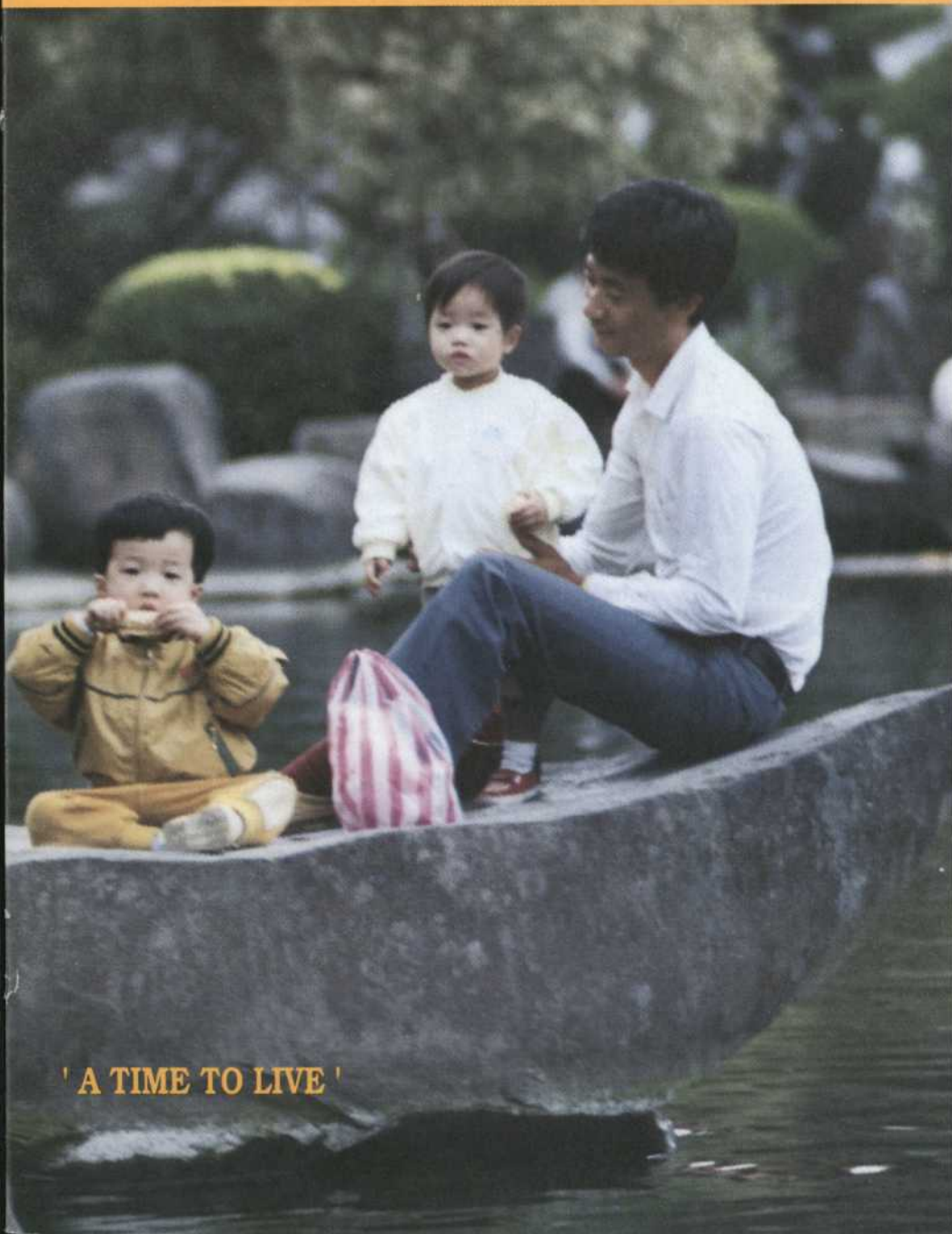


MIC MISSION NEWS

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July-August 1992



' A TIME TO LIVE '

The Church knows that the heart of man is not alive in doubt, despair nor hatred. It offers life again by giving reasons for faith and hope, for love and healing when people run out of reasons and are on the verge of thinking their future is less than it really is. (A. Padovano)



When hardships, hopes and joys in life are shared, people are brought together... their minds and hearts firmly united. In doing so, they find themselves as brothers and sisters — heirs of the Kingdom! Lived experiences of missionaries in different countries and cultures attest to this reality. *

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"To come near the Lord is prosperity"



Sr. Nancy with Fr. Gus, CICM, and catechumens, in front of Holy Rosary Church. (Chinese inscription above: see title)

Searchers, all!

