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MIC

MISSION NEWS



THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

To life!

"I have come that you may have life in all its fullness." Jn 10, 10

Today, mission calls us into every area of life. With this comes the recognition that the fullness of life which Jesus came to bring is sometimes hidden by fear, weariness and loneliness.

In this issue, the articles tell how people help and support one another to drive away the darkness of anguish, solitude and want. Inspired by Christ's teachings of an abundant life for all, our missionaries – from isolated villages in the Philippines and Central Africa, to cities in Canada, Haiti and Chile – devote themselves ministering to the people and sharing their lives.

No matter how they seek to assist others, their own lives are fuller and richer. Persons bloom! Adding their uniqueness to the colorful pattern of life, they bring new ideas, enthusiasm and energy.

Life is always present, particularly when the choice taken is one of hope and openness to the commonplace joys each day brings. The gifts of the Holy Spirit are visible signs of this hope in a vibrant People of God – signs that challenge us to celebrate life with great joy!

Ma. Anthea Raso, MIC

Photo credits:

Front: R. Guay, MIC (Zambia)

A reflection of their heritage is found in the joy and openness to life of these little ones.

Back: S. Leclair, MIC (Zambia)

The warmth and vibrancy of far-away mission lands light up our lives!

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A mission of discovery

A visitor would never have known there was a cluster of newly-built nipa huts nestled at the foothills of Santa Cruz in Mindoro Occidental.

Some 20 families belonging to the Mangyan tribe now reside in Siyapo. Part of a Program of Settlement for Tribal Filipinos, the project has been set up by the local government, in co-operation with the Apostolic Vicariate Mangyan Mission.

Life for those who call Siyapo their home is a constant struggle. Each family has a small plot of land to till and hardly any cash income to buy food. Most

members of the nomadic tribe cannot read and write.

Fewer persons are aware of this situation than the four MIC Sisters who, upon Bishop Vicente Manuel's invitation, arrived in Santa Cruz in 1989 and chose to work with the Mangyans in the new settlement.

Among Sisters Angelita Olimba, Elvira Madolora, Josephine Leal and Prima Silvestre, there is a tangible spirit of joy – a joy that comes from knowing that by their presence and service, the people are helped to acquire a new sense of dignity and selfworth.

L. to R.: Sr. Elvira Madolora with Srs. Violeta Tutanés and Florita Galido at the MIC residence in Santa Cruz.

S. Dupuis, MIC





"To become acquainted with the families was our first task – the wide-eyed, mischievous faces of the children, the trusting and hopeful faces of the youth, the leather-like, stoic faces of the old. It is our hope that by sowing good seeds and promoting Christian values, they are being equipped to help themselves." Angelita Olimba, MIC

"Whenever we enter the settlement, wisps of smoke drifting from the small huts tell us that some families are at home. I ask myself, 'What are they thinking of as they plan their days, their weeks, their lives? Have we anything in common?' In spite of their poverty, the people show a positive outlook and zest in life. Values of the person, family and community are openly shared with us Sisters." Elvira Madolora, MIC



"It did not take us long to detect the strong character of our Mangyan friends – their innate joy, their capacity to suffer and their community spirit especially during difficult times. What I thought to be an unproductive land, with little chance of progress, is blooming with possibilities. We are learning something very important – that the main resources of the Mangyan tribe are the people themselves."
Josephine Leal, MIC



S. Dupuis, MIC

"Siyapo has been for us a place of wonderment and growth. Somehow, joy and sadness are always close to the surface, revealing our vulnerabilities to the reality around us. We have held dying children in our arms and seen old men cry. Harvests have not failed to yield just enough and perhaps a little more. We have been blessed with the friendship of many and humbled by everyday mysteries and blessings!"
Prima Silvestre, MIC

Youth comes at all ages

Whatever our age, we wish for a long life, but the sunset years are often lonely.

At Ancud, elderly people have organized a club. 78-year-old Amado Arismenti relates the lived experience of the club members.

Beginnings

In a sector of the city of Ancud, called "Inez de Bazan", I was a member of a small group of elderly persons. Time was spent together to reflect and pray for all our people who are in need, especially for the deceased, the poor and the prisoners. We also prayed for peace in our country. At the end of each encounter, praises to Mary, Mother of God, were sung for enlightenment and guidance along our path of life. Then



Sr. Nancy Campos, MIC, encouraging a friend on her knitting skills.



