

MIC MISSION NEWS

Series 20, No. 1
January-February 1993



Hope lives !

Christ, our Hope

CHRIST, living in our own time, is our unshakable hope - living in the hearts of his disciples who carry on the marvellous but painful adventure of building a better, more fraternal, more human world. Hope that breathes vigour and dynamism into our missionary endeavors.

The more we try to see Jesus himself acting in our brothers and sisters who live according to their faith and shed the light of their faith around them, the more careful we will be to act in such a way that others see Christ in us, and the more will humanity be inspired with OUR HOPE.

**Jean-Guy Couture,
Bishop of Chicoutimi**

Excerpts, World Mission Day
"Cahier d'animation missionnaire -
1992
Oeuvre Pontificale de la Propagation
de la Foi"
Quebec, Canada

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Like the mustard seed...

A missionary in Taiwan for twelve years, I spent the last five years with 162 physically and mentally handicapped students at the Kuanhsi Center. This ministry has helped me understand the parable of the mustard seed... "the small seed thrown into the ground grows, becomes a tree and the birds make their nests in its branches." (Luke 13:18-19)

At this Centre - a non-Christian milieu - I saw the "mustard seed" grow. Here, the handicapped are helped and encouraged to give meaning to their lives.

Day after day, in the patient repetition of ordinary gestures, and in the assurance that Christ's love inhabits each one, they learn to discover and develop their capacities. Indeed, in many of them the small "seed" grows. After 2, 3 or 4 years of training - attending to their personal hygiene, domestic chores, manual work and group work, the "tree" of their person develops.

A unique work brigade

For the past four years, I've looked after a group of mentally handicapped girls at the Center. Early this year, I was privileged to participate in a new project with a different group.

A job-training for boys and girls of the Center was offered to us by the Philips Company. This is a factory of 3000 employees, situated at Ju Pei, a 20-minute drive from the Center.

What type of work was assigned to our students? For the girls, it consists in washing the dishes, tables, chairs and windows of the dining room. The boys will see to the maintenance of the lawn, pick up scraps of paper and look after the cleanliness of the grounds. Philips Company accepts our students on the condition that they are accompanied by teachers.

With two lay teachers, I set out to train a group of eight boys and eight girls. Before long, we prepared 26 young workers in all.



At play - Sr. Françoise (2nd from left) and her regular group of students at the Kuanhsi Center...

Each morning, from Monday to Saturday, we drive out in our own vehicle. Work at the factory begins at 8:30 in the morning and finishes at 4:30 p.m. The girls wash dishes from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., with a half-hour break for lunch. In the afternoon, they are given an hour to rest. Then they wash the chairs, tables and windows of the dining room. All return to the Center at 5:00 p.m.

I was thrilled to see how our working students did their jobs well. They needed to become familiar with the many operations involved. Each day, close to 1000 employees showed up for lunch. This gives an idea of the number of dishes to be washed, the number of tables to be cleaned, the size of the dining room, etc. As a teacher, I made sure to guide the girls and not do the work for them.

Valuable lessons for all

My experience at the Philips Company was very enriching. It gave me many occasions to meet the factory workers, especially the women employed at the kitchen and maintenance. The short time spent with these workers helped me understand them as well as our handicapped students. All this is precious to me!

Several students are learning to use common transport. They stay on at the Center to continue their formation. Some are helping to support their family with their salary. Don't they remind us of "the tree which provides shelter for the small birds"? Isn't this a note of great hope for us who live in a society where productiveness and yield are the basic criteria?

... and at work! - with
the girls' team at Philips
Company.



I wish to share with all, especially the families who have a handicapped child, the priceless lessons learned from my students. I've discovered their deep sense of personhood, their richness of heart, their sensitivity, their possibilities which are often ignored and dormant and their joy of living. May we also discover in our own contact with other persons like them the "mustard seed"... a seed of hope! *

Françoise Larouche, m.i.c.

In February 1992, Sr. Françoise received a plaque of appreciation and ten thousand N.T. dollars (Taiwan currency) in recognition of her services at the Kuanhsi Center. A joint project of the Ministry of Interior Affairs and the San Ching Charitable Institution of China, the awarding ceremony included as recipients teachers, students, policemen and volunteers in social and charitable works.

***All is gift!... We can anticipate the eternal feasts
by singing God's praises and by giving ourselves over
to joy and gratefulness. How good and consoling it is
to give thanks!***

***Delia Tetreault
M.I.C. Foundress***

Remembering Beijing

Months have passed since the Beijing tour, but the days away from that summer have not lessened the value of each learning experience I gained from the trip. The entire Beijing visit was indeed meaningful.

As I recall, each step I took on these ancient structures was actually a great leap back into China's magnificent past. Also, it was a gigantic mark forward into my own consciousness of peoples and cultures, and most of all, people's oneness.

