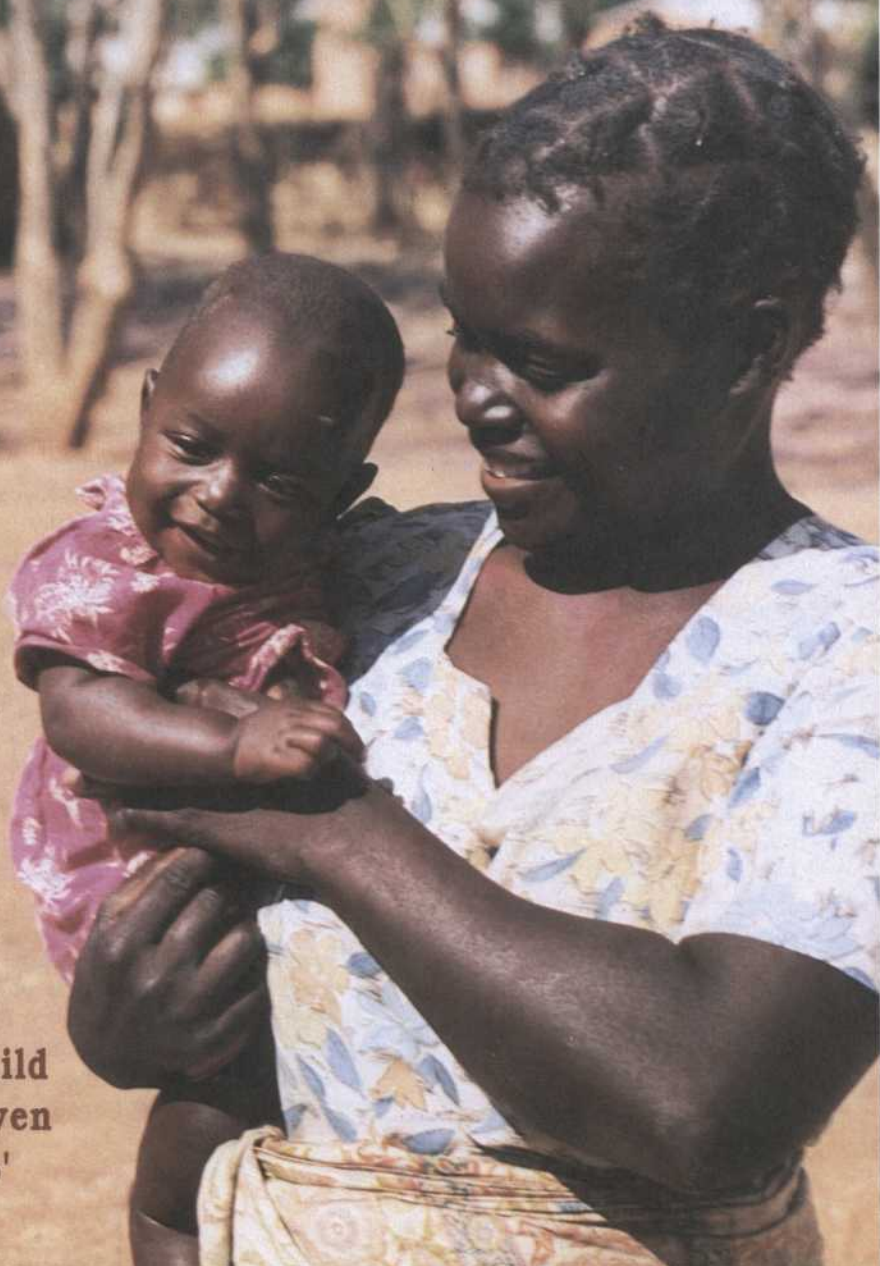


MIC MISSION NEWS

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November-December 1992



'A child
is given
to us'

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Dare to tell

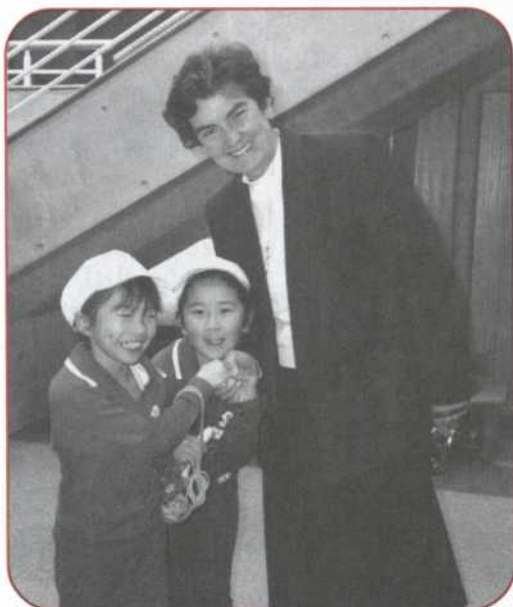
As I thought about this editorial, the memory of my heart recalled all those men and women who, all along the ages, have dared to tell. To tell what? about whom?