"Why have you come?", I asked the inquisitive faces before me. This was during the adult catechumenate class at Holy Rosary Parish where I work.

"I saw your poster ad outside and I was just curious."

"I have friends who are Christians, and there's something different about them."

"I married into a Catholic family and my in-laws are very kind to me. My mother-in-law prays every morning in front of the little altar we have at home, and I'm touched to see her pray."

"My life feels empty. My friends told me everyone should have a religion, and suggested that I come and give this a try."

"My boyfriend's family is Catholic. I feel a love and

warmth among them which I don't feel in my family. Not too long ago, his parents went through some financial difficulties which obliged them to move to a smaller apartment. In spite of this, they kept a positive attitude and said they trusted in God, and that there are many other important things to be thankful for! I don't understand this."

"My sister was baptized only a year ago, and it surprises me to see the great change in her. I'm having some personal problems now and she told me I should also turn to God, but I don't know how."

As I listened to each one, I could not but marvel at how God works in the hearts of His peo-

ple, constantly knocking at their doors and awaiting their time to stop, listen and ponder over the stirrings of their heart. Our God patiently takes time to wait for our time. He is indeed the God of Love and the Father of all, untiringly reaching out to draw His people to Himself.

Each person who walks into our Church has his or her own story to tell, revealing a God who is very personal. He uses different means to enter into the person's life, according to each one's unique personality and life story.

Together seeking the light

Doing pastoral work here in Taiwan, in a milieu that is mostly of Buddhist-Taoist beliefs, I have many occasions to be asked

Sharing ideas on a parish project. Sr. Nancy (left) with lay leaders.



by the local people what being a Catholic is all about. After attending our Mass, they ask what "the man" up front was doing? Those who could not contain their curiosity asked me why I chose to be a "nun" and gave up marriage, and wasn't that too bad?

I smiled in response to their questions because I knew that behind the question is a search, a knock of God, ever so discreet and quiet. I smiled because these are simple questions which called for simple answers. However, to be able to answer simply, I needed time to reflect and really go deep into my heart.

I realized that actually, there are many religious terms which we take for granted but which would sound abstract and unknown to "foreign" ears. I felt challenged to define for myself the terms such as "grace", "salvation", "Kingdom of God" and "divine presence".

To answer their simple questions, I also needed to ask myself some questions... in what do I believe when I profess myself to be a Christian? What is the Good News of Jesus Christ for me? How is God relevant to my life here and now?

Love spills out

I discovered in the course of these exchanges with my non-Christian friends that God is not only knocking at their door, but that He is also knocking at mine, waiting for me to stop, listen, ponder, and tune in to His active, living presence in my everyday life. Thus, sharing with these people has "graced" me and brought me to a deeper awareness of my own convictions and beliefs and deepened my faith-life.

When I recall how entering into a deep relationship with God has brought meaning and direction into my life, and made a world of difference to me, I feel ever more convinced of the value of my missionary presence here among the non-Christians. They too have a right to hear about God, to choose to know Him and find in Him the answer to all their questions.

As St. Augustine once said: "our hearts are restless, O Lord, until they rest in Thee." Jesus gives us this command: "Go... and teach all nations... I am with you always!" *

Nancy Vy-So, m.i.c.

The Spirit of the Lord puts His own light into our hearts.

(Si. 17.8)

Discovering cultural richness

My search for a vocation

I was born and grew up in a small village near Sapporo in the northern part of Japan. At present, I live in Longueuil with eight other M.I.C. Sisters. We represent six nationalities: Canadian, Haitian, Peruvian, Malagasy, Chinese and Japanese.