M.-P. Charbonneau, MIC

While enjoying a cup of tea, experiences are shared by "New Horizon" club members.

followed the sharing of our daily lived experiences, while enjoying a cup of tea. However, day by day, the members left the group until we had to dissolve it. For the oldest members, these were hard and painful days. Our hearts knew peace no longer... it was difficult for us to return to our 'aloneness'.

The dawn of "New Horizon"

At a decisive meeting, the pastor of our parish, Fr. Andres, who was deeply touched by our disappointment, made a suggestion. "You are filled with good will and a spirit of co-operation; you are capable of organizing a club for the elderly." "Why not?" we replied, after some moments of reflection. A responsible person, capable of organizing and directing the activities of our club was what we needed. We, the members, will cooperate fully and put our whole heart into the project.

Mrs. Gladys Herrera, well-known for her dynamic personality, was unanimously elected. She accepted graciously. Active and always preoccupied to do good for others, Mrs. Gladys enjoys team work and appreciates fellow volunteer workers, especially her enthusiastic sister, Gisele. Thus, from a core group of 5, our club, "New Horizon", now counts 30 members!

A time to begin once again

When we meet, the family spirit among us brings joy and

comfort to each one of the members. To think that in the past we hardly spoke to one another and now we have grown to be a loving family! Most enriching and joyful, our meetings help us to forget our pre-occupations and they break the monotony of daily routine. Above all, we are able to share our anxieties concerning problems of health, finances and solitude.

At the club, small projects have been started according to our interests and skills. The women sew, make cushions, table-cloths, slippers, gloves and rugs. With several companions, I've introduced woodwork and painting, which are interesting hobbies. At the end of the year, an exhibition of all our crafts will be held.

The directress and volunteer workers have a big share in the smooth functioning of the club. Always available, they are attentive towards each member.

We pray for one another. We thank God for the food we share together and ask that there will always be food on the tables of the poor. Indeed, we feel happy and satisfied to belong to this club which allows us to build fraternal bonds and to participate in communal activities. Come, grow along with us! *

Adapted from LE PRECURSEUR

by **Don Amado Arismenti**

It was a touching departure ceremony for our young MIC lay missionary, Pauline Barette.

Pauline's wonderful Christian family joined her in prayer with the MIC Sisters and her fellow lay missionaries. Young and old gathered around the table to share a meal at the Mother House.

All expressed their support and solidarity with Pauline on her decision, praying for her and with her. The Gospel message was meaningful, reassuring Pauline of the Lord's presence: "Be not afraid, I'll be with you always!" Her two-year-old nephew echoed the phrase he heard, saying: "Don't be afraid, Pauline!"

I had met Pauline a few years back when she was a nurse in training. She phoned me one day... it was important that we meet! She came, confiding her dream to undertake something special for others - far away; God had been so good to her!

She agreed to contact Sr. Pauline Williams, the Sister-coordinator of the MIC lay missionaries. That was nearly four years ago! Pauline found the encouragement and guidance needed to prepare more adequately for her future mission. She attended sessions, joined in prayer week-ends and made contacts with the MIC community, especially those who had lived and worked in Africa, the land of her choice.

Occasions



P. Williams, MIC

Miss Pauline Barrette, happy to be 'sent' to Africa in our name!

Pauline left for Africa on March 19. She will assume her nursing task at our clinic in Katete, Malawi, for two years.

Working side by side with Malawi nurses and MIC Sisters, her presence will not only be as an apostle, but as a witness to those around her. 'Sent' in our name and in the name of her fellow parishioners at St. Veronica's in Dorval, she counts on our support. As a collaborator of the MIC Sisters, she looks forward with eagerness to share her Christian life and experience with her new friends. *

ons for joy



as, MIC

H. Turcotte, MIC

A warm welcome to Pont-Viau!
L. to R. (seated): Srs. Msu Ya Yi,
Rachel de Mars, MIC, Chiu Hua Mei;
(standing): Srs. Blandine Simard, MIC
Huguette Turcotte, MIC.

Upon recommendation of the Canada-China Programme, the Canadian Association of Social Services invited two young Chinese Sisters of the province of Jiangsu, mainland China, to spend a few weeks in Quebec and Ontario. Their visit was intended to give them a glimpse of the activities of Canadian religious communities.

