

MIC MISSION NEWS

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'Easter People'



This issue features profiles of 'Easter People' — those for whom the Resurrection holds a deep meaning — men and women who have allowed the Risen Lord to help them help others to 'come alive'.

May we, too, be Easter People, discovering the joy of being bearers of light and freedom for those around us. May we evermore find in our own lives the roots of a hope that can overcome the powers of failure and despair.

Thus called to be a joyful people, may we always feel the need to renew our hope — a hope imbued with the newness, the freshness of life, in the spirit of the first Easter!

Ma. Anthea Raso, M.I.C.



Front Cover:

Young participants in the Palm Sunday Celebration held at St. Francis Xavier Church, Bukidnon, Philippines.

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Wafted by Music to Beijing



Messengers of hope — the Good Hope School choir performing with chime bars.

It was almost like a dream come true! On August 10th, 1993, we were flying by Dragonair, on our way to Beijing.

Some months earlier, a verbal invitation for the Good Hope School choir to join the First National Choral Festival in Beijing was received in Shenzhen. We felt privileged to be asked to represent Hong Kong. But as the weeks went by, no official invitation came. Then in mid-May, a phone call received from Beijing enquired if we were

participating. The official letter of invitation came in July. We hurriedly contacted a local travel agent and the parents of some choir members. We were 49 in all — 45 girls, our two music teachers, Mrs. Daisy Tai and Mrs. Betty Tham, Miss Clara Chong and I.

We were overwhelmed by a sense of awe as the plane landed at Beijing International airport. Yes, we had reached the capital of China, our own capital after 1997.

In the coach our girls spontaneously burst into song. They sang 'Walk with Mary'. How meaningful in a way. 'Walking' with Mary — like Mary — visiting our neighbours, bringing joy through music; and hoping also to hear their expression of joy in this Choral Festival.

One of the highlights of this trip was the friendly exchange of singing with the "Railroad Secondary School Choir", arranged by Qiu Lee, the renowned conductor and composer. How beautiful it was to see music breaking the ice in a matter of seconds, and the young people warming up to each other in no time. The two choirs sang 'Heilong Jiang' together. Indeed, the hall was pulsating with the vibrant waters of Heilong Jiang.

The students then went off to chat with each other. Everyone spoke some *Putonghua*, but the main language was that of the heart and music. After lunch, as our coach started to leave, the Good Hope School students sang 'The' song that the Railway Choir had taught them, 'The Ocean — My Homeland'.

Our two days as 'tourists' were more days of relearning our Chinese history. The Great Wall of China and the 13th Ming Tomb spoke to us of the past splendor of the emperors. These massive structures are engineering feats. A sacred silence filled us as our coach neared Tian An Men Square — my heart pounded with prayers for the many lives that were sacrificed for

greater democracy. The square is filled each day by throngs of visitors from abroad and the many provinces of China. Probably among those milling around, taking photos, many a prayer were also offered silently.

We have had many occasions to rub elbows with ordinary people. We asked questions, listened to them and then it was our turn to answer their questions. In these encounters, I noticed how open and friendly everyone was. I could sense, too, the deep aspirations of the people... they were all eager to be included in the 'global village'. I also picked up some rumbling of deep feelings which often flared up over insignificant matters — verbal shouting accompanied by fist-blows. Are these indicative of some healing that needs to take place?

At the stadium and on our way to the airport, our choir sang the Our Father and the Ave Maria. On both occasions, a moving hush enveloped us. Healing will happen with music. The many choirs that I listened to are certainly sending out salubrious ripples. There is promise in these young music lovers and makers — and they bring hope and joy to the people of Beijing, of China — in their attempt to discover healing of past memories and some meaning to their day-to-day life. There is a dragon waiting to be unleashed, hopefully a royal dragon that is propitious and compassionate, ushering in peace and harmony. *

Mary Olga Lam, M.I.C.

PHILIPPINES

"Pag-Asa" Hope for the Living

The Philippine Eagle Conservatory Program Foundation (PECPF) in Calinan, Davao City, is a non-profit foundation which took the initiative of helping preserve the almost vanishing species of the well-known Philippine eagle.

The Foundation's main concern is a response to the threat of extinction of this rare bird due to continuous logging, resulting in the destruction of breeding grounds for wildlife. And, this situation carries a warning that human beings will also be victimized.

