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MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Dear Readers,

The invitation of the Church on last Mission Sunday was a reminder that we have a mission to live together. This echoes the words of Our Lord: "As the Father sent me, so am I sending you!" (Jn. 20:21) Then St-Paul, the missionary par excellence, comes in with this statement: "I should be punished if I do not preach the Gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16)

It was surely in this same spirit that a saintly lay woman, Victory, who was beatified in her native land Madagascar, managed to sustain the faith of her countrymen against odds.

Srs. Patricia and Aludia now invite us in turn to live a mission in Arizona as they share their faith with people in those remote areas. Also from Arizona, comes a relative of Delia Tetreault pointing to us the spirit of hope that led Mother Delia to carry on her marvelous work with her Sisters, always in mission together.

In Tak Sun School, the MIC Sisters have kept the flame of faith alive for the past 60 years by sharing and living a mission together. This mission is now bearing fruit all over the world where the Tak Sun boys are scattered.

Finally, the newly appointed editor, Sr. Ma. Anthea Raso greets us all as she begins her writing ministry in MIC MISSION NEWS.

So, together, we still have a mission to live together.

The Editor

Cover photo: L. to R.: Sr. Evangeline Plamondon, Sr. Helen Hong, Cardinal J.B. Wu, cutting the Tak Sun jubilee cake.

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Older and Younger

"How good the Lord has been to us! I try to keep in mind all events like our Blessed Mother... all that God has done for us ever since this mission first opened its doors."

These words of our Foundress, Delia Tetreault, kept echoing in my mind as we were about to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Tak Sun School. She had often reminded the Sisters that thanksgiving was the thrust of our congregation.

The thoughts of Delia Tetreault are very familiar to all the MIC Sisters and their Associates. Yet, it was something to hear them expressed in Cantonese on the other side of the world, by the Supervisor and Headmistress of Tak Sun Primary School for Boys, Sr. Helen Hong. They were addressed to the assembly at the end of a Thanksgiving Eucharist.

Cardinal John Baptist Wu took up the idea with an anecdote of his own. He said that one day when he was visiting a family, he had offered a gift to the youngest child. This one ran to show his mother who asked him if he had thanked his benefactor. The child then ran back to the Cardinal saying: "My mother told me to say thank you

for the gift." With humor, he reminded the young boys at the ceremony not to imitate this youngster by thanking God only because Sr. Helen had said so.

Before going further, let me give you a brief history of the Tak Sun School. It was at the request of the Bishop of Hong Kong, Mgr. H. Valtorta, that Delia Tetreault gave permission to her Sisters to open a small school for boys in November, 1929. The Canadian MIC's found 39 little pupils attending the first classes. The school grew in number until the classes were suspended in 1941 because of World War II.

When school reopened in 1947 at the present address of 123 Austin Road in Tsimshashui, the number of pupils increased to the point that new wings had to be added in 1956. Today, the school counts 1400 pupils in its classrooms.

The school motto is "Joy in Duty". Each day under the supervision of Mr. Wong Kwok Fai and Sr. Helen Hong, MIC, the pupils are educated in a spirit of joy, love, mutual respect and service to others in this school snuggled amid the high neighboring blocks of busy Kowloon. The majority of



*R. to L.:
Cardinal John-Baptist Wu,
Sr. Helen Hong, School
Supervisor, and Sr. Evan-
geline Plamondon, Superior
General*



*Sr. Evangeline
Plamondon, Superior
General, setting the
eyes of the Dragon*

the boys come from non-Christian families. Each day they are exposed to the values expressed in a Christian educational system, centered on Christ and His teachings.

At this stage of history, where Hong Kong is facing some instability as to its future in 1997, special attention is given to civics and religious education. Believing that Hong Kong can be the cradle of democracy for China, and that this can be an influence on the Mainland, the teachers feel a need to instill in their students a deeper faith in God and a sense of belonging to Hong Kong. They aim to inspire loyalty of good citizens to these young boys. The pupils are reminded each day that they are Chinese and that China needs them.

The present Headmaster of Tak Sun, himself a former student, Mr. Wong, insists strongly that educating this generation of young boys is stimulating and inspiring. "I love my work here. I love living

out what I have received here at Tak Sun. The school motto, "Joy in Duty", faith and thanksgiving keep me going in life. I feel that Hong Kong needs me, that China needs me. I love my students, I never tire of the work with them. Each group comes in with new needs, new challenges. Although I cannot always see the fruit of my work with them, I am confident that we are sowing and that God is reaping."

While listening to the inspiring words of this dedicated Christian educator, expressing his faith and thanksgiving in such a way, I can hear the words of Delia Tetreault echoing from his heart. So with Sr. Helen we can all say: "Thank you for what Tak Sun has become during its 60 years of existence. We can be assured that the song of thanksgiving will be heard for years to come, just as it was sung in the past 60 years."

(Adapted from an article from Pauline Boilard, MIC)



Mr. Michael Wong Kwok Fai and a young Tak Sun speaker

Miles to Go... So Little Time!