I still have goosebumps now as I see myself stepping on the majestic Great Wall, breathing the earthly scent of the Ming Tombs, communing with the ever living memories of the Q'ing emperors, even fantasizing living the Last Emperor's ordeal in the Forbidden City. And of course, I was one with the many millions who content themselves with having both feet on the ground called Tiananmen, where voices of democracy were maimed and cries of liberty were shattered.

Up until now, I still marvel at the strength of the Chinese

government, the discipline of the people and their trust in their officials. I am amazed at how men and women take long treks with their bicycles from home to their place of work. On the other hand, I also realize that we are on equal footing before God's eyes. Indeed, people everywhere in the world are vessels of love. I saw such tenderness in the people's most controlled smiles and in their cautious calculating distance towards foreigners.

I witnessed the steadfastness of Catholics in the Basilica - they struggle and stand strong in faith even if they are just a pinch out of the 11 million non-believers in the city of Beijing. I heard the candid pronouncements of: "I do not believe in any God, I only believe in myself." Yet the apology that followed, excusing one's pride, reveals an uncertainty, a disguised acceptance that somewhere a mightier force than oneself must be there. I have read a lot of stories about China's faith and all these strengthen what I see and feel now. How much our brothers and sisters in China need to hear the Good News!

I saw all these and many more. I simply could not put them into words. The experiences I gained have all been added up to what I am, who I am and how I see life. The differences between Manila and Beijing definitely lie only in the systems, but their people have the same hopes, share the same dreams and yearnings.

This visit to China increases my hope and trust in our own government, makes me grateful of the rights and privileges which are respected in our country and contributes so much to what I can share back to my students in school.

For these, I thank the ICA Administration and the Educational Development Fund for their support, their trust and their conviction that the teachers deserve this educational trip.

A non-believer I met in Beijing wrote back: "I could say that in my history of being a tour guide, there isn't any group who has even given me such a deep impression. Sometimes, I think it's your God who gave me such an opportunity to meet you in my city and I hope God would provide me another opportunity to see you again". *

Debra Liamzon

The author is the Instructional Supervisor and Social Science Coordinator of the High School Department of the Immaculate Conception Academy (ICA), Metro Manila, Philippines. With 16 fellow-teachers, she went on a 7-day educational trip to Beijing, China. The trip aimed to help the faculty develop a better understanding and appreciation of the Chinese culture so as to help students become more conscious and appreciative of their Chinese cultural origin.

Missionary Intentions 1993

January

That missionary activity open to the Spirit may strengthen the ecumenical commitment of Christian communities.

February

That the particular Churches of Latin America put into action the missionary orientation flowing from the fifth centenary of evangelization.

In the first quarter of the twentieth century, the Church of Quebec asserts itself in the emergence of an authentic missionary spirit within the population.

Religious Congregations are sending more and more of their members to the missions. Generous Christians support their works and ask for news and information on "their mission countries". Moreover, missionary tales challenge the youth and foster missionary vocations.

Enterprise

Delia Tetreault realized this and she poured a great deal of energy into the launching of **LE PRECURSEUR**, in 1920. She was definitely a 'precursor'; and in 1923, she continues her mission by launching **THE PRECURSOR**, an English version whose name was changed in 1974 to **MIC MISSION NEWS**.

The English version is 70 years old this year!

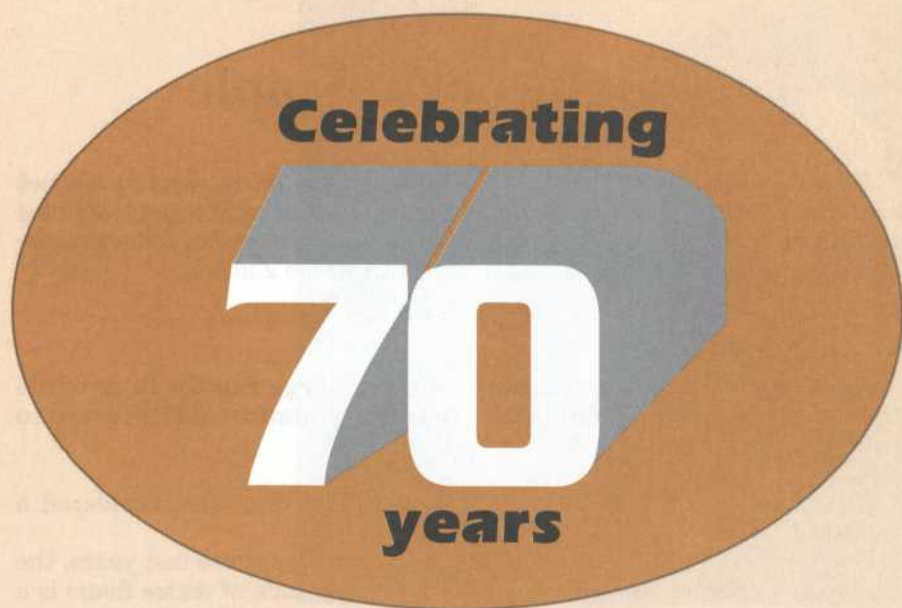
The reading of this magazine has stimulated missionary vocations for congregations of both men and women. Today, it is still a worthwhile means of providing missionary animation among the young and old alike. Subscriptions were taken up by the Sisters in those places permitted by the bishops and the pastors.

