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MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

This year being United Nations Literacy Year, we are happy to introduce you to one of our three Hong Kong schools. Tak Oi Secondary School was founded twenty years ago at the request of the diocese of Hong Kong. Thousands of girls have already graduated from this bilingual, Anglo-Chinese school. Sr. Monica Lam explains briefly and simply the philosophy of the school in one of our articles.

At a time when the debate on abortion is still making headlines, Sr. Lise Tremblay, an MIC nurse, explains her options for her favorite patients, the children.

Sr. Therese Blais allows us to take a look at her diary as she returns to her mission at the MIC Novitiate Formation Centre in Zambia. Gloria Teresa, a young Cuban novice, shares her intimate feelings about the call she heard from the Lord and her response.

Sr. Marie Therese Beaudette of Hong Kong brings us once more into China where she had the privilege to join a pilgrim group meeting the faithful Christians who impressed her with their simple faith and trust in the Lord. Now that we are in Lent, it will remind us that we must pray in union with our brothers of countries that do not have our religious freedom. Here's hoping that their Easter Alleluia will ring as loudly as last year. Together with them, we will prepare the way in our hearts and in our lives for the coming of the Risen Lord.

The Editor

Cover photo: Sr. Marie Therese Beaudette with the faithful praying Our lady

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What Does it Mean?

In Hong Kong, Catholic schools are in demand. Tak Oi Secondary School, an all-girls school, is one of the three institutions managed by the MIC Sisters.

You may wonder what is the meaning of **TAK OI**? Why name a school "Tak Oi"? First of all, in the Cantonese language, "tak" means virtue, and "oi" means love. The school was purposely called Tak Oi Secondary School since we MIC's had already two other schools by the name of Tak Sun, virtue of faith, and Tak Mong, virtue of hope. So quite clearly the third school took the name Tak

Oi. It first opened in September 1970 with five MIC's and a teaching staff of several Chinese lay teachers.

The building is located in Tsz Wan Shan, on the slopes of a Kowloon mountain. The area is heavily populated and around the school are hundreds of high rise living estates where thousands of families live. In this modest



Tsz Wan Shan, Kowloon



Sr. Monica Lam with graduating students



Tak Oi Secondary School in Tsz Wan Shan, Kowloon



Joan Chan



quarter of Kowloon, thousands of workers line up for the buses each morning to go to their work. The children of these workers may attend any one of the numerous Primary Schools of the housing estates. For secondary education, they must attend one of nearby Secondary Schools. Tak Oi was the first to be built in the area of Tsz Wan Shan.

Today, the school population in Tak Oi is over one thousand girls. The students range from Form One to Form Seven according to the British system of education. There are 50 full time teachers and 23 auxiliary staff members serving the school. Sister Monica Lam, a Chinese MIC, is the Headmistress since 1976.

Among the many school facilities provided by the Department of Education for this subsidized school, there are 24 schoolrooms, four science laboratories, a well stocked library with both English and Chinese books.

Many activities are offered to the students. They may join any one of the 22 clubs and societies, including social services, academic or interest groups. There are also possibilities for sports, religion and cultural activities. Special sessions are given to Catholic students.

When Joan Chan, an Upper Form student interviewed Sister Monica for an article in a local Hong Kong newspaper about her expectations of the Tak Oi students, this was her answer:

"Firstly, I would like the Tak Oi students to put their whole heart in whatever they do, whether this be play or studies. Secondly, I expect them to bring their problems to their teachers so as to get help as soon as possible. Thirdly, I should like to see them independent and not always relying on their teachers. The Upper Forms should help the Lower Forms since Tak Oi is like a large family. Lastly, I expect them to be polite at all time. This is a part of our moral education program. This courtesy is also characteristic of the Chinese people and they must be proud of their cultural tradition. That is why we have established "Politeness Year". These are points which I discuss regularly with my staff."

Joan then asked Sister whether all instruction should not be given in Chinese rather than English or Chinese.

Sister Monica agreed that they should all know their Chinese language, but that English was also essential in our modern world. Since there was no possibility to have Mandarin on the curriculum, a Mandarin speaking club will be organized.

In a society where a heavy academic curriculum is imposed for each subject, it seems that there should be little time for extra-curricular activities. Students are forever facing stiff examinations. But because of the philosophy of Tak Oi with its motto, "truth and love", the students manage to find time to live fully their teen-age years in an atmosphere of love and relaxation.

Wish You Were Here!

