

MIC MISSION NEWS

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All is Gift

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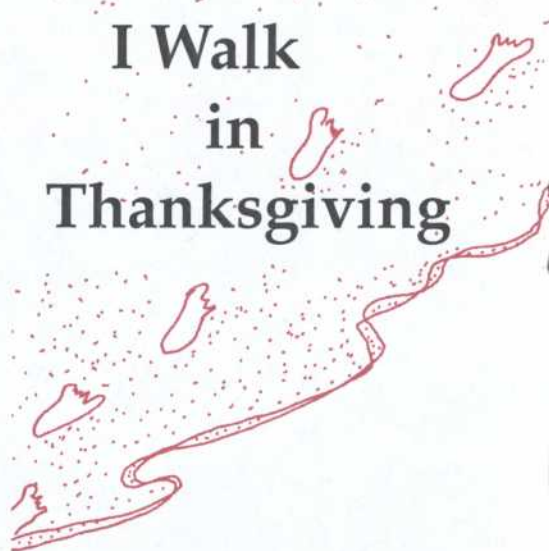
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I Walk in Thanksgiving



All is God's gift.

*"Our life should be a perpetual hymn
of thanksgiving!"*

Délia Tétreault sent her missionaries
to the remotest ends of the earth to
render God love for love, by *"giving
Him children, chosen ones, who would
also praise Him for His goodness forever
and ever"*.

Mission is a gift to be received, a
love to be welcomed. Our response to
God's gratuitous love is concretized in
the daily situations of life, in the love
of our brothers and sisters in God's
family. *

M.I.C. Documents



◀ a

*I walk in thanksgiving
for the sunlit years of
childhood
for laughter and
discovery and the gift
of wonder...*

And because I walk in thanksgiving, I walk in belief.

*I walk in thanksgiving
for the years of growing
awareness of life
of my own self as one among
many selves
fashioning myself through
reaching out
for the experience of growth
through uncertainty...*



b ▶

And because I walk in thanksgiving, I walk in trust.



◀ c

*I walk in thanksgiving
for family, community and
friendship,
for insight and the gifts of
prayer
for music and song, for
challenge and delight...*

*And because I walk
in thanksgiving,
I walk in joy.*



d ▶

*I walk in thanksgiving
for life that comes, not as a whole,
but in little pieces called people
for tenderness and strength, for gentleness and warmth
for weakness and pain, for anguish and ambiguity
for laughter and courage and the gift of your Spirit...*

*And because I walk in thanksgiving, I walk in love. **

Anonymous

“Thank you people”, all! — M.I.C. Sisters and friends...

- a) Sr. Marthe Lwo, Taiwan, and schoolgirls in St. Sulpice, Quebec.** Photo: D. Bourgeois, M.I.C.
- b) Sr. Manuela Velasquez, Chile, and a neighbour in San Andres, Cuba.** Photo: M.P. Charbonneau, M.I.C.
- c) Sr. Pauline Brodeur, Quebec, and catechists in Malawi, Africa.**
- d) Sr. Francine Ravaoarilala, Madagascar, and Sr. Marie-Antoinette Bolduc in Pont Viau, Laval.** Photo: H. Turcotte, M.I.C.

Women of Living Faith

On my desk this morning, are letters from women I had met some time ago in China. They have their stories to tell, their own stories about their very existence. Much to my ignorance, these women in a simple and humble way, tell tales of courage and fidelity to a living faith!

Sister L., due to her advanced age and her illness, apologizes for not writing sooner. She even fears that this letter might be her last one. However, she wants to give me some news about her two companions. One teaches catechism in the evening when

the authorities are not around to guard the place. Another one helps some candidates to religious life to do some sewing. "How good my two companions are to me!", Sister L. says and she adds "I cannot do much now but pray and thank the Lord for missionaries who came and showed us the way to real happiness and truth." At times Sister L. takes old photos of these missionaries and names them to God.

