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MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Paths of Hope

"We can only create the path by walking!"

Spring is around us... fresh sounds and sights herald the springtime reawakening of the earth. How wonderful is the newness in God's creation!

In this time of division and unrest among peoples and nations, and in the context of today's interdependent world, mission entails developing our awareness of interrelatedness—we are all part of Christ's body. Today, too, the full mission message that missionaries share necessarily includes a heightened awareness of the unity of creation—and of our individual and community responsibility to preserve life around us, wherever we are!

MIC MISSION NEWS describes in this issue how Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception and our lay collaborators, at every stage and in a myriad of circumstances, instill hope in people that life is worth living. They are 'there'—praying with the people, listening to them, supporting their initiatives, promoting lay leadership. Together, they seek to renew their trust and joy in the richness of life and in the grateful awareness of a loving God who "looks down on the lowly." The people in turn inspire our missionaries by persevering in their struggle for life in the face of incredible odds.

Through the power of the Holy Spirit, small Christian communities, be it in Peru, the Philippines, Cuba and China continue to renew the face of the earth!

Ma. Anthea Raso, MIC

Cover photo: H. Crête, MIC

"Tomorrow, my little brother, things will be better!"

Back cover photo: T. Lebeau, MIC

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Renewing Hope in Yauri

"The people's indomitable spirit continues to create life even in the face of poverty and hardships. We have been blessed to share in this spirit!"

My first impression of Peru: progress in reverse. The Arequipa-Yauri road, the holes, the bumps, the rocks, the dust—all that one would rather not have! Yet each time we took the route, my companions and I never failed to exclaim: "What a beautiful road!" The inconveniences of the trip are indeed compensated by the beautiful landscape, the charming llamas, the alpacas, and even the vicuñas, with their proud and haughty look, who hardly pay attention to us.

My third return to Yauri from Quebec, Canada in August 1990 brought me immense joys of reunion. News of my arrival spread quickly. Good friends came at once, one after another. Each of them asked me: "Have you come back to live with us?" Happiness lit up their faces when I replied: "Yes!" And immediately, they began to describe to me, in all their amplifications and nuances, the events that had taken place since I left.

I continue to accompany the teachers handling religion classes. With their help, I find it a great

comfort and a challenge to prepare grade six pupils for the sacraments. Since my arrival, 21 of these young people have been baptized and 178 have received Holy Communion.

There is our garden project too. This includes communal vegetable gardens and a greenhouse. Our employee, Victor, did a wonderful job during my absence. Victor reached only third grade, having been forced to emigrate to Arequipa at the age of 11 to earn his living. He worked mostly in rice and onion farms. Last year, we helped him to take a few horticulture courses. With his experience, he has become an expert gardener. We share his pride to see that at present, he and his neighbors have radishes, lettuce and spinach as part of their meagre meals.

The greenhouse plants are ready to be transplanted; rain is abundant and everything grows rapidly! We now look forward to a future project—operation tree planting. As soon as the greenhouse is enlarged, we will be preparing some tree seedlings. Given the dyna-

mism of the women working with us, everything is possible. Our mutual hope is to see the Andes green again!

More than ever, I am discovering the vitality of the Peruvians, who, despite malnutrition and other adversities, continue to show courage when everything seems to invite the opposite. They remain steadfast, believing there is room

for hope and peace. They keep with vigilance, too, their refusal of violence. Here one truly meets the God of life who, in such harsh circumstances, becomes incarnate in their midst. This leads us missionaries to live the challenge of mission with the boldness and dynamism of those who love God and trust in Him with a passion.

Elmire Allary, MIC



Sr. Elmire Allary and Yauri peasants welcome a good harvest!



Hot meals and the warmth of team spirit at the "olla común" center.