Therese Blais, a Canadian MIC, left for Africa last summer. This was her fourth departure. She left behind her in Canada, her family Sister Cecile, who had also worked in Zambia for many years. Cecile passed us her letters written in diary form.

(From the diary of Therese Blais, MIC)

July 15, Kachebere, Malawi

After a good night's rest in the Netherlands, we finally left aboard another KLM plane and 12 hours later we landed at Dar-Es-Salam, in Tanzania. After a brief 45 minutes stop-over, I took the plane for Lilongue, Malawi, where our Sisters were waiting for me. The Customs officer seemed to recognize me. A two-minutes inspection of my luggage and he said: "It's enough! You look so tired!" I had flown more than 20 hours since I left Mirabel, in Montreal.

Sr Yvonne Ayotte, our provincial superior and I had lunch and then we took off by car for my mission in Zambia. But I was not allowed to enter the country. All entries were barred since there had been a discovery of a huge amount of forged money circulating within the country. I was forced to stay at

September 15, Chipata, Zambia

Kachebere with the Grey Nuns (of Ottawa).

I am now living in our new novitiate building in Chipata, Zambia. At this moment we are four in the house: St. Germaine Perusse, the directress of novices, Sr. Yvette Demers, Sr. Ireen, our novice, and myself. We also have a postulant on her way to Katete, Malawi. She arrived here by bus exhausted after waiting four days and four nights with hardly any sleep except for reclining on her knees.

Sr Leontine Lang arrived recently from Canada in good form, happy to be back with us in Chipata where her artistic talents in African art are so well appreciated. Sr. Yvette Hervieux is in charge of the maintenance of the house

and premises; she also raises vegetables for us and sees to all our necessities.

I am now learning how to drive the van since this will allow me to get to the various mission posts.

A few weeks ago, we attended the blessing of a church building in Mchini. It started at 10 a.m. and finished at 3 p.m., followed by a communal meal. Needless to say that we came right back, tired after the long African ceremonies.

I wonder if you are still lonesome for me? If only I had a telephone, I would call you up every day... that

would go faster than a letter to be sure! Our local phone is connected only with our neighbors here. When it rings, it sounds like a whistle toot.

It's really time to say "Wish you were here!" I know that many of you MIC's are held back in Canada by illness or age. But I thank God that I can still serve in the missions of Zambia where I am so happy. We don't have everything, we may lack this or that, but we forget it as we go about serving the Lord in others. "Wish you were here"

(From letters of **Therese Blais**, MIC)



Sr. Therese Blais with her sister Sr. Cecile, in Karonga, Malawi, a few years ago.

Easter in

by Marie-Therese L

"When we arrived in Shanghai, we had our private Holy Thursday service with our accompanying chaplain in our hotel room. (In China, the Catholic Patriotic Association, controlled by the Government, does not allow Roman Catholics to celebrate in the churches.)

On Good Friday morning we climbed up to She Shan, to the shrine of Our Lady. (Some really believe that Our Lady appeared here.) As we go uphill making the Way of the Cross, we notice many people doing the same. The noisy schoolchildren do not seem to disturb them as much as us. I had to keep reminding myself that Jesus went up to Calvary amid confusion, noise, hatred and jealousy. Near us were other people kneeling down on cold cement slabs in front of a statue of the Immaculate Conception, while others were chanting the Litany of the Sacred Heart. It was painful yet consoling to witness such a scene.

On Holy Saturday morning we arrived in Chengdu, Sichuan. When we reached the cathedral the Easter Vigil celebrations were coming to an end. We then paid a visit to the sickly, old Bishop and his 37 first year seminarians. The visit was stiff and formal until tea time when the young ones relaxed and formed groups around us, regardless of the supervisors from the Patriotic Association. We then saw young men, full of faith, eager to give their lives to the Lord. We had to tear ourselves away from them to get into our buses.

That night we left Chengdu by train where we had our own Easter Vigil in our two small sleeping

Last year during Holy Week, a Kong made a pilgrimage to She near Shanghai. Sr. Marie Theres



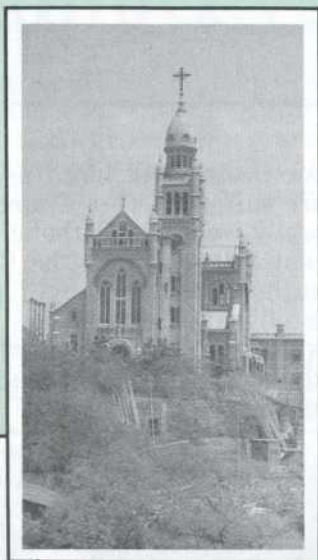
Our Lady's statue at She Shan. (Photo: R. Bigras, MIC)



in China

ese Beaudette, MIC

x, a group of Catholics from Hong
She Shan, a shrine of Our Lady
erese was among the pilgrims.



