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MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

Mission Sunday will soon be upon us. This October 21st, the universal Church will come together to pray once more for the missions. The Church is always in mission, and this mission must be lived together, as the theme for this year expresses it: **IN MISSION TOGETHER.**

This is what the MIC's have tried to live out ever since the foundation. No MIC is ever alone in mission. Even when we hear that two of them had to enter solo into China for an assignment, they were supported by the community. Mission is communion with the others, and being in communion with others is also mission.

In Haiti, a group of convinced Christians have understood this as they organized a club to spread the Good News to their own people. A generous Cuban lady has responded to the Lord's invitation to make one of the witnesses of His love, Delia Tetreault, known to the world. In Japan, Sr. Bolduc explains how being in mission can make one sensitive to the needs of the other and so be the bearer of these Good News that give hope in life's tragic moments.

Finally, to complete the presentation of our MIC schools in the mission countries during this Literacy Year, we hear about one which serves the poorest in Haiti. This year we brought you to visit one of our schools in Mati, Philippines, Tak Oi in Hong Kong, Marymount in Malawi, (Africa), Xaverio in Koriyama, (Japan) and this time, one in Haiti. The MIC Sisters are still managing many other schools helping in the Literacy Program encouraged by the Church and United Nations. They are educating thousands of youth and adults all over the world in their evangelization programs. In these schools, the MIC's really feel "In Mission Together".

As I complete my last editorial, I invite you to turn to p. 15 for a last word to you all,

The Editor, Therese LeBlanc, MIC

Cover photo: Haiti. You must integrate both human and Christian values in education (D.T.)

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Mommy, tell me...

by Agathe Bolduc, MIC



It was in May, 1987 when a three year old Japanese tot asked her mother, "Where do we go when we die?" Yukina was on her way to the MIC Kindergarten in Koriyama when she popped this question to her mother. Little did she realize that she would die three weeks later! This led her bereaved parents searching for answers.

Seichi Hashimoto and his wife Kimiko were both pharmacists. Their little family of three brought them a lot of joy. Kana, the eldest daughter was five years old, Yukina was three and their baby brother Takafumi, was barely one. The two little girls were registered in the Xaverio Yochien Kindergarten for the school year 1987.

At the end of May, according to the tradition of the school, everyone celebrated Maria-Sai, the feast of Our Blessed Mother. Each child came forward to offer a flower to Our Lady during the celebration. Yukina also brought hers.

On the way back home the little three year old girl asked her mother: "Mommy, where do we go when we die?" The non-Christian mother answered: "We go to heaven where the Blessed Mother takes care of us." This answer was one of convenience; it fitted the time and place for such an answer. Although many Japanese may be Buddhist, Christian or Shintoist, they adapt readily to a given situation. Here the answer suited the situation and pleased little Yukina. Nothing more about it!

It was Pentecost Sunday for the Catholics, that 21st of June, 1987.



Yukina, (2nd left), offering her flowers to the Virgin on the feast day of Maria-Sai

For the Hashimoto family, it was just another Sunday. The two little girls were playing in the yard. Without ado, little Yukina darted out of the yard on her tricycle just as a speeding car was passing by. She was killed instantly. The parents were numb with grief.

As soon as the Directress of Xaverio Yochien heard of the event, she rushed to the stricken family. There was little to be said. The Grandmother, uncles and aunts had already assembled. Nobody talked. Finally Sr. Gisele Lambert broke the painful silence and began talking about Christ, His compassion, His mercy, His love for little children, and of a new transformed life. These words were a balm on their grief and pain. Everyone listened respectfully. Just as she was about to

leave, someone said: "Sister, we would like to hear more about this Jesus."

Looking down on the inert form of her beautiful little daughter, laid out before her, the sobbing mother exclaimed: "If only I could have hugged her before she died. But I know that the Blessed Mother has done that for me." Was this a statement of faith or one of convenience? Only God knows. The father, turning to his aged mother said: "Mama, when you die little Yukina will be there to meet you!" It was barely three weeks previously that Yukina had asked her mother where she would go if she died.