The Philippine eagle is mottled brown in color. It has a wingspan of 2 meters, with a height of 1 meter and it weighs between 9 to 12 kgs. It feeds on fresh meat such as flying lemurs, bats, snakes and occasionally, on monkeys. The female eagle lays one egg every two years. The eaglet reaches maturity in six years.

Monogamous and territorial, this bird of prey builds its nest 80 feet above the ground on prominent mountain peaks, mostly in rain forests. The Philippine eagle is noted for its

Sr. Judy Saludes (right), Sr. Antoinette Castonguay (2nd from left) and friends from Spain and Peru visit the Philippine Eagle Conservatory.





A majestic profile of the adult
Philippine eagle.

piercing eyes which are 8 times more powerful than human eyes, being able to see things as far away as 700 meters. The speed of its flight is 70 to 80 kms/hour.

The PECPF experts say that the Philippine eagle is a very good symbol of the quality of life, a bio-indicator of life in the forest. As long as one eagle flies, there is hope. Why? Because the eagle has a unique life-style. The place it inhabits is an important and special ground. This bird of prey needs from 60 to 100 kms of virgin forest wherein to hunt for its food and it cannot share this place with others. Nor does it migrate to another environment. When the forest disappears, the eagle dies. As of the present count, only 20 to 30 pairs are thought to be still left in the Philippines. In the PECPF compound, there are about 13 eagles in captivity.

To counteract the fatal danger of extinction of the Philippine eagle, the PECPF laboratory personnel embarked on a breeding experiment — artificial insemination of the eagles held in captivity. After 14 years of

scientific studies, trials and failures, an eaglet was hatched in January 1992. Named *Pag-asa* (Hope), the young eaglet remains robust and proves to be a source of hope for all concerned.

This enriching visit to the Philippine Eagle Conservatory brought my reflections to the surface concerning the life situation of the Mangyans, a tribal Filipino community with whom I worked and shared life in Mindoro Occidental. The Mangyans have a substandard life-style. Are they doomed to extinction? Maybe... if they are continuously considered as "inferior", uncared for and unprotected by laws.

These tribal Filipinos belong to one tribe split into 7 groups. They form an isolated tribe directly opposite the so-called "civilized people" in terms of community status. They live a frugal life with few belongings: a *kaldero*, their cooking pot, a native serving plate and a *bolo* (big knife). Practical indeed is their life-style and, being nomadic, it is easy for them to move on from place to place. Their shelters are built from what nature can give — tree trunks, dried grass and bamboo. They depend largely on the gifts of Mother Earth for survival.

Because their forest territories fall under the axe or the plough of settlers, because their ancestral domain is invaded and their presence hardly tolerated, because their human rights are

Mangyan menfolk are avid participants in the literacy program.



E. Dominguez, M.I.C.



Sisters Angelita Olimba (standing) and Judy Saludes caring for malnourished Mangyan children.

too often disregarded, the mortality rate soars high in the Mangyan ranks. With the vast areas of denuded mountains and polluted rivers, where can they find a place to settle down? Sooner or later, like the vanishing forest trees and the disappearing eagles, the struggle for life in the Mangyans' habitat will be a matter of great urgency.

Respect for life at whatever echelon is respect for God's gifts.

A Filipino author, R.M. Umali, writes:

"If we are to create harmony out of the disruption of nature's rhythms and out of the irresistible blows of economic forces, we must search for a national consensus on ultimate values. What we need is the combination of faith, reason and pragmatism." *

Judy Saludes, M.I.C.



C. Chua, M.I.C.

Sr. Adeline Bonny, M.I.C. from Haiti, and a young friend in Madagascar.

THIS EASTER SEASON...

*Mend a quarrel.
Seek out a forgotten friend.
Write a love letter.
Share a treasure. Give a
soft answer. Encourage a young person.
Keep a promise. Find the time.
Forgive an enemy. Listen.
Apologize if you were wrong.
Think first of someone else.
Be kind and gentle.
Laugh a little. Laugh a little more.
Express your gratitude. Gladden
the heart of a child. Take pleasure
in the beauty and wonder of the earth.
Speak your love. Speak it again.
Speak it still once again.*

Anonymous

The Atayal People

Continuation of "Mission in Atayal Country", featured in MIC MISSION NEWS, January-February 1994.



I am deeply impressed by one of Fr. Browning's projects, one which is very dear to his heart. He tries to find ways to help the Atayal people reclaim and preserve what is left of their traditional culture which is about extinct now.