To tell about God! There! All is said! And yet, no! We have to go beyond these words. Isn't language often inadequate to express the deepest realities?

You will agree that there are different ways to tell people about God, but all depends, first of all, on our communication with Him. We need to desire Him, to search for Him, to enter into communion. It's a moment of silence, of solitude, of prayer: a tear, a feeling of doubt, hope, joy, rapture and, what else? It's an encounter!

Let us recall Mary, so happy to share, through her Magnificat, the covenant God had just made with her. And what about the Samaritan woman who, leaving her jug behind, ran joyfully to tell others what Jesus had told her? The Apostles - Philip who told Nathaniel, Peter who told the Jews and Paul, the Gentiles... the adventure of a marvellous communication was launched. "The Word was made flesh (...) To all who did accept Him, He gave power to become children of God." (Jn 1, 12.14).

Communication - communion, this long story of love and fidelity is ours today. Through faith, we subscribe to it and are called to communicate it to others. Doesn't the Church remind us that we are all missionaries through our baptism?

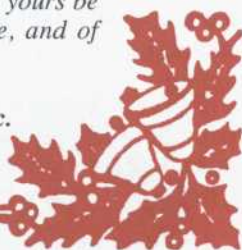


Sr. Evangeline meets young friends in Koriyama, Japan.

It surely happens that you dare to tell about Him: a creed shared, a pastoral commitment, Christian education given to children; having the courage of your convictions, helping the destitute at home or abroad, being in solidarity with missionaries, forgiving and, in your heart, crying to God in prayer. Yes, dare to tell about Him for He is the Source of Peace, Justice and Love, which our world needs so badly. Therefore, if you are among those daring ones who tell about Him and live by His Word, let us give thanks together. Hope is entwined in the fabric of your days!

For having dared to tell about Him with us, allow me, in the name of the large M.I.C. family and of our ASMIC associates, to thank you for your great solidarity in the mission entrusted to us. May yours be the joy of hearing others tell about Him, the Living One, and of daring to tell about Him yourself!

**Evangéline Plamondon, m.i.c.
Superior General**



Children behind bars

The fate of refugees

Several times now, the government of Hong Kong has repatriated groups of Vietnamese refugees who have reached its territory after escaping by boat from their own country. This solution was adopted to settle the problem of the 70,000 boat people in the many camps of Hong Kong, who, it is hoped, will be evacuated before the return of the country to communist China in 1997.

Unpleasant scenes have appeared on television showing people dragged forcefully towards the plane that would take them back to their country of origin. Such news have perhaps left us indifferent. We've so often spoken of refugees... and Hong Kong is so far away! But for one who visited a detention camp of "boat people" in Hong Kong last year, these people have faces and some of them even have names. I recall being in their midst when I lived this extraordinary experience, and I feel concerned and in solidarity with them.

Before leaving Montreal, friends of Vietnamese origin had asked me to visit Camp Tai A Chau where they had family and

friends. Once in Hong Kong, I realized that the undertaking would be difficult since the refugee camp was situated on an island at an hour's boat ride from the city.

A visit to Camp Tai A Chau

Through the help of a Belgian sister who was a pastoral worker in the camp, the doors were opened for me. I went in with Sr. Lucie Gagné, after having exchanged my passport for a visitor's identification card.

An Australian priest who accompanied us celebrated Mass for several hundred Catholics who, grouped together in a hall, sat on the floor - men at the right, women at the left. The crowd, many of whom were well-behaved children, sang the Mass, which they had memorized. We were deeply impressed by the lively liturgy and by everyone's participation. United by the same fate, they were all but one heart and one soul... an eloquent manifestation of the faith of an afflicted people.

We were invited to have lunch with a family in their barrack. On either side of the central aisle were three levels of bunks

with wooden platforms of approximately six square feet. Each family occupied a bunk and platform: here they slept and ate. One managed to have a bit of privacy by sliding a blanket or piece of cloth on a rope stretched out along the full length of the bunk.

Each barrack accommodated many hundreds of people: men, women, children of all ages, babies. Clothes hung everywhere; luggage, bags, boxes and utensils were piled up on or under the beds.