Even if he was a disciplined and serious Japanese gentleman, Seichi Hashimoto could not get over his grief. The mourning was

affecting everyone's life. They searched for answers in books, in all sorts of ways. Sr. Gisele noticed this. She suggested that the young mother could take a series of courses on psychology leading on to a possible study of the life of Christ, and then on the Church.

After a year in these courses, Kimiko asked for baptism. "I attend Mass each Sunday and I aspire through baptism to enter the Kingdom of God. I hope to see Yukina one day where we will all live together for all eternity."

While Sister Agathe Bolduc was instructing Kimiko, Fr. Guy-Michel Gariépy, O.P. began giving instructions to the father, Seichi Hashimoto, who in turn expects to be ready for baptism next April.

This grace, this gift of God, which came to them through a tragic accident happened on that Pentecost Sunday. It brought light into the lives of these sincere parents. Through death they found new life, through suffering they found joy, they discovered their Father in Heaven.



The Hashimoto family on Yukina's third birthday



Why go to School?

by Angele Alix, MIC

On October 12, 1944, the MIC's first arrived at Les Coteaux, a small village about 250 kilometers away from the capital, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. In 1949, they opened a small primary school called Our Lady of Lourdes.

"Les Coteaux is situated in a rural area. About 11,000 peasants eke out their living by cultivating their own plot of land. As in most parts of Haiti, they are so poor that they have to keep their children home for the harvest. So these children have only nine months of classes each year.

Every day between 350 to 400 girls between the ages of 5 to 16, climb the steps of the school, after crossing streams and mountains to attend their classes. Even some of the smallest tots, have to walk over two hours each day to come to school. During the colder winter months, they have to leave before sunrise. They have no transportation commodities as school buses, cars or bicycles. Once in the village, they stop off at the home of a friend or relative to don their school uniform, a royal blue

jumper, white blouse, blue or white socks and their shoes. (After class the reverse process takes place.)



Courses start at 8.00 a.m. Around 10 a.m., the school canteen, sometimes sponsored by benefactors, or welfare associations such as CARE, opens to offer them their first meal of the day. Then a good plateful of mashed corn covered with a pea sauce and a sort of pasty bread are sold for the modest sum of 0.02 cents. This gives them back the strength and energy to continue the school day.

The reading and writing program is taught in Creole, ever since the School Reform Laws were passed. Later, they learn French. It is quite a feat to make them speak and study French, as they never hear it at home nor in their village. It is a task to finish off their primary education of six years in such a condition, since the school year is only nine months, from October to June.

You wonder whether there are any extra curricular school activities? Yes, we have an updated Children's Eucharistic Crusade, called New Fires. In this group, the youngsters deepen their faith since they have recollections, prayers, team games, songs, little plays, artistic work and picnics. They love to organize these plays as they can use their ability to dress, to decorate for dances, songs etc. The main celebrations are at Christmas, on Mother's Day, on the Festival of the Flag (May 18). The older students are monitors of the younger ones while the task of the Principal is to supervise and organize."

Sr. Angele Alix who was principal for more than four years

says that sometimes she would leave with one or two teachers to climb the mountain, a two or three hour walk, to visit the parents and families of her pupils. She offered psychology lessons, some pedagogy and encouraged the parents to have some discipline over their children. During that time, she felt happy to be able to offer some points on the religious education that their children were receiving.

They were giving these sessions in the shade of a large tree. Some of the better-off people came to offer them a refreshing drink of coffee and some eggs to bring home. They were happy since it was the first time that the teachers of their children had ever visited them.

Sister Angele is dreaming of the day when she will return to Haiti to teach again. She likes to remember the years spent in the beautiful little white school of Les Coteaux. She recalls how it was dominating a higher plateau overlooking the village. She can still visualize the tall palm trees joining hands with the red flame trees in the alley leading up to the little school. Although poverty is an undeniable factor in this school managed by the MIC Sisters, it is also one of joy since they help young people to become literate and free. The school is a stepping stone to a more meaningful spiritual and material life for the children of these poor peasants. It is a small contribution to alphabetization in this country of Haiti.

