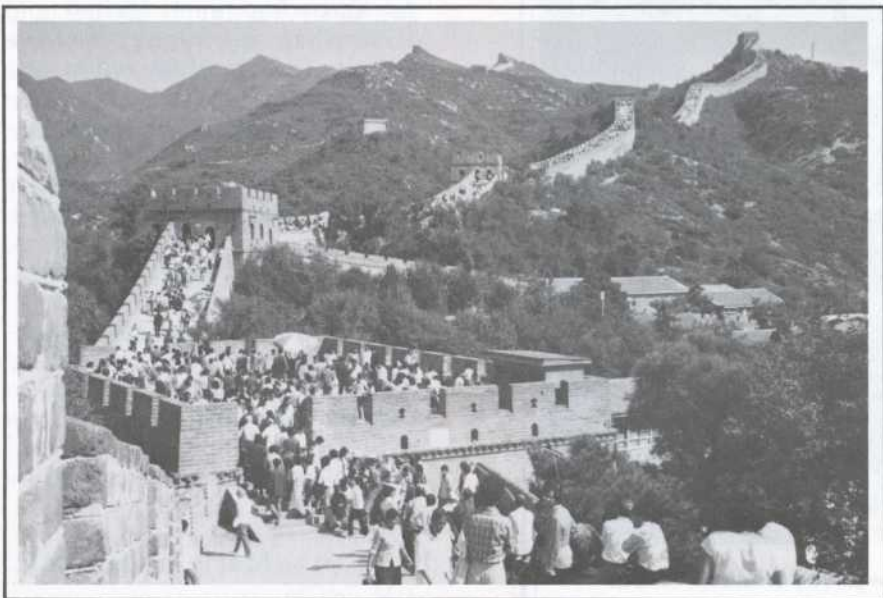
Is There a Crack in the Great Wall?

(This article was written a few months ago long before the present day student protests in Beijing).

Colette Soucy, a Canadian who reads and speaks Chinese, is presently on a teaching assignment at the Canada-China Language Centre of Beijing Normal University in China. As she roams about, she confides to us some of her reflections on the contemporary Chinese society.

Is it possible that the Great Wall can have a crack? All walls can be cracked! For centuries, China has been a mystery, walled in as it was to protect itself from

the outside world. The foreigner was seen as an intruder, an invader, a profiteer, or even as a dangerous corrupter. For a long time, the only way China could



survive was to forbid the undesirable alien to enter its compound; the doors were closed with double bars. Of course, sentinels watched closely over the fortress. Nowadays, it seems different. But is it really so?

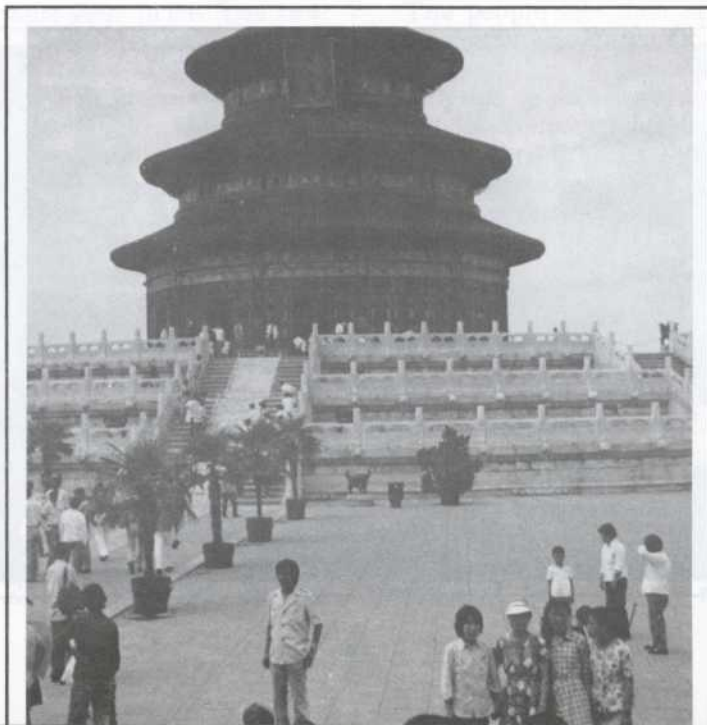
The End of Protectionism

You're hardly out on the crowded streets of Beijing, when you notice these foreigners from all over the world. The ever present photographers, the passionate collectors, the students of holistic medicine, the inquisitive sinologists, the hyped disco-dancers or the simple visitors criss-cross one another all day long. Each has his specific interest, his hidden motivation as well as his inner plan. Is the era of high walls around homes, of minute window openings, a thing of the past? It seems so, but do we really know?

Open Door Policy

It's true that there has been an opening in policy these last ten years or so. China wants to modernize, wants to get into the technology race, trying to keep step with the more developed countries. But, to do this, can it remain inside the Great Wall, well protected in its jade tower? The Great Wall is still there for sure, but the isolation from the rest of the world is evidently a thing of the past. You can now enter the Forbidden City, you can escalate the Great Wall, as long as you have the "yuan" to pay.

The open door policy is clearly perceived all over the place. Even in far-off regions, in small remote villages, new hotels and restaurants are springing up to welcome the foreigner. They even have English posters to display their goods. What you really see is the



dollar sign of the tourist industry. But who can tell what is underneath? These same tourists leave behind them not only their money, they also carry with them their own specific values in life, their own life philosophy.