Sr. Patricia Blanchet with some First Communicants

Dear friends,

Three years ago I wrote about our mission on wheels in this southern part of the Arizona desert. Some of you may not know exactly where we are, but these last few months have put us on the map. The police discovered an underground drug traffickers' tunnel just a few miles off the road from our home. So now when we say, "We're from Mc Neal, down near Douglas," a bell rings at once in their memory.

We are always in mission on wheels. We travel miles and miles each day. My Filipina companion, Sr. Aludia Rufin, who has been with me for the last three years, has the largest portion of the parish if we consider the size of her CCD Centre and her religion classes. All her work is centered around the settlement of Pirtleville, a suburb of Douglas. Everyone there lives near the church and centre, so Sister has less travelling to do than I have.

My apostolic work stretches from Double Adobe Road, our home street, to Elfrida, 16 miles up north, then to Sunizona and to McNeal. In September, I will also be in charge of another post at Sunsites, 42 miles further. Plans for the classes in that area are still in limbo, but we know something will have to be organized on time for the opening of the CCD courses in early September.

One of our First Communicants, Tomas Easterling, 9 years old, came to attend First Communion classes two years in a row. He felt very advanced compared to the new candidates. In a lesson on thanksgiving, Tomas shared spontaneously: "I am grateful for the world, for being created, for grandpa and grandma. I am also grateful for beautiful girls! I love to look at them from the other side of the street!"

On the lesson about sin, he had this to say: "I want to die young

because I do not want to commit many sins as I grow older." God answered his prayer. Five months later, Tomas was burned to death as fire gutted his home and took with him, his grandpa and grandma and a little neighbor friend. A terrible tragedy but now, we like to think of Tomas in Heaven rejoicing with his angels and Jesus.

Our mission in this area is interesting but demanding. The CCD teachers appreciate our services as do the young First Communicants. Recently, one of them confided to me: "Sister, don't ever leave us. We need you and want you back with us next September." It is good to feel needed and wanted. We are here to bring the Good News to our people. They also bring good news to us by their appreciation of our being at their service.

Patricia Blanchet, MIC



Sr. Aludia Rufin and the graduating class of the Vacation Bible School

A Dream...



(Mrs. Moultroup of Sun Lakes, Arizona, is distant niece of Delia Tetreault. Her great-grandfather, Pierre was a brother of Delia.

Diana came to meet the MIC's and pray on the tomb of her great-aunt at Pont-Viau in the summer of 1988. She is presently doing research and writing the history of the 14-16 generations of the Tetreault family scattered all over USA and Canada.)



Delia Tetreault - an ancestral aunt of mine...

Had a unique vision - way, way back in time.

Delia was just a little girl when she experienced her dream...

A wheat field with a most unusual and poignant scene...

All the ears of wheat transformed into children's heads.

Delia tossed and turned for hours in her little bed.

A desire in her heart began extending, mile after mile...

With a deep desire to see on each tiny face - a glowing smile.

In the eyes of the children - Delia saw her mission in life revealed.

... A Reality



This image remained in her heart and mind - forever sealed.

An inspiration to establish a missionary community for God...

So, Delia dedicated herself to the needs of others - here and abroad.

Obstacles and delicate health did not blur her childhood vision...

As she became the foundress of the M.I.C. with foreign missions.

Women united from all over the world to help realize Delia's dream.

Faith, determination and courage resulted in a worthy missionary team.

Diana Hebert Moultroup

CANADA

Still Waiting...



The Gospel informs us that the right hand must ignore what the left hand does. This is exactly how it was between Sr. Colombe Gagnon and myself, both MIC's. I knew Colombe, I always admired what she could do as a cook... no one could prepare a meal quite as good as hers. I also knew many other things about her... for example, I saw her leaving for Vancouver as a young Sister where she made her final vows.

In Vancouver, she served both the Sisters and the patients of Mount Saint Joseph Hospital for 15 years, preparing hot meals, delicacies for birthdays and feast days. This often meant late evening meals when the nursing Sisters worked in the operating theatre or were on night duty.

Then she went to Central Africa where she shared her life with the people of Katete and Kaseye, in Malawi, for 14 years, besides working in Chipata, Zambia for another 3 years. In these mission posts she helped to prepare children for First Communion, taught Domestic Science and trained native cooks for the various missionary posts of Fathers and Sisters. She was proud to show me photos of some ladies with their newly baked bread.

On her return to Canada, in 1983, Colombe was asked to take charge of the kitchen at the MotherHouse in Outremont. It was there that she met a Laotian refugee and his wife working in the kitchen with her. She became interested at once in their plight. Khamp-Pho of the Namm-Savanh family, wanted help to get his family members out of the Thailand Refugee Centres.

First, he worked hard to get his brother out; later he managed to find funds and ways to bring his fiancée into Canada.

Then it was the problem of raising \$10,000 to bring out another brother with his five children. Sister Colombe's family, her parish of St. Roch de l'Achigan, friends and other benefactors helped her raise the amount of \$7,000. Then with the support of the Holy Cross Sisters and Fathers, she found the complete amount, so, they were accepted by Canada. The father-in-law, Soo Yee, came in later and is now working in the MIC kitchen at Pont-Viau.