Since my return to Yauri from the Philippines in May 1990, I found my days quite full! Following the high inflation declared last August by the Fujimori government, exuberant prices of commodities made it very difficult for the poor to buy even their basic needs. In the midst of poverty and the absence of many basic necessities, an Emergency Plan was set up by the parish to assist the people. The parish team of which I am a member gave me the responsibility to see to the implementation of the plan which includes the following projects:

- Distribution of seeds for production, together with food products for the farmers and their families;
- Food-for-Work, wherein the people are encouraged to be productive and help develop the community. The participants receive food products from Caritas in return for their labor;
- "Olla Común" (Common Cooking), where a group of families prepare their meals in common. Each family contributes an amount equivalent to about \$0.50 weekly and receives cooked meals for all the family-members. With assistance from Caritas, a total of 26 barrios with a minimum of 40 families in each barrio are benefitting from this project.

Once a week, I work with a group of old people. They spin lamb's wool and make woolen



*Sr. Adelaida Santiago
with Sr. Jeannette Fanfan*

blankets. The finished products bring them some earnings and they partake of nutritious food on our workday.

We are thinking of venturing into other small scale income-generating projects such as macaroni-making and soap-making. We try to be creative with the time we have together; we pray and speak of the hardships of life, finding a source of strength in our common faith and shared struggle.

I have witnessed how scriptural reflections, prayers and social responsibility are becoming meaningful to the small community in Yauri. Although each day confronts them with the struggle to survive, the people find hope in the support, strength and communion they have established among one another.

Adelaida Santiago, MIC

The Earth

If the earth were only a few feet in diameter, floating above a field somewhere, people would walk around it, marvelling at its big pools of water, its little pools, and the water flowing between the pools. People would marvel at the bumps on it and the holes on it, and they would marvel at the very thin layer of gas surrounding it, and the water suspended in the gas. The people would marvel at all the creatures walking around the surface of the ball and the creatures in the water. The people would declare it precious, because it was the only one and they would protect it so that it would not be hurt. The Ball would be the greatest wonder known and the people would come to behold it, to be healed, to gain knowledge, to know beauty and to wonder how it could be. People would love it and defend it with their lives. Their own roundness could be nothing without it. If the earth were only a few feet in diameter.

Author Unknown.

*(Scarboro Missions, April 1990)
Illustration: T. Moisan, MIC*

A Simple Wealth

A missionary discovers that mission life has many mansions and each sojourn ushers in priceless moments—a share in the joys, the sorrows, the hopes and aspirations of a people.

Children ran to meet me and my young companion, Madeline Magoc, as we arrived in Migsulang, for a two-day stay. Preparations were being made to celebrate Tribal Filipinos Sunday and I chose to be with the barrio folks for this special event.

Migsulang is situated in the mountain of Santa Maria, Davao del Sur. From Malita, it took us an hour by bus to reach the 'poblacion' of Santa Maria and another hour to arrive in Madeline's home. For this trip, we took a 'sky-lab', an improvised motor cycle with an extended piece of steel maintaining balance at both sides. You can imagine my relief to finally reach the crest of the mountain and to accept the hospitality for the night from Madeline's family!

The following day, we walked a good three hours down to the valley at the other side of the mountain. It is here where most of the Migsulang families reside. Three young men accompanied us and I recognized one of them as the boy who used to bring his horse to carry our things for the evangelization seminars... the last time I

had been in Migsulang was in 1983! On our way down the mountains, I had mixed feelings. I was very eager to meet friends and former pupils. I was sad to see the mountains denuded of trees. I missed the sounds and songs of forest birds this time.

There have been other changes...

The first thing I noticed on entering the barrio was a school with two classrooms and a small reading center. There was a newly constructed chapel. More houses with backyard vegetable gardens were a welcomed sight too.

We went to the chapel earlier to have time to meet the people. I was happy to greet old friends... they have grown; others have gone. I was happily surprised to find the chapel full of people—it was their Day and most of them came in the full bright colors of their tribal costumes.

Right after the liturgy of the Word, we proceeded to the schoolyard for a musical presentation. Cultural traditions, folk dances and songs were brought to the fore with simplicity and gladness of heart. Sounds of gongs

and 'edel' (long wooden logs) echoed throughout the valley. Dances were presented by the parents and youth.