Only the elders still speak their native dialect, mingled with Japanese (a consequence of the Japanese occupation of Taiwan and the subsequent imposition of Japanese language and culture on the native peoples.) Young adults have forgotten many words and are more familiar with Mandarin than with their own language. Chinese culture is now being imposed upon them from primary school on. Teenagers know very little of their own Atayal cultural background. They have forgotten their dances, their songs, their festivals and their rituals, and they do not remember what their tribal costumes used to look like.

Fr. Browning has been going around learning the language from the elders as best as he can. He is also recording their ancient

myths, legends and folktales before they are lost forever in oblivion. This enterprising thirty-two-year-old American priest has developed, within the year and a half of his stay in Atayal territory, a written alphabet partly based upon Roman letters and partly upon Chinese phonetics. He has also translated liturgical songs and the proper of the Mass in Atayal. Some of the songs are genuine native tunes which are being adapted for liturgical use. He is currently conducting Atayal language classes for children every week.



Fr. Browning explained to us why it is important to save the Atayal heritage from extinction. This tribe is a sub-tribe belonging to a larger ethnic group. This particular group of about 5,000 people has developed a unique and beautiful culture. More numerous and better organized tribes have attracted the attention of scholars and their cultures will be preserved by history. But this sub-tribe is going to disappear as if it had never existed.

There are world movements to save endangered species, but who cares about threatened unique human achievements

such as aboriginal cultures? Fr. Browning believes that if nothing is done now, the Atayal culture of this territory is doomed to die within ten years. The people will outlive their culture, but it will be a people without a soul, bereft of self-identity and dignity, because they will have been cut off from their roots.

'Lumen Gentium' proclaims that nothing human is indifferent to the Church. Part of the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ to the Atayal people is the fact that a missionary priest cares for them and works with all his heart to salvage the fragments that remain of their culture. If they succeed in bringing back to life what is left of their cultural heritage, the Atayal will in turn rediscover their human dignity, and their unique contribution to humanity.



I spent four days in the mountains of Atayal land, and mostly on the balcony because of my fear of snakes. When I mustered enough courage to accompany Fr. Browning along mountain tracks to visit his second mission post, I met the friendliest people in the world. I could see how they love their pastor and how he loves them in turn. Children come running to his open arms, teenagers sing like birds for hours in the back seat of his mini-van, old folks smile and laugh as soon as they see him.

True, the capacity to love and to relate to others is most important in these wild mountains. I did not need further proofs in order to be convinced. Here stood in front of me a living example of gratuitous love: Fr. Browning has a doctorate, and he could do other things than fixing pipes or cutting bush growth around poor mountain chapels. He certainly could live in a much more comfortable and cozy way, and enjoy a more intellectually and socially gratifying life. Instead he walks or drives along hazardous mountain paths, meets simple people, and tries to preserve a dying culture.

Above all else, he loves them with the same love Christ loves these men, women and children of the mountains. With them he struggles to bring the Good News of Salvation within the heart of their culture. He believes that something can be done and has set about to do it with an incredible determination.



Fr. Browning's ministry and that of his assistant, Fr. Carmelo Horlador, MSP (Mission Society of the Philippines), greatly inspire me. I am grateful to have had the chance to meet both of them. I know that many others have spent their lives in the silence and secret of these mountains, and that a new generation of young priests is willing to take up the challenge of mission work in the most remote and neglected outposts of otherwise opulent, thriving Taiwan. They go there

sent by the Church, and in the name of Christ.

As I was coming back to the big and overpopulated metropolis, Taipei, I wished I could bring a little souvenir from the mountains. But there are no tourists' shops up there, and I saw nothing typical enough that would distinguish it as Atayal in quality. An eleven-year-old girl graciously gave me a name. After conferring with Father Browning to make sure it was good, she offered me this name

as one would a gift. So I came back with a beautiful Atayal name, *Haking*.

Atayal land and its people, the missionaries who live there and the work they do, and in a special way, the name gift, all these often set me dreaming. And at times I find myself yearning to go back there, not only for a short visit, but to join forces in a new Gospel venture. *

Francine St-Onge, M.I.C.

THE RISEN CHRIST, LIGHT OF NATIONS

MISSIONARY PRAYER

1994

MISSIONARY INTENTIONS

Lord Jesus,
it is not we who have chosen you,
but you who have chosen us,
to take the Good News of your Gospel
to the whole world.