Christians are a minority in Japan. None of the members of my own family are Catholic. My grandmother is a fervent Buddhist. Though my parents never practiced Buddhism, they integrated this with Shintoism. I was sixteen when I was baptized at the Catholic school where I had studied for six years.

Since my baptism, I searched for my vocation in life. There were such beautiful values to live and so many choices to make. Upon completing my university studies, I had nearly decided to marry and dedicate my life to a husband and children — as was the vocation of a majority of Japanese women at the time. However, I met an elderly M.I.C. Sister with years of experience in

Japan. She had left everything to dedicate her life to others and she was radiant and beaming with joy! I reflected upon this deeply.

The missionary call

At the age of 23, I decided to join the M.I.C. Sisters. The 26-hour trip to the convent in Tokyo by train and boat was marked by sadness. I could not forget the hardship of my family — especially that of my mother. However, after three months, my mother wrote to me: "Your happiness is mine." This encouraged me to follow the call of the Lord.

During my year at the Novitiate, I was always happy to learn something new. I continued my formation in the Philippines where I studied English. This was another occasion for me to be generous. I was very happy in Japan and I was not interested in going elsewhere. I kept thinking that Japan was the best country, the most beautiful and comfortable. Upon my arrival in the Philippines, I was impressed by the kindness of the people



For Sr. Theresia, a jubilee... a unique chance to say thanks!

and by the beauty of nature all around.

I had a change of heart and I became more aware of God's greatness. If He has created such wonderful people and such beautiful nature in the Philippines, has He not done as much in Japan... and why not in the rest of the world!

Mission experience in Canada

When I received my assignment two years ago, I wondered what it would be like, being a missionary in Canada. Canadians are blessed in many ways and their faith is carried on from

generation to generation. I am happy to be here! I am discovering the people's richness — the quality of a life based on Christian values

I deeply appreciate my missionary vocation. Day after day, I experience the greatness and depth of God's love and kindness, through my Sisters and our friends from different countries.

Recently, my mother wrote to me: "I believe you have never regretted the life that you have chosen." Indeed, it is true and it has been so for 25 years! *

Theresia Kyoko Takahashi, m.i.c.

Hope comes to San Antonio

Mt. Pinatubo erupts

Is there life after Mt. Pinatubo? This question has been foremost in the minds of the people of San Antonio - once a thriving barrio in Pampanga.

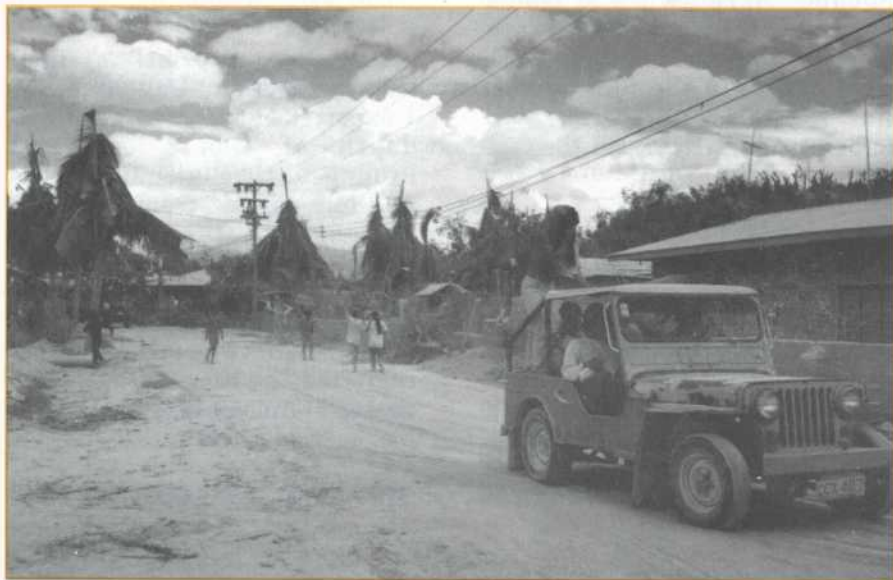
Mt. Pinatubo, having spewed billions of cubic meters of ash and other volcanic materials, had turned San Antonio and other areas in Central Luzon into a real wasteland. Worse still, the eruption took place at the time of the year when the monsoon season dumped heavy rains on the mountain slopes. In turn, the rain brought about

mudflows or 'lahars' (flowing mixtures of volcanic deposit).