Sister Q., who is in her late twenties, belongs to the first group of religious preparing for

Holy Rosary Sisters in Siping, Jilin.



final vows this fall. She relates her own struggles and the feeling of unworthiness to be loved by Our Lord: "My work in the parish gives me opportunities to proclaim the Good News". She asks for prayers that she may persevere and seek the will of God in her life. "In spite of many difficulties, I try to be a good religious."

The third letter comes from a lay woman — mother and wife — who shares the fruits of her many years of having been deprived of going to church: "Now, I can attend the Eucharistic celebration every day. Even if this means getting up at five in the morning, it is a joy for me to pray in the church. Please rejoice with me, for my husband and my son are receiving Catholic instructions as they prepare for

Baptism." She adds that daily, she offers her Eucharist for the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and prays not only for the elderly missionners but also remembers to pray for the young candidates.

I feel privileged to have met these friends... women whose richness is unfolded in the monotonous gestures of daily life, but always with perseverance and fidelity; women who know how to be grateful and find motives to give thanks; women who tell tales of a God who is Love, who walks with them and accompanies them in pain and in joy; women of living faith who, like Mary, play the role of mother, wife, and most of all, disciple of Jesus-Christ. *

Celia Chua, M.I.C.

Missionary Intentions 1994

January

That prayer for Christian unity be made with renewed missionary fervour.

February

That the terminally ill be accompanied with respect and love.



A Life of Thanksgiving

Rev. Cassian Yuhaus, an American Passionist priest, is presently the Executive Director of the Ministry for Religious / Research and Consultancy in Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

While in Montreal for a workshop on Pastoral Planning with the M.I.C. Sisters, Father Yuhaus graciously offered to give his personal testimony during the colloquium on "Délia Tétreault and Missionary Montreal".

I am delighted to participate in this special colloquium honoring Délia Tétreault, a Foundress of outstanding merit and a prophetic voice for our day.

My own life has been profoundly influenced by a study of her life and virtues. For me it came as an amazing discovery to learn of someone who saw what I did not see. It was amazing because all of a sudden I came to see what was always there but I failed to grasp it. It was a discovery because I found what I had been searching for — a key to understanding the very meaning and purpose of life.

Sister Délia puts it so strongly and so clearly in concise language:

May our entire life be a perpetual hymn of thanksgiving for ourselves and for all who forget to thank the One from whom they receive everything.

What made her life and teaching so meaningful to me was the beautiful way thanksgiving was to become not an occasional word or gesture like a nod of the head, but rather the fullness of life's meaning. Listen to her words:

Let that thought permeate our lives, give them vitality, let it do so in such truth that it become the inheritance of those who will follow us.

As I study the life and virtues of Délia Tétreault, I wish to suggest that in terms of a post-Vatican II theology we can discern two basic truths of divine revelation that form the foundation for her rather new, exciting and dynamic spirituality, a spirituality that is as contemporary and as vital as is the Council itself.

Two Fundamental Truths

The intrinsic relational nature of every human being is the foundation for giving thanks. We were never made to live alone. Our life is fulfilled only with and through others. Our mutual interdependence in family life, in economic life and in political life is the foundation for the realization of our own worth and dignity and the assurance of our freedom. We are necessarily inter-related... we have power over one another.

For Délia, the power we have over each other is a power to evoke from the other's heart the same "hymn of thanksgiving", the same vision of goodness and love, of beauty and joyful hope.

The distinguishing note of the Christian — **the primary characteristic of discipleship** — is "agape" which means, a deep love for others, a willing and preferential response to others in need in the concrete experiences of life. Therefore, Christian love and Christian justice belong together and are the basis of **peace**.

What binds all this together in the thought and teaching of Délia Tétreault is the spirit of active gratitude — for all of life is gift.

Four Consequent Truths

We can derive four further expressions as a consequence of what the spirituality of thanksgiving requires as we see it fulfilled in the life of Délia Tétreault.

The supremacy of God: The first task of every creature is to accept creaturehood in the acknowledgement of the Creator and the acceptance of limits to human existence in the admission of sin.

Perhaps nothing is more actualized in Délia's spirituality as this constant and profound awareness of what it means to be creature and the grandeur of God as Creator.