The people did not forget to give their "guest" a chance to speak. Facing the crowd, I found myself sharing aloud a thanksgiving prayer and an appeal at the same time. In their name, I thanked God for all His gifts—for life, for the youth and children, for friends and missionaries. I led them to give thanks for life around them—the mountains, the rivers and trees. I asked: "Have you taken care of your land? Where are the trees, the birds and even the wild beasts? Can we do something to bring them back where they belong?" Together they responded: "Yes!" Encouraged, I addressed a challenge, telling them: "Plant, then, so that your

children and your children's children will be happy to remember what you have done and give thanks to God as you do this day."

I left Migsulang filled with joy and confidence. I encounter in the people a simple wealth. They are people who face the daily challenge of learning to sustain their faith through the Word of God, the shared unity of neighbors and the betterment of their community. They have taught me to believe in bigger and better things and instilled in me a great hope that in the years to come, we may continue to sing with them: "**Salamat kay Tyumanem!**" (Thank you, God, the Great Planter!)

Elizabeth Relacion, MIC



A 'sky-lab' ride for Sr. Elizabeth Relacion and Madeline Magoc.

*In the chapel
of Migsulang*



*Tribal music
and dance highlight
the festivities.*



Making a Difference

Parents of school children experience the joys of becoming missionaries of light and hope to one another and to those who do not know Christ.

The missionary spirit that moves through the lives of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception touches, inspires and moves the lives of many others. We, parents of students at Immaculate Conception Academy (ICA) feel highly privileged and grateful to be counted among these 'others'.

The school directress, Sr. Tere-sita Canivel, MIC, planted the seed of the present ICA Parent Council some ten years ago. Today, the parent group has a structure which is very well set up, complete with a constitution. Officers, level

representatives and committee chairpersons work together to carry out the group's objectives and projects.

One of the committees, the Spiritual Enrichment Committee, is concerned with making God's presence felt in the lives of the parents. With Sr. Digna Ramonita Magtibay, MIC, as our adviser and animator, we seek to build a genuine Christian community, sharing our faith where we are, particularly with those who do not know Christ. We pray and reflect together on our lives in the



At the Delia Tetreault Center, R. to L.: Sr. Evangeline Plamondon, Sr. Digna Magtibay and ICA parents—Mrs. Lucia Ong, Mrs. Rosalie Co, Mrs. Agnes Dee.



The Go-Alcantara family receiving from Sr. Justina Villagracia the award for the "Song of Delia".

light of the Bible. God's Word gives us courage and strength to unite with one another and work hand in hand as a Christian community. Throughout the school-year, we are challenged to undertake spiritual and mission-oriented projects in collaboration with the **Delia Tetreault Center**, also coordinated by Sr. Digna.

Schoolyear 1989-'90 was marked with challenging projects for us. A group of members, the "Friends of Delia" launched a song-writing contest based on the life of Delia Tetreault, Foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. The best song was the fruit of teamwork and talents pooled together by one family: parent-composer-singer Mr. Sonny GoAlcantara, his wife Lillian (an ICA alumna), their two daughters, Sheila Marie and Leslie (ICA students) and their son, Mark. The "Song of Delia"

has been adopted by the Spiritual Enrichment Committee as its theme song.

Another group, "Missionaries in Thanksgiving", are responding to the needs of tribal Filipinos. These grateful and generous hearts are presently helping to support financially the mission work undertaken as of November 1989 by the MIC Sisters among the Mangyan tribes in the diocese of Mindoro Occidental. While knowing full well that this project does not directly benefit our children or the school, we strongly believe that our care and concern make a difference in the lives and future of the Mangyans. Ours are the joys of being partners in mission with the MIC Sisters who live the mission call in their midst.

Adapted from an article in ICA Parent Bulletin, by Arsenia V. Lao

Mary in the Land of Confucius

*The interior of the Shrine
of Our Lady of Lourdes*

A certain mountain, named the Pointed Mountain; a village by the name of Hou after its founder hailing from the Province of Shanxi and 1,018 Catholics determined to express their faith... all these suffice to give new life to a shrine of Mary which was originally built there at the end of the 19th century.

Hou is a place in the Province of Shandong, often translated by the terms "was or originated from the mountain", this mountain being the sacred mountain Tai, also a famous place for a pilgrimage.

It is told that the Catholic ancestor from far-away Shanxi was running away from a disgrace.