Indeed, there will never be enough pictures to show the destruction brought about by Mt. Pinatubo's eruption on the people's lives, on the greenfields that used to be "kissed by the sun" and on the "valleys where rivers used to run".

The tragedy in barrio San Antonio

It happened in the evening of September 7, 1991. San Antonio is some 35 kilometers away from the volcano site. Some families,



considering the long distance, refused to join the exodus. In an hour's time, the central part of the barrio was four feet submerged in 'lahar'. "The rushing and steaming mudflow sounded like a stampede of hundreds of horses", recalled the residents. A few families perished as they were trapped in their rooms. The sights and sounds during that fateful evening are still etched in the memory of the people.

And now the life-blood of the people — the riceland, the fishponds, the canefields and the grazeland are gone, even the rivers. Many concrete houses of well-off families are half buried; roofs sticking out amidst a gray landscape of ash and mud are a common sight. Other houses can no longer be traced as they were carried away by the charging mudflow and hurled into the river or creek for burial.

A time to begin again

After recovering somewhat from their nightmare, the residents returned to their homesites to retrieve what was left only to find their mud-covered utensils and other household items fit for archaeological exhibits. Besides, they had no place to go. They would rather start from scratch than wait for dole-outs at the "tent city", an evacuation center where tents, donated by foreign governments, were pitched to serve as temporary shelter for the homeless.

ICA 'adopts' San Antonio

Twice a month, from November 1991 until February 1992, three school buses with students, teachers and a medical team of volunteer doctors left Immaculate Conception Academy (ICA) to bring relief goods and comfort to the victims in San Antonio. This was ICA's response to the

Despite the destructions, life goes on!



Photos: V. Masinda, m.i.c.



ICA volunteers: Sr. Edita (seated), with Miss Vita Duque and high school students.

"Adopt a Barangay Program" initiated by the Archbishop of Pam-panga.

The ICA students were inspired to see the grateful smiles and courage of the people. Some of the young volunteers played with the children in the churchyard. Others took over the Grade School classes to the delight of the teachers who were happy to be relieved. Goodies, toys, school materials, clothing and other useful items were given to the children. Above all, the students' loving touch and kind look gave reassurance of a caring God to the trauma-filled kids.

Enriching lessons

Yes, the ICA volunteers gave their time and love and shared their resources but what have they reaped? Here are some of their insights:

"Talking to the residents, it was good to note that so far all of them still have the spirit of hope,

that someday they will be able to recover."

"These people opened my eyes. I became more aware of the gifts God has given me and to all of us. In a way, the people of San Antonio helped me see the beauty of life."

"Through these experiences, God is showing me how to be humble and grateful for His blessings. Sometimes, I forget Him, and He comes to me through others so that I am able to rediscover Him again."

Is there really life after Mt. Pinatubo for the barrio folks? One of them admits: "Life is full of ups and downs. There is nothing we can do but start all over again." Yet the smiles around give evidence of hope and certainty that indeed, life goes on! *

Edita Telan, m.i.c.

Missionary Intentions



July

That the pastoral ministry among tourists and travellers favor the growth of human and Christian solidarity.

August

That in the countries of old Christian tradition, a yearning and mission spirit may be revived.

CANADA

Life is the best of gifts

Whoever visits the Délia Tétreault Pavillion at Pont-Viau might happen to meet a brave missionary, her face illuminated by a broad smile and shining eyes.

Sister Eliette Gagnon, wanting to discover more about Sr. Jeanne d'Arc Fontaine, chatted with her and now presents her to us.

Jeanne d'Arc, how long have you been in a wheelchair?

For me, it's just recently, although I've often pushed patients around in their wheelchairs in Haiti.

Did you enjoy being a nurse?

Yes! Yet, I never chose this profession. As a child I was greatly

attracted by the sick and had a deep love for them. When I joined the M.I.C. Sisters, I already had five years of experience in a hospital.