The primacy of the spiritual over the material: While inseparably united in the oneness of the human person, spiritual needs and spiritual values are distinguishable from physical needs and physical values. The primacy belongs to the spiritual: justice, freedom, truth, love. These endow the physical with meaning and value, they direct and enable the physical.

However, the spiritual value par excellence, for all of life, is "to give thanks", to continually be aware of glorifying the God of life, the God who never ceases to appeal to our innermost values.

The sacredness of the human person: Created by God and for God in His very image and likeness, each person is sacred, endowed with dignity at every stage of life, from the moment of conception to the moment of inception in eternity — life's destiny.

If there is anything to remember in the life of Délia Tétreault, it is her constant awareness that each person is sacred. She desired her missionary Sisters to spare no pain in a service of love and respect for every human being without discrimination or prejudice. Nothing was expected in return except the unifying refrain of the mutual hymn of giving thanks.

The integrity of creation: Man's essential relatedness is not only to other humans, but to all of creation. We are called to a respectful and harmonious relationship whereby we respect all life and do not destroy the living systems upon which we **all** depend for growth and development. Animals and plants, birds of the air and fish of the sea, all are participants in the sacredness of life. Animals and plants have extrinsic rights which reside in the other living inhabitants of this earth, in human beings who may not destroy them wantonly or inflict needless harm or cruelty upon them. They are to be cared for as integral to creation.

It is here that our contemporary theology finds its best expression. It is a theology for survival. But what so many of our contemporaries are missing is what Délia Tétreault saw so clearly: to overcome our misuse of God's creation, to prevent the destruction of life itself, we need but walk through this world, among the co-inhabitants of this earth, singing forever our great hymn of thanksgiving and hearing its echo over all the land from all creatures great and small.

Again, permit me to be true to my purpose. My life has been profoundly influenced by the spirituality of the saintly Foundress of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception. I would be altogether incomplete were I to fail to add a particular characteristic of that spirituality which even I have taken for granted. The inspiration and the sustaining note of all thanksgiving is the Blessed Virgin Mary's Magnificat. No reflection on Délia Tétreault's life and virtues would be complete without declaring: *"The Almighty has done great things for me and holy is His Name."* *

Cassian J. Yuhaus, C.P.

TAIWAN

Mission Life in Atayal Country

It came to me as a surprise. Though I had heard of mountain missions in the past, I had not yet personally set foot on aboriginal territory in my fifteen years of missionary service in Taiwan, a land of plenty and riches. My life has been honed to University teaching and high academic standards.

My chance to have a closer view of mountain mission came at last. Early one morning, I took a train bound for Feng-Yuan in central Taiwan. In Hsin-Chu, Sr. Huguette Chapdelaine, M.I.C., joined me for the last leg of the trip with Father Tom Browning, a Columban missionary. We headed up for the mountains looming majestically above the little town of Tung-Shr. The

narrow mountain road gave way to a muddy mountain path defaced here and there with the traces of recent landslides. We were actually progressing by jolts and leaps rather than smooth rolling, but we did reach our destination safe and sound.



The Atayal people who dwell in these mountains enjoy some of the comforts of modern life, such as electricity and running water, at least in the tiny cluster of small cement houses spread around the church compound. However, both these facilities suffer frequent shortages due to poor installations and equipment. Though it may be an annoyance, this is not a major

problem: when in want of electricity, we light our candles, and when running water is not available we use a spare supply stored in large plastic containers. I noticed that Fr. Browning's life style is very similar to that of his Atayal friends. Here, artificial life and superfluous needs are useless, clock-time unimportant, and nature's unspoiled gifts of fresh air and sparkling, pure water, abundant.