Amada, I understand you are an American citizen who emigrated to USA from Cuba some 20 years ago. Can you explain to me how you came to know the MIC Sisters?

In my hometown, in Colon, Cuba. In 1954, the MIC Sisters opened a boarding school for girls and I was their first boarding student. I stayed four years at Immaculate Conception Colegio until I completed my studies.

You seem to cherish your past teachers very much, why is that?

They were very good teachers. Besides the usual high school subjects that we studied at the school managed by the Canadian Fathers of the Foreign Missions, the Sisters taught us home economics and arts subjects such as music, oil painting etc. They taught us the art of living a good Christian life, preparing us for our future as wives and mothers. We enjoyed those years of our lives before the Revolution.

You emigrated to the USA with your husband and your three year old son. Did you find happiness in your new country, in your new life style?

Yes, we found happiness, freedom and security. We had to work hard to make both ends meet when we first arrived. To this day we are grateful to the country who accepted us and we want to do something in return.

Won Over by

Last July, a great friend of Mother Delia Tetreault to pray on her tomb. I am speaking with Sister Fernandez of Carney's Point, New Brunswick, who had a long chat together.



Amada and her husband, Armando, at

Had you heard of Mother Delia Tetreault while you were in Cuba? How did you happen to hear about her?

I cannot remember having heard about Mother Delia while in Cuba, although our Sisters must have talked about her. It was only in 1986, while visiting my former teachers, the Sisters, in Montreal,

er by Delia!

nd of Mother Delia Tetreault came
I am speaking of Mrs. Amada
Point, New Jersey. We had a long



l, Armando, at the tomb of Mother Delia

that I really heard about her and
the on-going process of the Cause
proposed for her beatification.

Sr. Suzanne Longtin introduced
me to her family sister, Sr. Pauline
Longtin, Vice Postulator for the
Cause. I prayed on her tomb asking
her help and enlightenment
through the Lord. Then I returned
to New Jersey.

I had been searching for ways
to serve actively in the Church
but there did not seem any opening
where I lived. I still remember
that it was on the feast day of Ste
Anne when I had prayed her to
guide me to some active apostolate.
Lo and behold, in the mail was a
little booklet. "Who is Delia
Tetreault", sent to me by Sr
Suzanne. It was like a flash... this
was going to be my new apostolate!
I had now the task of making
Delia Tetreault known to all those
I knew and beyond. I had found
my way! The words of Is.49:6-16
came to my mind: "Leave every-
thing in the hands of God!"

I told my plans to one of the
MIC Sisters who encouraged me
to follow that inner CALL which I
felt came from God.

**Where did this lead you? What
did you do after you heard this
Call, this invitation to work for
the Cause of Delia Tetreault?**

I communicated with the Delia
Tetreault Centre who forwarded
to me 10 books on her life to
distribute to my friends and
acquaintances. Then in 1987, two
MIC Sisters, Sr. Marie Marthe
Lorrain and yourself (Therese
LeBlanc) came for an apostolic
visit. We met many Cuban friends
in Union City and other places.
We passed on literature on the life
of the Foundress and Sr. Martha
gave us a video viewing of "Woman
Beyond Frontiers". Immediately,
people responded in a spirit of
Faith. Little by little, I kept on

spreading this literature. Some began telling me of favors received through the intercession of this holy woman. I reported these to the Centre and the Bureau studying the Cause.

Sr. Suzanne and Sr. Pauline came to visit us and we shared at length on the meaning of this great event in the Church, of this witness, who had done so much in her spirit of thanksgiving. Since then, I have been fully involved in this apostolate. The Sisters came for a second visit to our Cuban friends and this determined me more than ever to go along on the way that Lord had shown me He wanted me to take. That is why I am here today, to thank Mother Delia for the graces she has granted our family, our friends and everybody. It is a pilgrimage of thanksgiving and hope.