Make us, who are your disciples,
able to receive
the living and creative flame
of your Word
in the fragile lamps of our hearts.

May it transform our lives
and make our labours fruitful
wherever on this earth
human dignity is crushed
and hope is threatened.

Give us the courage to proclaim
to all who still do not know you,
or who no longer accept you,
that JESUS IS RISEN,
and that he is
the LIGHT OF NATIONS.

We are his witnesses.

March

*That refugees and immigrants in
every country receive a fraternal
welcome and adequate assistance.*

April

*That the constant gift of the Spirit
help particular Churches
everywhere become courageous
promoters of mission.*

World Mission Day 1993,
Society of the Propagation of the Faith
Quebec, Canada

A Choice to Make

If you were allowed to make a choice, of what nationality would you like to be? Would you turn to your powerful neighbours or prefer your far-away homeland?

Such questions were put to me by a young student in a large high school in Hull, Quebec. After a missionary encounter where Bolivia was the main topic, she wrote this brief comment: "Despite all our development here in Canada, I'd like to be a Bolivian since in that country are found love, sharing, collaboration..."

A Country of Contrasts

Situated at the heart of South America, Bolivia is the poorest of all its neighbors although it lacks nothing in natural resources. The statistics contain a whole line-up of negative figures to describe the nearly sub-human conditions in which a high proportion of inhabitants of this country live.

The geography of Bolivia makes it a country of contrasts on three well defined levels. The high plateaux of the Andes offer a cold climate and an arid soil.

Neighbours and newcomers alike are welcomed to a family celebration.





Sr. Suzanne Labelle, M.D. (Ottawa University '64) and Quechua patients at Huancarani Health Center.

In certain areas, potatoes and maize are the staple food year round. The most important tin mines are found in this region.

In the tropical region, at sea level, there is an abundance of fruit and vegetables, sugar, rice, cotton, coffee, etc. Natural gas is also found. However, the revenues are nearly all in the hands of foreign exploiters.

The intermediate zone has a pleasant temperate climate. As is the case in the whole country, agriculture is the people's main livelihood. Here too, economic progress is slow. In this region, the cocaine industry benefits around 20% of the population while producing hardship among the people.

Taking a Closer Look

The privilege of living in Bolivia allows one to observe the qualities of heart and spirit of the Quechuas and Aymaras, who form the majority of the population. One is quickly disarmed by the welcoming attitude of these proud descendants of the Incas — their simplicity, kindness and generosity. Whatever the scantiness of their homes, they always insist upon accommodating a visitor, relative or stranger. There will always be a place at table even if the meal is frugal.

Women, whose condition leaves much to be desired, respond with eagerness and courage to the possibilities offered them to improve their status. From this, the whole family derives great benefit.



Jaime Richard Molina

Being, indeed, the "poor of Yahweh", the people continue to thirst for God. But they are also wanting in spiritual help. Whenever possible, they form small basic ecclesial communities to reflect together on the Word of God and to see how it can influence their daily life and help them to improve their situation.

Strongly united among themselves, they ask for nothing more than to work together on projects for the common good. Moreover, their spirit of cooperation has age-old roots. Each village has its organization for community tasks. Do they agree to build a school or a small health center? There is already a list of the heads of families: each one of them volunteers to make the number of bricks required and provide the hours of work expected of them to help realize the project. For the purchase of cement and other materials, outside aid is most essential.

In Day-to-day Life

But of what use is a health center if permanent medical staff is not available? Missionaries working here have prepared a relief team. "Doctors in sandals", i.e., medical professionals assure a minimum of care in many areas far away from the large health centers.

Many young Bolivians wish to help their own people improve their life situation. Jaime Richard Molina is one of them. His father works with the M.I.C. of Huancarani as a rural teacher and catechist. However, he cannot afford Jaime's school and boarding fees. Jaime wishes to obtain a scholarship for his university medical studies in his country and exercise his profession among his own people.

A Realistic Choice

Going back to the question of choosing a nationality, the wisest attitude, without any doubt, is to want to preserve that which comes from the Creator and to find there one's happiness. But this option prevents no one from sharing with those who are materially less favored.

Would some of our readers like to help Jaime Richard? While remaining who we are, it could be a way of becoming Bolivian with Bolivians. What do you think about this? *

Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C.



S. Morissette (Canada)

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