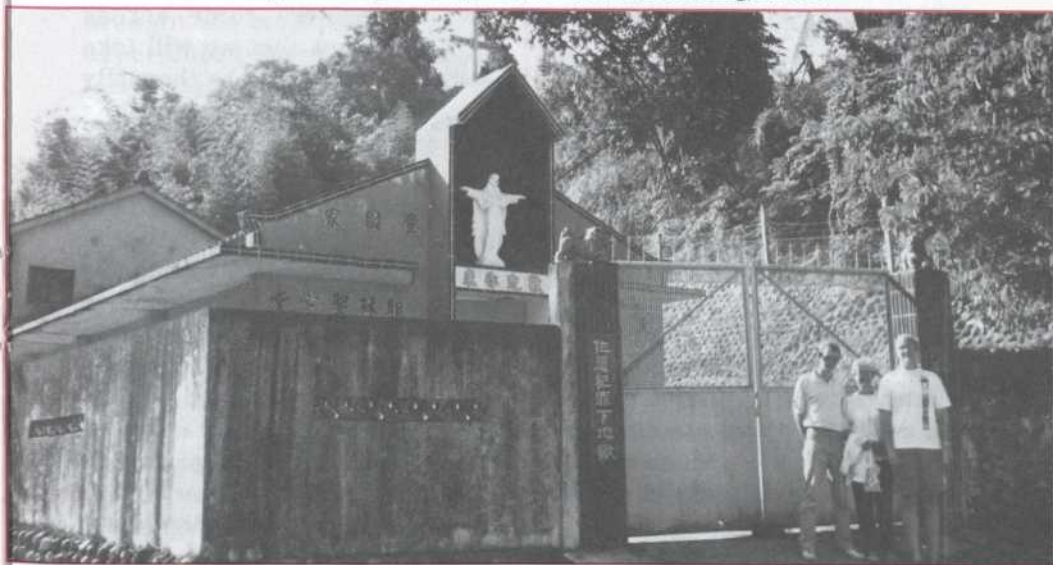


Let me briefly sketch one day with Fr. Browning. At 6:30 A.M., his clothes are already washed and his breakfast taken. How long he has been up, I cannot tell. Around 8:30, he discovers

that the water does not run: thus, arming himself with a few tools, he goes up the hill behind the church to fix the pipe once more. This time there is nothing wrong with the pipe; a neighbour is repairing the grave of his ancestor and has disconnected the pipe in order to get water to mix his cement. After making sure that the neighbour will reconnect the pipe, he comes down an hour later. Now the teenagers gather at the activity room where Fr. Browning teaches them how to speak Atayal. Today they are learning to count and to name body parts.

After a quick lunch around one in the afternoon, we set out on foot to see the other mission

The mountain parish church in Atayal territory.
(L. to R.): Kevin Gallagher, lay missionary;
Huguette Chapdelaine, M.I.C.; Fr. Tom Browning, S.S.C.



outpost under his responsibility. We wind our way along steep mountain slopes on narrow footworn tracks, and cross a suspended bridge hanging about sixty feet above a torrent. Some planks are missing and the bridge sways at each step we make. While crossing the bridge, Fr. Browning tells me, "The mountain is a place where we confront our fears". The shaky bridge crossing is not where I confronted my fear. The mountain track is the spot where I had to confront one of my worst fears, the snake.

We finally emerge into a larger path that leads to a tiny hamlet. We let a pack of hostile dogs go by, then we walk up to the small chapel. The ever invading bush growth has been cut down to create a clearing around the tiny chapel. Fr. Browning explains that by keeping the forest at bay, we also keep its creatures at a distance. As the parishioners were cutting the bushes the preceding week, three snakes were discovered nestling in the toilet.



As we proceed towards the village, Fr. Browning meets people right there on the road, chats with them, makes jokes and discusses serious matters as well. He reminds them of the Mass that will be celebrated

there on Saturday evening, of the upcoming catechism classes for the kids, and of the harvest festival gathering at the end of the month.

Entering in homes, he sits a few minutes with the family members, and on our way back we greet an elderly lady who slowly walks half crouched. She is almost totally deaf, but as soon as she sees Fr. Browning, her eyes sparkle with joy. He stoops beside her and chats with her for a while. Then we meet a seasoned farmer, quite elderly as well, and Fr. Browning turns around and says, "You know, doctorates are useless here, but the capacity to love and to relate are absolutely necessary".