Khamp-pho tried all kinds of ways to get his mother and her 18 year old adopted daughter to come. As it was nearly impossible to raise the funds he needed, he decided to go to Napho at the Thailand Refugee Centre himself to visit her. Finally, they too were accepted and the daughter now has a good job in a Montreal factory.

Now, both Sr. Colombe and Khamp-Pho are both searching for ways to get another young family member out. Pak Dy has been in the camp ever since 1980 and she hopes to get her papers soon. They have been backed by the kind friends of Sr. Colombe at St. Roch de l'Achigan in the Province of Quebec. These refugees need to pay their own plane fare. Colombe and her Laotian friends are praying that someone will be inspired to help so that this family can be reunited.

Therese LeBlanc, MIC

A Victory in Madagascar

On April 30, 1989, John-Paul II beatified a Malagasy lay woman. The event filled the local Church with joy and pride. Who is this woman?

Baby Rasoamanarivo was born in the royal family of Madagascar in 1848 at Tananarive. She was brought up at the Court. As she grew up her parents sent her to the convent school where the Sisters of St-Joseph of Cluny taught her. In 1861, after following catechism lessons, she was baptized with the first group of catechumens. She was given the name "Victory". Soon afterwards, she made her first communion.

Daughter-in-law of the Prime Minister

At the age of 16 she was married to a 17 year old cousin, the son of the Prime Minister. It was a marriage of convenience. They never had any children, a stigma that made Victory suffer for more than 24 years.

Theirs was not a happy marriage. The husband was an alcoholic and a womanizer. In spite of everything, Victory stuck by her unfaithful husband without complaint. In 1869, the royal family adopted the Protestant religion.



The tomb at Tananarive where the remains of Victory lie (MIC photo)

Victory remained faithful to the Catholic teachings in spite of the pressure by the royal family and her husband. The missionaries encouraged Victory to remain at the Palace in spite of the harassment.

Life at the Court imposed many social obligations on her as it was very worldly. Victory would attend Mass at 4 a.m. each day, living out her life as modestly as she could.

Guardian of the Catholic Mission

All the French colonials, including the missionaries were expelled during the war between France and Marina. The Catholic Church was only 22 years old, yet they could count 40,000 baptized persons and 20,000 catechumens.

One of the missionary Fathers, Fr. Cousseque confided the entire mission to Victory.

During the next three years, from 1883-1886, this 35 year old woman had to defend the Church at the Court. She had clarified from the start that they were fighting the French and not the Catholics, therefore schools and churches remained opened.

This dedicated lay woman knew how to appease tensions everywhere. She reorganized four parishes in the city and Christians could assemble on Sundays to pray and reflect on the Word of God. She managed to do as much in the rural areas around Tananarive.



Children receiving a Rosary and a greeting from Pope John Paul II

In 1886, a peace treaty was signed and the missionaries returned. This was 100 years before Vatican II... and this lay woman had assumed full responsibility of her local Church.

In 1888, her husband, dying of wound received in battle asked for baptism. After his death, Victory felt totally free to give herself entirely to serve the Church. She distributed her money among the poor, took care of the slaves with love. She became even more respected and admired by all. In 1894, this courageous woman was buried while the entire population praised her admirable works.

This lay woman was beatified on April 30, 1989, by Pope John-Paul II when he visited Madagascar. This ceremony meant much to all the lay people... it was one of their own who was proclaimed Blessed. She had managed to maintain the dignity of the Malagasy woman both in her home and at the royal Court. This 46 year old married woman, often ridiculed because she had no children, became spiritually loved as mother of the poor, the slaves whom she called "my children, my other selves". She is the spiritual patron and model of the women of her country, a country where the family values are still a priority.

(Adapted from an article in LE PRECURSEUR, by Sr. Adrienne Guay, MIC)



Dear Friends,

Greetings of joy and peace!

It is always with a happy and grateful heart that I look back on the first years I spent in Canada with the MIC MISSION NEWS (1980-1983). Since my departure in 1984, I have been privileged to participate in the mission work of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in Malawi, Central Africa (1984-1985) and in my own home country, the Philippines (1986-1990).

I am glad to be with you again! Indeed, I look forward to the years ahead with bright hope, confident of your continuing collaboration and support.

May Our Lord bless you abundantly for your valuable participation in our missionary endeavours.

Gratefully in Mary,

Sr. Ma. Anthea Raso, MIC



In Memoriam

We invite our readers to join in prayer with us for our Sisters Rhea Bigras and Aline Dumas who returned to the Father last September.

Sr. Rhea, aged 85, served the mission for 60 years in Canada, the Philippines, Hong Kong and Taiwan. She was the first Directress of Formation in the Baguio Novitiate, Philippines.

Sr. Aline, aged 56, served as formator in Canada and in Hong Kong for 35 years. She was Provincial Superior in Hong Kong until a few months before her death.

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The Dragon Dance on the school grounds of Tak Sun

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