During their sojourn in Montreal, Sisters Chiu Hua Mei and Msu Ya Yi were welcomed

heartily by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Plans were made for activities during their stay.

The two visitors met the Catholic Chinese community in Chinatown. They showed great interest in all social activities of Church groups and their questions were endless. One of our MIC Sisters, Olivette Côté, who speaks fluent Mandarin, invited them to a Gospel sharing every evening. This form of prayer was appreciated and found helpful to guide them in the teaching of catechetics.

Having returned to their respective missions, they have resumed their teaching duties. A letter from them, forwarded from Shanghai, reveals how deeply touched they were by the warm welcome from the MIC Sisters, other religious communities, priests and Christians whom they met.

"We felt at home with all of you... we were welcomed like your own sisters. What impressed us most was the great number of priests and religious and the love that exists among Christians. Our visit to Canada was a very enriching experience. How happy we were to share our new knowledge with our Bishop and community, who rejoiced with us. We count on your prayers!" *

Therese LeBlanc, MIC

The little ones of Yahweh

Children of the Haitian society are the visible sign of a country which, despite all, remains full of hope. The birth rate continues to increase. At birth, the child is labelled 'child of misery' or 'hope of the unfortunate'.

Children servants and children in the streets

Many common denominators identify these two groups of little workers whose occupations and anxiety are far beyond their age. Their conditions of life make them advance to adult age even before experiencing childhood and adolescence. Coming from the rural areas and being confided by their parents to urban families, the children experience a trauma which could mark them for a lifetime. Pulled away from the family atmosphere and from the affection of their loved ones, they live in isolation with little defense or supervision.

The little servant

Trapped in his relations with his masters, the little servant receives contradictory orders. Eyes lowered, no retort is allowed. When mistaken, he is severely reprimanded.



Self-reliance and responsibility are taught at an early age.

The majority of these domestic children are girls. The boys resort to delinquency, escaping to the streets and villages.

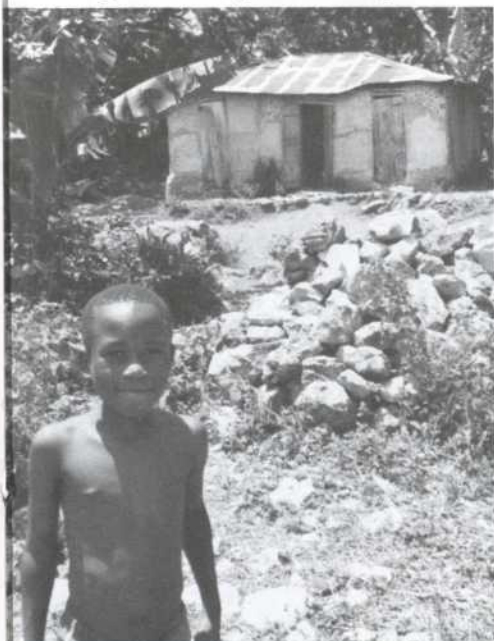
The child of the streets

The child of the streets joins other children of the same age and engages in a small trade or finds a little job: selling cigarettes, wiping cars, shining shoes or doing a man's job as a stevedore or porter. Barefooted and dressed in ragged clothes, he earns pennies, eats, plays and rests with other children. In his leisure time, he goes to football matches, plays cards and

sometimes begs. He sleeps in parking areas, in garages or wherever he can find refuge.

The number of such children has increased. Today, groups of people show great interest in this problem, trying to find an adequate solution. Animators are formed by the UNICEF to gather these children. The project "Fanmi, se lavi" (Family is life); "Timoun byenveni" (Children welcomed) with close to 300 centres of formation throughout the country, was created by Haiti's president, Jean Bertrand Aristide. Despite these efforts, the problem remains a serious one.

Breaking away from home surroundings takes strength and courage.



J. Dallaire

Hope of the future

My work with these children has taught me to know them, appreciate and love them. They are the little ones of Yahweh, miserable and marvelous at the same time. Always in search of love, they feel the joy of living, the hope of a better tomorrow. When loved sincerely they quickly reciprocate. Their good heart invites them to help their parents; they like to build small projects for the future.

As a Haitian, my heart goes out to them. Jesus calls them: "Let the little children alone, and do not stop them from coming to me; for it is to such as these that the Kingdom of heaven belongs". (Mt 19, 13-14). A cry gushes forth from my heart on their behalf. Why do these little ones encounter so much misery?

