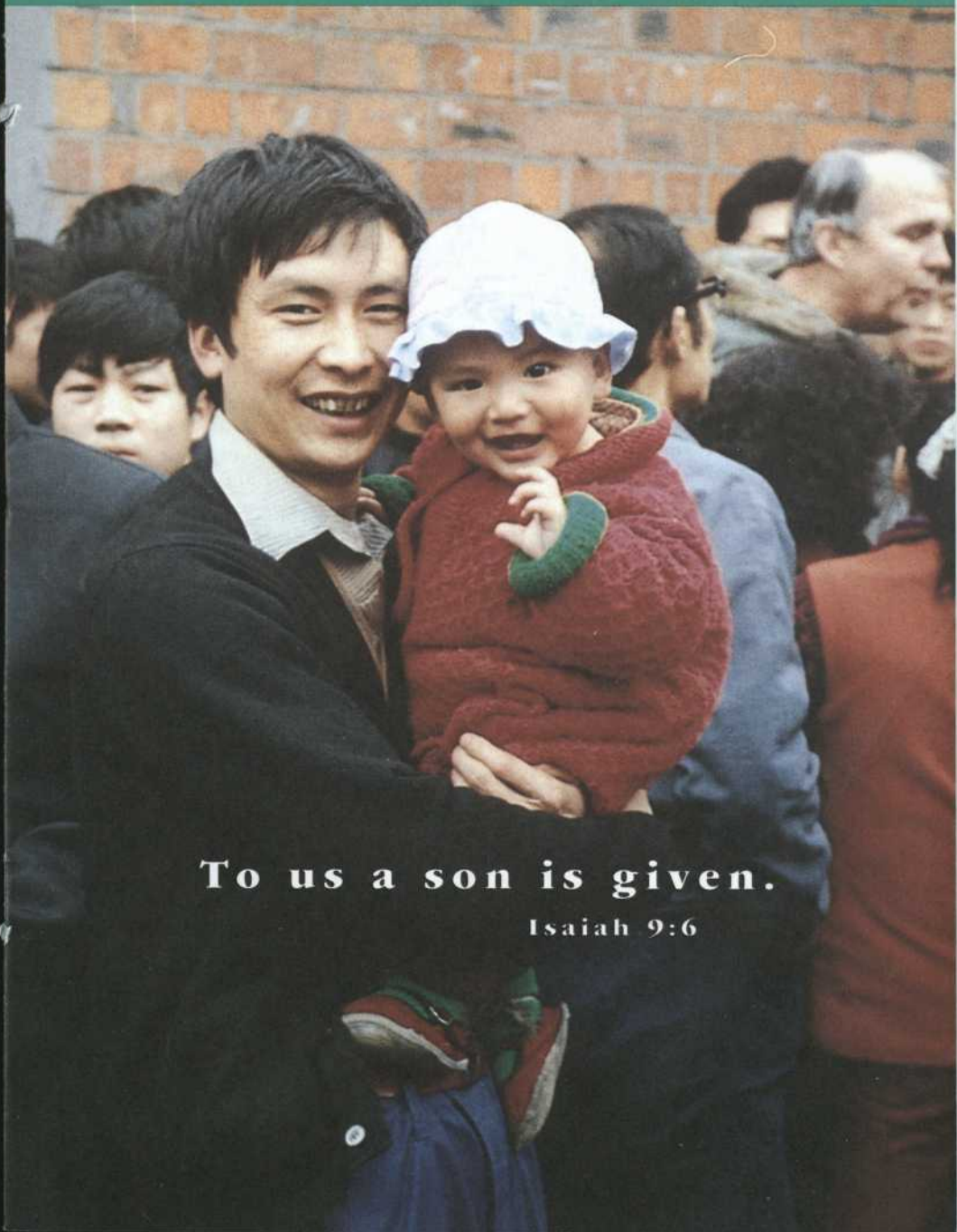


MIC MISSION NEWS

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November-December 1994



To us a son is given.