The coming and going was ceaseless; so, too, the sound of voices. People shouted to one another, children ran, babies

cried, the mothers consoled. Plunged so suddenly in such unusual surroundings, I felt quite lost and almost panic-stricken. Yet, I was surrounded by smiling faces, by welcoming and loving gestures. And the children were so lovely, so candid and innocent! I wanted to take them out of here, to a place where they could grow in peace and freedom! Sr. Lucie and I quickly emptied our bags and pockets of their contents to have the pleasure of hearing bursts of laughter and eyes beaming with joy.

Our hosts went to the distribution center located in the yard for a meal of rice, fish and sauce. They watched us attentively,

A refugee family at 'home' in Camp Tai A Chau.



Photo: H. Turcotte, m.i.c.

constantly filling our plastic plates with the best pieces. They were most amused to see us use the chopsticks and very happy to share with us their daily menu. With the polyglot interpreter who accompanied us (he spoke Vietnamese, Chinese, English and French), we went out to find the refugees whose names I had.

Suddenly, a young woman called out: "Is it true that you come from Canada? How happy I am! My sister lives on St. Vallier Street in Montreal." Quickly, a photo was taken, she gave the name and address of her sister. I promised to pay her a visit as soon as I arrived in Montreal. And then appeared Phuong and Minh, the husband of Anh. He explained that his wife, the sister of my friend in Montreal, was at the clinic to give birth to her fourth baby. I gave him a bank note, a gift from his family, to celebrate the happy event.

As for Phuong, upon learning from the interpreter that all the procedures for sponsoring her were already underway at the Canadian Immigration, she was breathless, wordless, her eyes brimming with tears. What hope for the future opened before her at this moment! But will this wonderful dream ever become a reality? There are so many administrative obstacles to surmount. And what if this hope of starting her life anew were to fail - imagine the extent of her despair!

Then, I observed all those around me who were worried by the threat of repatriation. Most of them say that the unstable situation of life in Camp Tai A Chau is still preferable to returning to a country which they have left at the cost of great sacrifices and at the risk of their life.

At the end of this visit, it was with a sigh of relief that we recovered our passports and crossed to the other side of the walls, 'mission accomplished'. But the vision of children waving at us behind the bars of the camp will remain with me for a long time.

What lies ahead?

Having returned amidst the skyscrapers of Montreal, I cannot forget these children. When meeting new Canadians of Vietnamese origin in the streets of our lovely home country, I think of the thousands of their fellow-citizens waiting in camps in Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Hong Kong. In reality, what are they waiting for?

The way things are going - restrictions set by 'welcoming' countries, racism, nationalism rising everywhere - the quest of refugees for freedom risks being disappointed forever. Yet, I feel a great desire for universal solidarity in a world where there will no longer be refugees - men, women and children crowded together without hope, behind bars. *

Huguette Turcotte, m.i.c.



All set and ready for the day's lessons.

They too are God's children

When I arrived in Siyapo last June, I met the Mangyans, one of the tribal groups of our country, for the first time. We Sisters were then entering our second year of ministry in Santa Cruz, Occidental Mindoro, working with the parish priest and the Mangyans.

Then, I met the children. My main task was to teach and help them. I had no second thoughts... I said "yes"! They deserved to be

taught, cared for and loved. They too are God's little children. Some day, they too will sing the goodness of the Lord.

I started to teach a small group of pupils. Some had already received basic lessons from the Sisters, but many were first-timers. We used a two-classroom school built by the government. At the start, there were no tables or chairs. We were indeed challenged to be resourceful!

Later, as the class grew larger, desks were provided by local officials.

During the first few months, the children and I had difficulties. The fact that we were learning together was challenging. It called for hard work but I was so impressed by my pupils' eagerness and desire to learn.

Learning was slow but hope filled our hearts when most of the children could write their names, read the alphabet, count numbers and read and write simple sentences. Oh, what a joy for all of us! For every effort made, I gave a pat on the back, or a word of appreciation. In return, they smiled candidly, as if to say: "Look, we too can learn, thanks!"

As they learned more quickly, I shared stories about God and His love for children. They soon knew the sign of the cross and prayed the Our Father. At home, they repeated these prayers before meals and at bedtime. Surely the Lord blesses them... they are His 'little ones'.

I observed that they were becoming more at ease with strangers. They used to run to their huts and hide when they saw new faces, peeping by the door or through a hole to get a

better view of the newcomer. They are still shy, but now, they can face new people and be friendly with them. I enjoy talking with them about anything that comes up. It only takes a simple question to get them talking and sharing. Once they are at ease, what good and pleasant entertainers they become!

I believe that deep in their hearts they have dreams and hopes for their lives. They know they only have a small voice and carry a small dream, unknown and perhaps unwanted in society. But I always tell them they are part of God's creation and that God loves them.