Children of all ages accompany us wherever we go in the village. Every time we come across people, I know that we will take some time to speak to them. By the time we reach home, it is almost night. Another hasty meal is prepared, and Fr. Browning goes to the activity room where people come to learn liturgical songs in their native language. From the balcony of my room, I can hear clear voices praising the Lord in a language I have never heard before. *

Francine St-Onge, M.I.C.

(Continued in our March / April issue)

Sharing Lives



Sr. Ozana Jean-Baptiste, M.I.C.

The privilege of giving a month of service to our elderly Sisters at the Délia Tétreault Pavilion in Pont-Viau, Laval, brought me manifold graces. I experienced deep joy, particularly because I had the chance to know the elderly Sisters more intimately.

Also, working in this residence for our retired Sisters responded to my profound aspirations. How happy I was to care for my Sisters and to be close to them! This indeed was a special opportunity to express my gratitude to my M.I.C. Community for having made it possible for me to undertake a course in Nursing in Haiti.

The experience was an occasion to give thanks and a moment of deep reflection. It was an occasion to give thanks because despite their age and state of health, these elderly Sisters have kept a missionary heart. Many of them, fingers deformed with arthritis, continue to work on simple arts and crafts for the benefit of the missions. I am most grateful to them.

My short service at the Pavilion provided moments of deep reflection. I felt privileged to know these lovable Sisters who were responsible for the efficient functioning of many a missionary project here in Canada

or in mission lands. I believe that they gave fully of themselves.

My presence in their midst invites me to live the present moment and to follow their example, giving myself to the service of others.

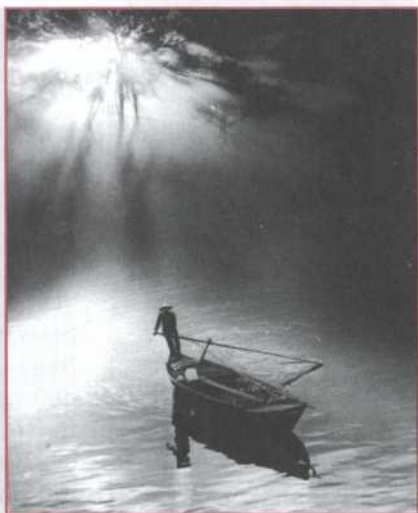
One day, when walking about without the help of a cane, Sr. Gratia Blanchet, who is now 99 years of age, said to me: "I don't find time to grow old". Sister Gratia has spent many years as

a missionary in China. Her words continue to inspire me and prompt me to give thanks to the Lord!

My elderly Sisters were happy and grateful for the time I cared for them. On my part, it was with a grateful heart that I accepted their words of thanks. All I can say is that the joy we shared was mutual! *

Ozana Jean-Baptiste, M.I.C.

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Our readers are invited to join us in prayer for two other M.I.C. Sisters who died during the past year:

Sr. Antoinette Alarie, M.I.C.

*Sr. Cecilia Kuniko Hayashi, M.I.C.,
(died in Tokyo, Japan)*

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



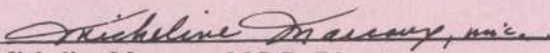
THANK YOU!

A fund-raising Concert for Peace was held at our chapel in Pont-Viau, Laval, on December 4, 1993 for the benefit of the MIC MISSION NEWS and LE PRÉCURSEUR. Grateful thanks for your generous participation, dear friends and benefactors!

Would you like to continue helping the MIC MISSIONARY PRESS? A raffle will be held in Pont Viau, at 8:00 P.M. on

February 4, 1994. There are five wonderful prizes, first among which is a trip for two to Cuba.

Tickets are available at five dollars (\$5) each. We will appreciate receiving your cheque with your name, address and telephone number. We shall see to it that you get your tickets for the raffle. Good luck and many thanks! *


Micheline Marcoux, M.I.C., Directress

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"God has given us everything... what better way of making return... than to give Him children who will also sing His goodness throughout the centuries."

Délia Tétreault (MIC Foundress)

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