What would you say is really your aim in following the Call?

I feel I can help many people spiritually. I hope that some vocations may be aroused through the spirituality of this saintly woman. I thank my husband who gave me moral support all the way in this apostolate, I thank the Sisters who came to make her known. I thank all my friends who took time to listen and believe in the message brought to the world by Delia Tetreault.

Therese LeBlanc, MIC

HAITI

In Mission Together

When Sr. Gisele Vachon was in Canada she had helped organize mission teams and clubs in her diocese of Chicoutimi. In Haiti, she set about organizing the first mission club.



I returned to Haiti after a wonderful pastoral missionary experience here in Canada. I had helped to organize and animate several mission groups in the parishes.

Back in Haiti, I wondered whether it would be possible to do the same. One day while attending a wedding ceremony, I heard the priest say: "Two married persons

are like two missionaries who preach together." There and then I was determined to do something. I approached the parish priest during Lent and exposed my plans to him. He too thought it would be a worthwhile idea to set afoot and encouraged me to go ahead.

I began contacting several young married couples that I knew. They fell in with the plan. Soon others joined them. Then we had a little group of eleven.

When Mission Sunday came we announced this event and we found documentation to pass around. With the poster we held discussions on the theme which was that year, "Open your heart to the light of Jesus Christ, and carry this light everywhere." It was really something to hear their comments. One dwelt on the light, explaining how if we believed in Jesus there would be no darkness in our lives. The other noticed that the two characters on the poster were holding hands to work together. A third one saw that this light had to be brought everywhere. It was a stimulating discussion for everyone. Meanwhile, the group did make serious reflection on the theme.

On Mission Sunday itself, we presented the mission team, the first of its kind in Haiti, to the parishioners of Hinche, the cathedral parish. All eleven members accompanied the celebrant to the altar carrying either the poster, the Bible, the flowers, the bread and the wine. They were followed by the youth mission groups with their banners.

Then we passed on to activities. Each member accepted to visit one of the 35 primary schools of the district, meeting with the Director in order to introduce the local mission magazine, "Timoun Misyone". Sr. Marguerite Razanabello, MIC from Madagascar, went visiting the secondary schools, sharing something of her missionary experience in her own country as well as in this one.

As a result a new missionary seed was sown. We kept asking young boys and girls why they couldn't offer a helping hand through prayer, offerings and other ways?

Now we find ourselves already making plans for the great missionary feast of Epiphany. Meanwhile each first Sunday of the month in the universal petitions, we pray for the mission intention of the Church for that same month. At our meetings we reflect on one or other mission country, we pray over *Evangelii Nuntiandi*, on the Documents of Puebla etc. There is a note of hope and we beg your prayers so that we can continue animating our people to the dimension of mission and their responsibility in this work of the Church worldwide.

Gisele Vachon, MIC

(In Canada this year, the theme for October 21, Mission Sunday is "A Mission that brings us together." This message reminds us that we are part of the Church that must bring the Gospel message to all men. We should be proud to have been invited to participate in such a mission confided by Jesus Himself to the Apostles.)

Opening a Door

Recently, two individual MIC Sisters were inserted in an active apostolate in China through their expertise. This is the only way that the MIC Sisters can re-enter China, their first field of apostolate. Although there is no direct evangelization, there is that Christian and silent witness of the person that can speak very loudly.



Sr. Monica Lam, MIC, animating a group of school principals in Xiamen, China

Sr. Monica Lam of Hong Kong, principal of Tak Oi Secondary School for the past 15 years, was invited to participate in an educational workshop in China for several days. Her wide experience and expertise in the field of education gave her entry into China, even if it was for only for brief time.

This had been possible through the Jesuit apostolate who had held discussions with the local authorities of Xiamen on a program of cooperation.

Sr. Monica explains how it happened: "It was at the invitation of the Education Department of Xiamen, in China that Mrs. Jenny Go, former principal of Jesuit Xavier School in San Juan, Manila and I, went to conduct a three-day workshop last March, 1990. There were three themes to the workshop: The person of the School Principal, the motivation of teachers and a study of the Educational System of USA and Hong Kong.