His descendants, ever faithful to the faith transmitted to them, stayed on at this place. The mere escalation of the Pointed Mountain is itself an expression of a determination that only an eye witness can evaluate.

Destroyed by thunder in 1925, the chapel was reconstructed by a Dutch missionary priest. Since that event, political upheavals and natural calamities had totally dilapidated the building. Only the foundations were visible, when the Catholic people of Hou decided to give back to their village of 1,048 inhabitants, a sign of their Catholic majority as well as proof of their pride in their religion.

In 1990, during the month of May, the official reopening of the shrine took place. The event was really the fruit of the combined efforts of the villagers themselves to give a meaning to the Pointed Mountain. It meant putting up a new roof to the chapel, staking out a new road to allow the pilgrims to come to express their needs and offer their thanksgiving prayers to Mary.

With an admiring eye and an appreciative heart, I climbed the slopes of the Pointed Mountain. There in the chapel of Our Lady of Lourdes, I joined in prayer with the other pilgrims for the Church

of China. I prayed that the witness of our faith seen here be not in vain! I asked for unity in the Church, that unity which is the fruit of charity "that believes, that endures everything!"

If you happen to go east of Mount Tai, in the land of Confucius, don't forget to go up the Pointed Mountain to pray to Mary. You will have the pleasure to meet the villagers of Hou. There you will also admire the shrine dedicated to Mary—all redecorated and resplendent in its new charm!

Fleurette Lagace, MIC

CUBA

A Church in Ruins... A Living Faith!

At the extreme north of Ciego de Avila Province, lost between mountains of limestone, there lies a tiny village with the happy name of "Punta Alegre" (Joyous Point).

During four years, I undertook endless and tiring trips to visit and animate the small Christian community. Some twenty women, long past their 60th birthday attended the meetings. There was only one male member; there was no child, no young person. Religious services were characterized by poor participation. When it was time for the readings, no one thought of bringing their reading

glasses. It's always hard to admit that one cannot or can hardly read!

Yet, every time a Mass was celebrated or a service was carried on, nearly all of these people showed up. They were present, in spite of their fear of criticism from the rest of the community. Yes, they were present in spite of the wish to return home as soon as

possible because of an impending rainstorm, or the apprehension of an electricity blackout.

I was always impressed to find them there each time I visited the place. They came in spite of all adverse factors. I felt that my fatigue was worthwhile and once more I grasped the meaning of these words: "...it was to shame the wise that God chose what is weak by human reckoning..." (1 Cor. 1:27-28) The people gave me the strength I needed to carry on.

Then, I was sent to another mission work elsewhere. I came back to Punta Alegre last September 8, the feast day of Our Lady of Charity, patron of Cuba. The roofless church, with its broken windows, seems more dilapidated than ever. The people are older but the passive community which I had left is ever alive! It has become enriched with several new members, including four children and a few young people. On that September 8 alone, 10 baptisms were celebrated during that one day. I just could not

believe my eyes! How can one explain why parents come here to ask to have their children baptized... and in a ruined church, with all the pressures of a hostile milieu?

At Our Lady's national shrine of El Cobre, as in that of Havana, thousands of pilgrims are at prayer. Yet, I look upon these people here, half-blinded by a scorching sun, trying to find comfort in the shade of the old walls. How does one explain the faith that brings some 40 persons to stand under a burning sun, at the foot of an old, broken statue of Our Lady of Charity?

When the present will become past, historians will probably try to glorify the event. Why? Our today, the today of a humble community of Punta Alegre has in itself all the beauty of its own reality, all the riches of its poverty, all the strength of its weakness. "God watches over the steps of His faithful... it is not by strength that man can triumph." (1 Sam. 2:9)

Dinorah Ayala, MIC

In Memoriam

We invite our readers to join in prayer with us for Sister Louise Tang, MIC, who returned to the Father on January 9, 1991, at the age of 60.

Sister Louise had served as a missionary in Hong Kong for 28 years.

Missionary Intentions 1991

March

That youth in India and the Americas find the seed of a missionary vocation.

April

That the Gospel reach and penetrate the culture of every people and nation.

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