Being, as they are, exposed to a hard life, their young minds look for something that explains why other people have much and they have nothing. This and other realities make them face a world full of questions and mystery. Hopefully, the lessons they receive will help them grow and welcome each day as a precious gift from God.

My joy is in knowing that today, these children are full of life, full of enthusiasm to meet what is in store for them in the future. *

Judy Saludes, m.i.c.

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Photo: F.-A. L'Heureux, m.i.c.

We invite you, dear friends and readers of MIC MISSION NEWS to join in prayer for our missionaries who died during the past year.

Sister Majella Allaire
Sister Brigitte Auger
Sister Annette Blain
Sister Lucile Dubois
Sister Marguerite Farrell
Sister Yvonne Frenette

Sister Louise Gérin
Sister Claire Giroux
Sister Alice Isabelle
Sister Lucia Mercier
Sister Marie-Thérèse Pilon
Sister Thecla Tchao

For your beloved dead, two Masses are offered each week in one of our mission houses.

Learners at the school of life



Shoeshiners on the job!

Studies in sexology from the Laval University of Quebec prepared Sr. Marie-Paul to respond to a current need of society today.

For the past 2 years, I've given courses, sessions, seminars, group and individual therapy in Peru and nearby countries. Different groups have been reached

such as young animators, seminarians, professors, parents and health professionals.

Since May of this year, I've been working in Pucallpa. The organizers of encounters on sex education invite young people and adults who are interested in different social services. Working children appear on the long list.

Who are they and why is this group given the priority?

Aged 7 to 17, these young workers - shoeshiners - are often shunned by the public, treated harshly and rejected. They are usually dressed in rags and carry the hurts of life. Many have taken drugs; some are infected with diseases. In general, they are extremely sensitive, very alert and aware of realities around them.

'Street university students'

I went to a Center where children and teenagers come for their daily meal. My first visit made a deep impression on me. Meeting the animators of the Center, Doris and Antonio, helped me understand the lived experience of the youngsters and their need for sex education. I felt small and incompetent but I accepted the challenge. Some of the children greeted me. Their filth and wounds saddened me. However, their smiles and their youthful eyes confirmed certain values and revealed a mysterious inner world. I wanted to be of help, but I felt powerless.

Then, I thought of inviting these teenagers to a 10-hour session set for 150 youth and adult animators. Having young delinquents join the animators was risky but it was a risk worth taking.

For our first gathering, 15 shoeshiners, dressed simply but neatly, turned up at the Center. It was not difficult to recognize them. I was filled with anxiety. How would these young people put up with the talks on sex education? I decided to make them my partners... I put them in charge of the projectors, slides, recorders, song sheets and other materials. In no time, they learned how to operate the equipment and listened with great interest. At the end of our session, I extended thanks to my new team of 'technicians' and the assembly applauded heartily.

These young people's zest for life and their many different life experiences drove me to talk to them very seriously. I listened and chatted with them as friends. For me, they were 'street university students'... they had learned much at the school of life!

Fruitful meetings

A climate of trust prevailed during the next meetings. Participants spoke out very frankly about the topics and questions were asked simply.

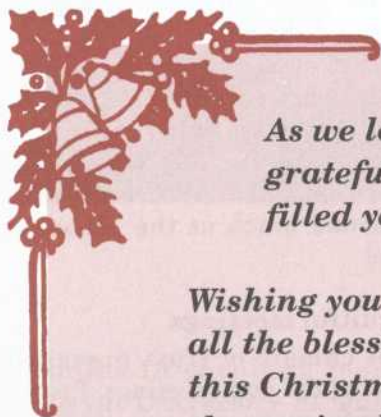
A group of young people shared their reflections. Gilberto, 16: "After 30 hours of sessions in sex education, I want to help young persons of my age

who have problems because they know nothing." Oliver, 15: "Thank you, Sr. Marie-Paul, I would also like to be a sexologist to help my friends and the children who are victims." Manuel, 17: "Sexuality is very complicated. I've learned a lot and I will be happier." William, 16: "I didn't realize that sexuality was so great. I shall tell my small brothers about it so that they won't suffer as I did. I've been hurt so often." Marcos, 16: "All young people my age should follow these sessions."

Many other sharings confirmed the need to continue these sessions and meetings. Indeed, sex education is more than needed in a society where repression and pornography are the main 'schools' accessible to all. How important it is to give accurate ideas on this topic!

I thank my young friends for their trust, their confidence and openness. My wish is that each one may truly grow in light and in love! *

Marie-Paul Ross, m.i.c.