The workshop, with an attendance of over 70 principals and vice principals, took place at the Education College of Xiamen City. They represented the key schools of the city and the region. The way they had organized the session

proved that they attached great value to the event.

We discussed on the person of the Principal, the importance of his/her role in public relations. We stressed the importance of having a listening ear and an understanding heart. We defined the principal as a catalyser, a delegator, a group enhancer and above all, a leader with a vision and a mission.

We introduced them to the educational system of the United States and of Hong Kong so as to help them have a broader vision on other systems besides their own. On the third day an interesting question and answer period showed how fruitful our morning discussion had been.

I must say that I was very impressed by the openness and sincerity of all those attending the



Sr. Jacqueline Villemure, MIC, with her hostess and colleague in China

workshop. Their response was enthusiastic and spontaneous. As I returned to Hong Kong, I thanked God for the opportunity I had to go and share with my brothers and sisters of China in a spirit of solidarity to become better persons as educators and in our role as principals."

Another MIC who entered China due to her expertise was Jacqueline Villemure, MIC, of Montreal. She too shares with us some of her reflections on her experience of last Fall.

"It started when an entente was reached between two universities and two Province of Quebec hospitals with a medical establishment in Shijiazhuang, capital of Hebei province in China. The Chinese hospital was the "Norman Bethune International Peace Hospital of the People's Liberation Army".

While determining the goal of our stay, the invitation letter authorizing our entry into Mainland China, also limited the field of possible exchanges. It was meant to be an opportunity for mutual exchange of knowledge, enthusiasm, sensitivity, and positive thinking.

Through the specific field of health and administration it is the time and place to witness to an ethics which depends first and foremost on the universality of health care, the improvement and progress of the quality of our basic services as well as on the research work involved.

Although my mission on Mainland China was very brief, barely two months, it allowed me to understand certain working conditions there. First of all one had to accept the various cultural differences as well as to admit a number of divergencies in outlook.

Today no outsiders are admitted in China without the expertise required by their needs which they clearly identify before admitting you. It is necessary to be able to enter solo on the basis of that expertise.

The invited expert must be willing to live in a hostel belonging to the establishment concerned. He or she must be able to bend to a fixed timetable of their choice, then be willing and able to live days and weeks with a restricted group of persons. Your Chinese hosts then take charge of your entire life activities and time. Lastly, as a witness to the Gospel to be willing to be a silent witness while yearning to shout it out on housetops." (*Au fil des jours*, No. 25)

These possibilities of the missionaries to share their expertise with their Chinese brothers is the only "open door" for them to go and share the Good News that they have a loving Father in Heaven. The message of justice and peace, the witness of joy and love is that seed which the Holy Spirit will help to take root and grow. Nobody knows how far the ramifications will go.

Therese LeBlanc, MIC

Aurevoir

Today it is with mixed emotions that I come to say good-bye to the readers of **MIC MISSION NEWS**. The Lord has spoken once more in my life. My assignment as editor to our mission publication comes to an end with the end 1990. Actually, this is my last issue as the forthcoming number will be the bilingual mission calendar. Another MIC Sister will take over as editor.

I had the pleasure to meet many of you either in person or through correspondence. Each month it meant much to me to start anew searching for inspiring articles that would bring hope in your lives. They always arrived on my desk on time for each publication, no matter how anxious I could be at times, wondering whether I'd have anything to edit.

Now my mission will bring me to another post not so far as Asia,



my first mission, was. It will be another opportunity for me to serve the Church and my congregation. I ask you that we accept to continue praying for one another in the months and years to come.

The newly appointed editor will introduce herself in her first edition. I know that you will love her as well as her interesting way of presenting mission articles.

With love to each and everyone,

Therese LeBlanc, MIC

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God has given us everything, even His only Son. What better way do we have to thank Him than to give Him children, chosen ones, who will also sing His praises for all eternity. (Delia Tetreault)

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