You have acquired other experience since?

After my final commitment as an M.I.C., I was sent to Haiti where I spent 30 wonderful years.

What were your responsibilities in Haiti?

In dispensaries of Port-Salut, Deschapelles, La Boule, Charpentier, I looked after some 150 patients each day — people of all ages. I cared for their various problems: malaria, typhoid fever, malnutrition, infections, wounds, etc. How happy I was serving the patients! All along these years, I tried my best to welcome them with loving patience.

Why are you now here at Pont-Viau?

It's a long story. In January 1986, a cerebral haemorrhage hit me. I returned to Canada without delay and was transported from the airport straight to the hospital for an operation on the brain. There was a chance of getting well and I didn't want to miss it. The operation was a success but I remained handicapped.

In my room I went from my bed to my chair and then back again with great difficulty. It was terrible for me since my great desire was to get well and to return to Haiti. In desperation, I clung to physiotherapy. I can still hear the doctor repeating to me: "There is nothing to do!" "Doctor, please, keep me on physiotherapy a while longer. I'm sure I will walk once again!" My insistence and perhaps my tears made an impression upon him. I remained in the hospital for two months of physiotherapy.

Upon returning to Pont-Viau, I put all my heart and energy in doing the exercises on my own. I wanted to recover the use of my paralysed hands and legs at any cost. Each day was transformed into a small miracle. Today, I can walk short distances with the help of a cane. Yet, progress was slow and I had to face the fact that I would never return to Haiti!

It must have been hard for you!

Yes, it has been extremely difficult. During two years I resisted with all my strength. The Lord helped me experience His great love for me. I



Hope and the joy of life bloom anew for Sr. Jeanne D'Arc.

understood that He was inviting me, through these events, to a new life, a life of a handicapped to be made beautiful — right to the end.

During 30 years I had given Him a life overflowing with joy. He was now asking me in my inactivity the full gift of myself, like a candle which, when burning, sheds light and warmth.

How do you spend your days?

I like to read, I listen to my favorite music, I correspond with many people. I compel myself to regular exercises, I recreate myself with my sisters and try to be of help when possible.

My mission has totally changed. It has become one of adoration, praise, prayer and offering for the entire world, from pole to pole. I pray especially for young people, priests and missionaries. I have never regretted having clung to life since it is for me the best of gifts.

Thank you, Sr. Jeanne d'Arc for your faith and courage. You give me the desire to live my own missionary life to the full! *

Eliette Gagnon, m.i.c.

IMPORTANT!

To our dear readers:

The team of MIC MISSION NEWS has asked itself some questions and now puts these questions to you.

- Read attentively the survey on p. 15
- Return your answers as soon as possible
- Use the enclosed envelope

URGENT PLEASE ANSWER TODAY!

We need your answers. **Do not hesitate** to give your comments or observations.
We are grateful for this service for the **future** of our magazine.

Remember that 2 masses are offered each week for your special intentions and for the deceased members of your family.

Thank you for taking this occasion to renew your subscription or to offer a gift subscription.

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☐ 1 to 5 years ☐ 5 to 10 years ☐ more than 10 years

2- I subscribe because: _____

3- I read it:

☐ from cover to cover ☐ partially ☐ not at all

4- This magazine helps me to reflect on the mission of the Church and on my missionary commitment:

☐ very much ☐ a little ☐ not at all

5- I like the choice of the articles: ☐ yes ☐ no

6- The texts are easy to read: ☐ yes ☐ no

7- I like the format of the magazine: ☐ yes ☐ no

8- The characters are easy to read: ☐ yes ☐ no

9- I would like to have more photos: ☐ yes ☐ no

10- I would like to have more pages: ☐ yes ☐ no

A- My suggestions to improve the contents of the magazine:

B- My suggestions to improve the presentation of the magazine:

My age group:

☐ 20-40 ☐ 40-60 ☐ 60-80 ☐ 80-100

☐ lay person ☐ priest ☐ religious

We thank you sincerely for your prompt collaboration!

THE MIC MISSION NEWS TEAM



Play, little men, play!

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