*Basilica of She Shan,
Shanghai*



*M. Therese at Chungking,
China on Easter Sunday*

compartments. We had the blessing of the new fire, the water, the readings after which we renewed our baptismal vows. This had a lot of meaning to us as we rolled gently on Chinese soil.

At Chungking, we went to the 6 a.m. Easter Sunday Mass. Even if the church was packed, someone steered us through the crowd into the first pews. Near me some elderly persons patted me gently on the back to signal rising or kneeling. While the priest was conducting Mass, the congregation of over 3,000 sang their faith in the Risen Lord. The communion lasted a full 45 minutes; all this time people kept chanting their hymns. At this point I broke down and began sobbing. I was experiencing the Risen Lord with these simple people who had kept the faith in spite of the Cultural Revolution and its aftermath.

Along the way, we met several elderly Bishops. One of them humbly admitted: "The Lord is really present among us. Many miracles are taking place!" He explained how a deaf-mute boy was able to talk after his baptism. After the usual exchange of Bibles, rosaries and medals, he gave us a warm hug. That day I felt I had met Jesus in this joyful man of faith!

I'd have so much more to tell you. I'll save it when I meet you soon on my home leave. But my pilgrimage to China really livened my faith and each day I pray for the wonderful Christians I met there."



What Are They Doing?

HONG KONG

Pauline Yuen, a young MIC Sister of Hong Kong, tells us how she felt as she participated in the marches of the Hong Kong people for the students of Beijing, last June.

"We Catholics of Hong Kong are deeply touched because of what

our brothers in blood and faith are suffering. Our Church here really woke up. Catholic groups sent telegrams to the Chinese authorities, they held prayer meetings and seminars. As Church, we want to be prophets who dare challenge and denounce injustice openly.



At the Hong Kong rally, Sr. Pauline Boilard, Sr. Cecilia Li, and Sr. Pauline Yuen

As for me, a young Chinese MIC who had the privilege to journey and witness this momentous event in history, it also meant a better understanding of my vocation and the thanksgiving charism of my religious community.

I now can see God's presence in all these events. I don't know what His will is through all this suffering but I know His Spirit is at work in the world to bring about good from evil.

The miracle I see is that the young people of China, by the action of God's grace in them, are really endowed with the spirit of Christ though they have been

deprived of the opportunity to know Him. Their option for non-violence is a witnessing of the Gospel values of love, peace and reconciliation. Their sacrifice for the country echoes the teaching of Christ telling us that there is no greater love than laying down one's life for others.

For all these wonders I have to thank God. I ask myself what stand would I take if I were confronted with such an uncompromising situation. I have no answer except to ask for the strength to live and speak as Christ did. My anxiety then turns to gratitude that I have someone to whom I can turn to..."

CANADA—PHILIPPINES

In early January, Sr. Suzanne Tremblay will be returning to the southern Philippines where she had worked previously for some 15 years. Suzanne will join the MIC community in Malita for pastoral work after following refresher language courses at Maryknoll Language School in Davao City.

Since 1984, Suzanne has been head of the mailing department of our mission magazines, sending you regularly MIC MISSION NEWS and the French, "LE PRE-CURSEUR".

The editing and mailing staff wish her a fruitful apostolate among her beloved Filipinos.



Sr. Suzanne Tremblay (seated center) with her staff a few years ago

A Bundle of Riches

by Lise Tremblay, MIC

You are asking me the history of my nursing vocation? I feel it's a real love story. A story explaining how I see love and availability. One where you offer your life as a gift forgetting self for the others... so that those others may "have life to the full". (Jn 10:10)

There's an old quotation which claims that happy people have no history. That is only partly true. I would add that the history of happy people is found in their everyday activities and in their humdrum life.

Even as a young child I felt called to relieve suffering, to dedicate my energy serving the sick. During a childhood illness, I remember thinking that nurses can really bring comfort to others. So, I would dare say that my vocation to missionary life was a twin vocation with that of nursing.