Many long-time subscribers to this M.I.C. periodical may still remember the regular visits of the "Precursor Sisters" offering their publication from door to door in the various Canadian and American parishes. Most M.I.C.s participated in this demanding work; it was part of the missionary formation of the time. Others gave several years of their life to it. They believed, like Delia Tetreault, that contacts, dialogue and missionary presence are means of opening hearts to evangelization.

Due to the demands for M.I.C. personnel in the missions, fewer Sisters continued this activity as such. However, other means have allowed the magazine to survive.

Collaboration

Delia Tetreault believed in lay collaboration for the distribution of the magazine. Shortly after its appearance, **THE PRECURSOR** invited fervent supporters, especially among the parents of the M.I.C.s.



The Sisters' home visits allowed lay collaboration to take on diverse forms and contributed to increasing subscriptions. Let us mention the volunteer drivers who drove the Sisters in the towns, villages, and on rural routes, the women and girls who accompanied the Sisters, the mothers who prepared a good dinner for the promoters, sometimes lodging them when accommodation could not be found at the rectory or convent. These services were offered "for the missions", "for the missionaries" as these kind people liked to say. They, themselves, being "missionaries in their own way."

The generous help provided by lay persons certainly favored the success of the magazine in its best years and succeeded in creating true "friends of the missions" a bit everywhere. To this very day, these friends and relatives have come to the rescue of the M.I.C. publications.

Delia Tetreault's missionary heart saw far ahead and accurately, since the present century is so greatly influenced by the mass media. The audacity of her faith, the ardor of her love not only allowed her to think about but also to undertake and realize works of the Church that were unknown until then. *

Georgette Barrette, m.i.c.

(Delia Tetreault and the Canadian Church)

Sketches of a people

Sister Suzanne Rinfret, m.i.c., who worked some thirty years in Malawi, interviews Sister Jacqueline Vachet, m.i.c., who spent eight years in Zambia and seven years in Malawi. A registered nurse and midwife, Sister Jacqueline has returned to Kanyanga Rural Health Center in Zambia.

Jacqueline, do the Zambians look for a large family to provide them with support in their old age... or a comfortable income to prevent financial worries?

Children are welcome in a Zambian family... they are considered a wealth.

Due to the severe devaluation of Zambian money these last years, the challenge to obtain the daily "nsima" (porridge made of maize flour) is a serious one.

Do you think the Zambians are traditionalists in the face of modern life and progress?

The Zambians have embraced the European concept of progress. In Zambia all "whites" are termed "European" whatever their country of origin. However, the standard of living of the people is low. For instance, while a number of wells have been dug throughout the country, most people have no pails in which to carry the water home.

Many overseas organizations have set up facilities for health care and education. Yet, lack of funds prevents an adequate maintenance of buildings and equipment. As for medical care, "European" style, it is appreciated whether dealing with government-run or mission-run dispensaries and hospitals. Faith in traditional medicine still exists though. On more than one occasion, the witch-doctor is consulted either before or after the patient has been treated in a modern dispensary.

What place does woman hold in Zambian society today?

In the towns mainly, the promotion of the Zambian woman is on the rise. She has successfully entered many spheres of public life and assumes important responsibilities. Today there are women members of Parliament and others are ministers.

Promoting health and hope... Sr. Jacqueline and staff meet the villagers.



In the villages, women are happy to see to the needs of their own family. Those working outside do so mainly to help provide the family with food, clothing and education. Actually, the inflation rate being so high, such a thing as a copybook would cost a lot. No fees are paid at the primary school, but it is not so at the secondary level. Parents go out of their way to provide their children a high school education.

Are the Zambians generally receptive to Christianity? What are some of the problems met?

The people have a thirst for God and are anxious to hear about Him. They wish to be baptized.

For the youth more especially, the main difficulty met in the Christian faith is faced at wedding time. A boy is often unable to pay the high dowry expected for his future wife. He runs away with the girl he loves and she becomes his common-law wife. Their union not having been blessed by the priest, the couple stop attending church altogether. Attempts are now being made to regulate the amount of the dowry.