Whether they are children in the streets or with their parents, the Haitian children, like those of the whole world, remain beautiful and marvelous. They are the very language of God. The more I approach them, the more I discover that they are the symbol of life, of simplicity and of joy. Even the most miserable are joyful and I marvel before their countless qualities.

Long live the Haitian child!

Long live all the children of the world! *

Agnes Dumas, MIC

ZAMBIA

What a second career!

When Sr. Suzanne Leclair joined the MIC's, her deepest desire was to go to far-away lands to bring the Good News to those who had never heard about Christ. However, God's ways are not always our ways. Surprises are often in store for us!

At the age of 49, great was Suzanne's joy and happiness to be appointed to Africa. After 25 years of service in Canada, her dream of long ago was finally realized - she was assigned to Kanyanga, Zambia. You won't find this

on the world map, but look for Lundazi. Kanyanga is located 35 kilometers south of this town, where are found a small church, a rectory, a dispensary, a primary and secondary school.

In the African bush

I've already lived four years in this African bush where I've savored the hospitality, the simplicity, the love and respect for life, the unceasing and patient work of the people of the Watumbuka tribe whom I greatly appreciate.

Kanyanga days bring...
happy faces of children at play...

H. Turcotte, MIC



team spirit in a community project...

S. Leclair, MIC



People wonder what I am doing here

In charge of the administration of a Health Center which consists of 58 beds, 25 of which are set aside for maternity cases, there is never a dull moment for me! The day begins at 5:00 a.m. when I take time for a personal encounter with the One who called me 'to follow Him'. After breakfast, I set out for the dispensary located at a stone's throw from the convent. Along the path I usually meet a mother hen calling her little ones to protect them from an intruder, or a small snake which makes me jump, or a crab basking in the sun. Children, charming and mischievous, come to greet me with a handshake and sometimes laugh at my 'citumbuka' (dialect) which I've not mastered as yet.

Unemployment?

At 7:45 a.m., a short prayer, song and reading of the daily Gospel assemble the staff of the clinic. Then begins the day filled with a variety of chores: looking after the upkeep of the dispensary buildings and the houses of the medical personnel; the supervision of the garden, the laundry and the maintenance of the property. I also see to the good functioning of the solar system, the water pump and the engine which supply water – so precious for all! Occasionally, when bricks are required, I see to the brick oven.

Ouf! a moment of rest!

Working days extend from Monday to noon on Saturday. Needless to say that I get plenty of physical exercise.

a mother's loving care!

H. Turcotte, MIC



The nurse-in-charge who knows my love for adventure, often invites me to accompany her for a delivery in the bush or in an African hut... an offer which I never turn down. How I love to visit the maternity ward to admire newborn babies, speak with the mothers and even help to feed a triplet!

A ray of joy

And what about my apostolate? I attempt to be a joyous presence to all I meet, attentive to their unexpressed needs and open to dialogue. How many confidences have been received, either in my office or in a field under a mango tree and elsewhere. The important thing is to take the time. Question the trees – giant and discreet witnesses of all that is shared... or ask the flowers that ornament the

grounds and the paths year round... they will reveal the thirst and search for God that invades the hearts of all Africans!

Yes, to radiate the deep joy which dwells within me and share very humbly the Good News – this gives me dynamism and new life! Indeed, this is the reason of my being here in Kanyanga located in the African bush – at the end of the world.

If you envy me, I fully understand you. And if you ever hear: "Come, follow me", do not hesitate to answer the Lord, He who every day overwhelms me beyond my expectations and fills my heart with songs of joy and thanksgiving!*

Suzanne Leclair, MIC

In Memoriam

Let us have a prayerful remembrance for our Sister Martha Giguère who passed away on March 9, 1991 at the age of 80, after serving as a missionary in Rome, Vancouver and Hong Kong.

Let us also remember our Sister Laura Thérien who passed away on March 16, at the age of 81, after laboring in Manchuria, the Philippines and Hong Kong.

Our prayer is that they may love eternally in the Kingdom of Light!

Missionary Intentions 1991

July

That religious communities live with renewed enthusiasm their service to the Gospel in missionary activities.

August

That Christians learn to make the media an efficacious instrument of evangelization.

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