In 1979, when I first left for Haiti, I had but a minimum of nursing experience behind me. I had fully decided to go there to give and receive. I made it a point of looking around me, of listening to others, of learning a new language while living and working side by side with my Haitian nursing colleagues. All this led

me to enter fully into their health and sanitary projects.

The Public Health Department of the locality worked hand in hand with World Health Organization where both projects were channeling their energy towards primary health care. This meant educating the public regarding health and sanitary problems as well as promoting nutrition programs, family planning, pre-natal and post-natal care of mothers and babies, vaccination programs against infectious disease, treatment of current illnesses, etc.

I welcomed all these projects and fell in with them at once. They really coincided with my own options, that is to protect life and promote good health. They helped maintain a sane optimism in spite of the numerous set-backs. Working closely with doctors, nurses and midwives in community projects which had originated within the country thrilled me. I was fully committed to the set objectives which aimed to bring good health to all in Haiti by the year 2000.

Even if I was involved in all these activities, children still remain top on my list. Whether I



Sr. Lise with her sick patient, Sr. Aline Malouin at the MIC Infirmary

was working in clinics of Port-Salut, Roche a Bateau or in the Hospital of Limbe, in Haiti or in the Montreal Hospital of St-Justine, children were always my

favorite patients. I always felt the children had their rights in life from the very moment of their birth and even before birth. The child needs a life where he can bloom. After all, they are the hope of the future. That is why in Haiti, people will say: "Timoun se richès", that is: the child is a bundle of riches.

For me the child is an important person from the very moment of conception. I know how important is the mother's health, so that all care given to her during her pregnancy touches the life of the unborn. By protecting the mother, the unborn child is in better condition as he begins his life on earth.

Now, as I am nursing some of our elderly Sisters here in Canada, I realize more and more how life is a gift. Old life and new life must be protected and respected. Life is a gift from God. Each one of us is a bundle of riches.



In the clinic at Roche-a-Bateau, Haiti

Another Love Story

by Gloria Teresa Aguilar

I'd love to tell you a true love story. It's really a small part in the longer history of the people of God to whom I belong.

I'm a Cuban girl, born and brought up in the region of Holguin on the east coast of Cuba. My family is Catholic. To help me grow in my life of faith, I joined a youth parish group to share with them.

When I grew up, I went working as an accountant in a large office. My Cuban colleagues and myself shared the same dreams, aspirations, problems and joys together. It wasn't long before I noticed a lot of suffering around me.

I also attended university courses. I had a boy friend with whom I talked seriously about marriage. My parents approved of him since we shared the same Christian values. In the university circle I felt lost in a hostile world. My companions were either Communist Party members or members of the Union of Young Communists. Although they declared themselves atheists, they did not seem too convinced nor convincing. I managed to get along with them in spite of our conflicting ideals and views.

But the Lord kept pursuing me day and night. I looked around for an answer. I found it in the presence of some MIC Sisters whom I had met. Their serenity and joy simply amazed me. Sr. Jacqueline Brages, a Cuban MIC, really inspired me to the point that I wanted to become like her.

Then, I decided to take the step!

I entered the convent and was admitted in the formation group to study my vocation. This meant an abrupt rupture with family and friends, work and studies. I took the step in confidence, knowing that the Lord was with me.

It's now nearly two years that I am living here. The Sisters have steadily accompanied me on the first steps of my adventure with the Lord. My heart has opened up to new visions. I am now in contact with the wider Christian community. Here I discovered so much love and generosity. In my own life, I can discern more clearly what is God's will for me.

Each week-end, I animate a group of teen-agers returning home from their school hostels. They are happy to be back in the warm atmosphere of the parish. There they are sure to find sincerity and true friendship after walking along the path of atheism all week. They too now can perceive more clearly God's presence in their lives.

I realize now that I can not be like Sr. Jacqueline. I am ME, another focus of God's image. I am happy to be ME. I must try to bring out all my potentials that the Lord has given me. I must be just what the Lord wants me to be, in the MIC way of spirituality. I want to continue thanking God and praising Him every day of my life. This is what I am asking Mary and Delia.



*Sr. Madeline Maillet former editor of MIC
MISSION NEWS*

In Memoriam

We invite our readers and friends to join in prayers with us for Sr. Madeline Maillet, MIC, who passed away peacefully on September 19, 1989, at the age of 83.

Sr. Madeline was editor of "The Precursor" and later on "MIC MISSION NEWS" for nearly 40 years. Previous to this responsibility, she had been a missionary in Japan, serving in several missions.

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To be present to others... just to be there... D.T.

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