Another problem is the lack of priests. There may be, for example, one priest assigned to a parish with two far-away outposts, making regular visits to these communities very difficult.

How do the Zambians face suffering, death and misfortunes of all kinds?

The Zambians are profoundly religious and they often see suffering as coming from the hands of the Almighty. However, when someone falls sick or dies, a witch-doctor might be consulted to find out who has bewitched the patient and is thus responsible for the said ailment or death. As regards the numerous trials which are part of daily life, the Zambians easily see them as an expression of God's will.

Thank you very much, Sr. Jacqueline, for this portrait of the Zambians you have sketched for me. I appreciate knowing more about them. Thank you especially for sharing with me their riches - their deep sense of family values, their attitude towards worldly goods, their faith in God. *

CANADA-CHINA

A 'martyrdom' that might have been!

Mission implies risks and apostolic joys. On the occasion of her 60th jubilee of religious life, Sr. Diana Chainé relates an unforgettable incident of her missionary life in China.



Szeping kai, China 1947

On the night of June 16, we were to be put to death... For a third time (2 other previous attempts having failed), communists decided to do away with all the Canadian missionaries interned at the residence of the Clercs St-Viateur. Mgr Lapierre, the PME priests (Missions-Étrangères), the Clercs St-Viateur and we, the M.I.C. Sisters, were destined to be the next victims. The communists intended to get rid of us that very night. We Sisters resided on the first floor of the school. Although the windows were well blocked with sand bags, pieces of shrapnel reached us. The men were well secure in the cellar with the nationalist commander and many of his soldiers.

Much later, at a gathering in Montreal, a Clerc St-Viateur who was alluding to this time of war, said to me: "We regretted having left you on the first floor during this upheaval since you

were more exposed to the danger." At that time it was understood that the Sisters were to occupy quarters separated from the rest of the group in the building.

From 5 p.m. to 5 a.m. cannons and machine guns attacked the Catholic mission and the Cathedral. In the midst of this fierce exchange of gunshots, we were far from secure and jumped at the slightest explosion of shrapnel thinking we had been attacked.

Our death being imminent, we prepared ourselves in prayer. When receiving the sacrament of reconciliation, the priest told me: "Tomorrow, you will be in heaven!" What consoling words! I rejoiced! Tomorrow in heaven! The greatest sacrifices had been made when I parted with my dear family and left my country forever. I renewed my offering by accepting to end my ministry among the Christians and catechumens in Szeping kai.

At left, missionaries in front of a building in Szeping kai after the bombing.

A jubilee celebration!
Sr. Diana (center) with her elder sister, Germaine Desharnais and Sr. Colette Dufour, m.i.c.



Thanksgiving flowed within me as I recalled all of God's goodness on my behalf ever since my childhood. The rest of the night was spent in deep recollection while preparing to meet the Lord.

Providential protection

To my great surprise, the communists were driven back the next morning, chased from the city by the nationalists from Peking. Upon learning this unexpected news, my reaction was truly one of hope and consolation. I could carry on my ministry. Providence had indeed protected us. However, deep within me I admitted my disappointment. My 'martyrdom' had failed! I expected something else; after the whole night in prayer preparing for the long journey, I felt ready to meet the Lord.

God judged it otherwise. Saint Peter seemed to tell me: "You haven't worked enough as yet. There is still much to accomplish on earth. Take your cross and follow your Master. You still have a long way to go." I asked myself with a certain regret, "Shall I be as well prepared at the last hour of my life?" To continue my journey, I need a lot of courage.

We found our houses in a pitiful state; there were holes and ditches everywhere in the yard. Blood was shed here and there - dead bodies lay scattered along the way. For clothing, we had but what we were wearing. We

decided to leave Szepingkai and head for Shanghai. We were crowded together in a truck used for transporting animals. On the first night, the truck broke down. We were out in the open, the communist guards keeping watch.

Father Schetagne, p.m.é., later introduced us to the Sisters of the Sacred-Heart: "Sisters, I would like you to meet these martyrs!" With great kindness they welcomed us and provided us with all we needed. These blessings gave us strength and courage.

To other mission fields

Exiled from Manchuria, we spent three months in Tsung Ming where I received an appointment for the Philippines. My first departure was in 1932 for Japan, my second, for Manchuria in 1933 and the third, for the Philippines in 1947. I thoroughly enjoyed these three countries, each of which has its particular beauty and charm.

Having returned to Canada in 1971, my ministry goes on in St-Jean-sur-Richelieu. I am involved with prayer groups at the Cent-Logis, Villa St-Jean, and in the Renewal and parish committees.

My grateful thanks to the Lord for the gift of health which allows me to remain ever active in His Service! *

Diana Chaîné, m.i.c.



(Bolivia)

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the God who calls us all to HOPE and LOVE!...**

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