*As we look back at 1992, we
gratefully reflect on this grace-
filled year.*

*Wishing you
all the blessings of God's love
this Christmas and in
the coming New Year !*

*We look forward to sharing 1993
with you.*

ALL OF US AT MIC MISSION NEWS



An appeal for help

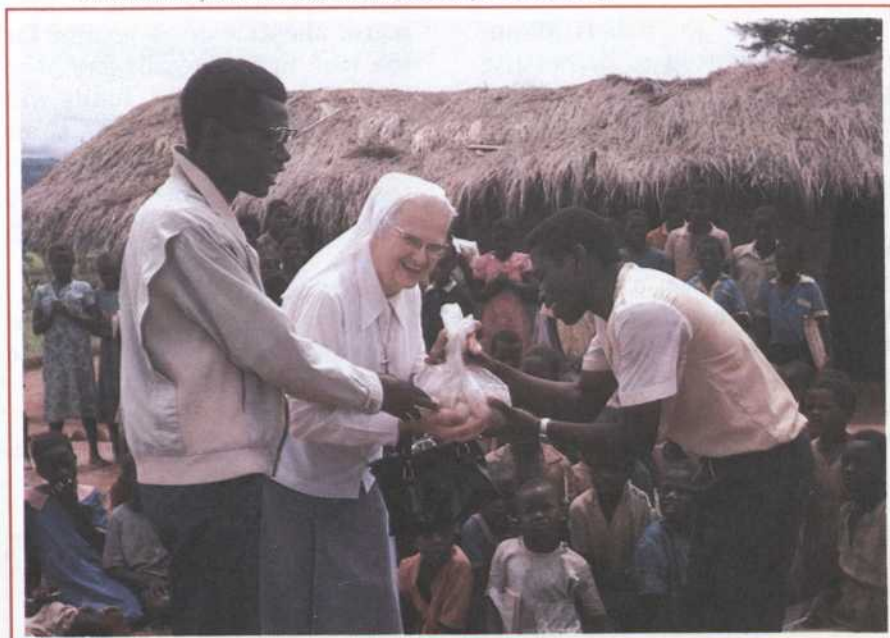
For most young Malawians, living conditions are far from adequate. How I wished our Canadian children were with me a few months ago, when I visited a small school located 16 km from Mzimba mission!

Missionary priests had a small church built in this bush area called Tchiri, where the Chris-

tians gather to pray. However, as there is no school yet in Tchiri, the children walk 8 km to reach the nearest school at Wozi or 10 km to Mtandani school near a forest.

One day, the parents decided to do something to remedy the situation. Without asking permission from either the parish

At the schoolyard, an exchange of gifts - pencils and eggs. (L. to R.: Fr. Mkandawiri, Sr. Thérèse and a teacher, Mr. Banda.)



authorities or the minister of education, they chose a young man from a neighboring village, without any qualifications for teaching, and gave him the job to teach their children. On the first day more than a hundred children, ages 5 to 14, gathered in the village chapel. They had no desks and not a single book.

After a short time, four parents came to the parish priest, but nothing could be done without the consent of the department of education. Therefore, a delegation was sent to meet the authorities and explain their problem. Overjoyed, they soon returned to the parish to announce the good news... they had been allowed to open a small private school.

The pastor, Fr. Robert Mkan-dawiri, accepted to direct the promising project. After meeting the district education officer who confirmed the approval of the small private school - which would receive no help from the ministry -he set out for Tchiri. To his great surprise, a small bush school had already gone up. Within a week, 40 people had built a 2 classroom school with walls made of sticks covered with mud and a thatched roof.

Some time later, I went to visit the makeshift schoolhouse and was intrigued by the blackboard. What skill! A mixture of sweet potato leaves and mud had resulted in a black paste and been applied to the classroom wall. Once dried, it was quite suitable for writing on with chalk.

At present, two young non-qualified teachers handle the classes for a growing number of children in this small school in the bush. Minimal fees are paid annually to support the teachers. The parents have started to make bricks for the construction of a more stable school and two small houses for the teachers.

The income is so low that it will take a long time before metal sheets can be bought for the roof. Still, the villagers keep hoping that, in time, funds will be available to complete their school building. They also look forward to having desks and chairs, books and school supplies.

Yes, how I wished our Canadian children were with me to see this situation! *

Therese Deziel, m.i.c.

Sincere thanks for your prompt response to our survey.



H. Turcotte, m.i.c.

Dried grass and sticks for a schoolroof!

Missionary Intention

December 1992

For children, that their rights be promoted and supported, particularly their right to a worthwhile human and religious education.

MIC MISSION NEWS

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The coming of your Word fills us with new light!