Everybody is Affected

The direct contact with foreigners can have some effect on China... the same goes for indirect contact. The media is surely influencing the people of New China. Western products are displayed all over the place! In the book shops, you can buy all kinds of printed matter, documented tapes. You can read about philosophy, business, economy, computers, politics, pornography, etc. They may be simple copies or adaptations from Western writers... not always mentioned. Over the roof of each home, the TV antennas are catching the waves of Western culture and penetrating into each

home. Nobody is spared! Is this good or bad? Who knows?

Some Chinese are worried with this open door policy. They believe it is incompatible with the building up of a Socialist society. People are repeatedly warned against subversive Western thought, against bourgeois liberalism, excessive consumerism, unrestrained capitalism. It seems clear to me that capitalism is here! You can see it the minute you enter Tiannemen Square, in front of the Monument of the Heroes, in front of Chairman Mao's picture.

The Syndrome of the "Meih Yau"!

When you enter a State store and notice the indifferent attitude of the sales clerk, you understand at once that they are not helping the Socialist economy. The minute you enter, someone will shout "Meih Yau" even before you ask for any product. (We have none)





The Free Market - selling music cassettes.

Surprisingly, on the "Black Market", not far from there, the same products are sold at a competitive price. The vendors convincingly show you their wares, inviting you to name your price. You can bargain! These small business men are motivated by the profit they make.

These markets are flourishing, everything is available from cotton shoes, silk underwear to gems of jade and gold. As long as you have the money! A tourist magazine recently advertised: "Since 1986, gold necklaces, rings, earrings and bracelets are the rage. These 24 carat gold rings are made in Beijing!" Is this wild rush for luxury items a sign of prosperity or a consequence of capitalistic infiltration? Each day, you read about dozens of corruption cases being reported, as well as robberies and mismanagement of funds. Everybody wants to get

rich fast. "Money talks loud here!" Did capitalism creep in through that crack in the Great Wall?

Capitalism or Socialism?

The people feel torn apart by the agonizing dilemma. On the one hand, they don't want capitalism at all, and on the other hand they want the economy developed according to capitalistic principles. They want to encourage production and personal initiative. What compromise will they have to do? You can hear all over the place: "Change money!" You wonder whether the sentinel on the fortress has not been perverted? Is Mao's China with its open door policy paying too high a price for modernization?

Even if we seem to be able to penetrate easily inside the walls, can you bring in "outside products"? The Emperor had said once that they had no need of

outside products inside the Great Wall. Could it be that in spite of appearances, China is still protected inside that Great Wall and that its people are satisfied with merely peering through their small windows? I'm not sure any more! But this is what a certain Mr. Li states in a popular literary essay published recently: "Through the Small Windows". "The conditions of life", he says, "are gradually changing. But old ideas are difficult to put away!" He warns us not to be too naive about appearances.

After living here in China these last months, I have the impression that the Walls are not only cracking but they're ready to blow up! But Mr. Li invites us to be prudent and this makes me doubtful of my own opinion. He adds: "Many

people still believe what their ancestors believed; they're still locked up in their dreary rooms. A few aspire to open the windows, and the mood of these last years is more encouraging for them. Some day life outside the walls will penetrate, -golden rays of the sun, silvery rays of the moon, tender rays of lovers' eyes all these rays will enlighten our lives." This opening would bring joy. The Great Wall will be lit up. But... when will that be?

Probably Mr. Li's dream is that of the New Generation of the Chinese Republic of China. It dreams of light, of love, of freedom. May this dream one day become a reality! Thus, the crack in the Great Wall will not have been in vain!

Colette Soucy



Colette Soucy in Beijing.

They're Still Beautiful!

Way back in 1913, Mother Mary of the Holy Spirit (Delia Tetreault) accepted a mission in Shek Lung, a leper colony near Canton, China. Her sisters remained there until 1952 when they were forced to leave. Among the nursing Sisters was Sr. Jeanne Bouchard now living in Hong Kong. This year, after an absence of 36 years, she was invited to go back to visit her leper friends and the island where they had lived for so many years. She left with Sr. Therese Bellerose and a Chinese friend.

"I had received many invitations, including a letter from the Director of the Leper Hospital to inform me that I was welcome and expected. At 2 p.m., we arrived at Tung Kuen, the place where our leper friends had been moved. Although it was raining, the place had a festive air. In the large room where we met them, we had an emotional meeting indeed. There were tears of happiness, cries of joy, hugs, tokens of affection and recognition. This or that person approached me asking: "Don't you recognize me? I was young when the Sisters left us! But I can still remember that day! To avoid any demonstrations, the new authorities had assembled us in the chapel. It was truly a sad day for us... how we cried!"

I noticed that the disease had disfigured quite a few of them.

*Sr. Jeanne with her leper friends in
Shek Lung, China.*

But they were beautiful in my eyes in spite of their disfigurement. They stood there, smiling, calm and resigned. They still look forward to a better life. When I worked with them before 1952, I can well recall how many of them would say before dying: "In heaven, there is no more leprosy, suffering or tears!" I can see that they believe in God even now by their smiles and serenity. I even had the privilege to pray with a dying old man before leaving.

One of the medical attendants whispered that whenever he sees a patient about to die, he talks to him about the Lord Jesus... "I am happy then, for God is with me!"

But after four wonderful hours, we had to leave. It was another reluctant good-bye. On that island, the Rosary used to be recited continually. It was truly an Island of Prayer. May these prayers continue in the hearts of those suffering lepers whom I'd love to serve once more if I could."

Jeanne Bouchard, M.I.C.

(Translated by Virginia Robertson)



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