Isaiah 9:6

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a bimonthly published by
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P.O. BOX 157,
Laval-des-Rapides
Laval, P.Q., Canada
H7N 4Z4
Tel.: (514) 663-6460

Directress

Louise Denis, M.I.C.

Editor

Ma. Anthea Raso, M.I.C.

Staff

Helene Labelle, M.I.C.
Milagros Duque, M.I.C.

Secretariat and Circulation

Christine Desrochers
Veronique Bernatchez, M.I.C.
and MIC Team
René Cournoyer

Promotion

Alice Mills, M.I.C.
and M.I.C. Teams

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Message

In the Headlines...

In 1995, the United Nations' 4th Conference on Women will take place in Beijing, China. Women of diverse nationalities, cultures and training will meet to reflect on woman and her role in society. In certain milieus, the meeting place and the subject matter will make the headlines of well-known periodicals. In our case, is this topic of interest to us?

From my round of visits in countries where the M.I.C. Sisters work, it is images of women that most often come to my mind. Humble shepherdesses lost in the denuded Andes... farm workers, their backs bent over in immense ricefields... young and noble African mothers — with a baby on their back, another child clinging to their skirt — hoeing the dry soil... young professionals happy to work freely for their country and their family. Oh! some of those smiles!... some of those glances! How many a time, I was proud with you and also humbled with you! For many of you, justice and respect for your life are wanting and this is happening in all parts of the world! What do we do to help one another?

As I look more closely, gleanings from my memories are the many commitments of my sisters with women of diverse conditions.



M. Bigras, M.I.C.

**Confidences between friends — little Roxana from Bolivia,
with Sister Evangéline.**

I say to myself, this is to be promoted and multiplied! Education, health, human formation, making aware of rights and duties, the place of women in the Church and society — these are fields of action as vast as the world. What an interesting challenge for women missionaries! A question of survival for our times!

In the midst of these women, comes Mary... Mary of Nazareth. Humble and realistic, a woman of her time, really engaged in listening to her God and in giving life. The yes of her Magnificat is still meaningful today. Let us ask her to help us discover it and to live it fully. Is this not another beautiful challenge taking on the hue of our faith?

On behalf of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, of our associates — the ASMIC, and of our lay missionary partners, thank you for taking these commitments with us!

Have a Happy New Year!

**Evangéline Plamondon, M.I.C.
Superior General**



Celebrating 1994
Year of the
Family



C. Bégin

▲ The joy of coming home — Suzanne Morissette, warmly welcomed by her parents.



▲ For the Cournoyer family — René, Hélène and daughters Karine and Mélanie, the backyard swing offers a great time together!

Prayer for Families

*For all the families who weave
the fabric of love each day
through deeds of caring;
we pray to you, Lord.*

*For families in the making
and for those in danger of breaking,
for those which are new
and those showing signs of wear and tear,
for the families of the past,
broken by pain,
and the families of today,
which have made a new start;
we pray to you, Lord.*

*For the history of each family,
for the happiness of some
and the suffering of the others,
for the loves which are born
and which grow and expand,
for those that last a long time
and for others that are short-lived
and, sometimes, die;
we pray to you, Lord.*

*Yes, for all the ages of life,
the ups and downs,
the broadness and the depth,
the arrivals and the departures,
the wounds and the healing,
the words of love and the forgiveness,
the silence and the confiding,
Yes, for the great hope of families,
we pray to you, Lord. **

Jacques Côté

Excerpts

English translation: Antoinette Kinlough

The Christmas Gift

One afternoon, 8 year-old Lyo Kang Li told me: "I can't strike my nail". I helped him and all went well. But as soon as I dropped his hand, I realized that he couldn't strike the nail on his own. Moreover, I observed that he had great difficulty in writing his Chinese characters and seemed unable to see closely with his right eye. I notified his parents about all this.

Later the sad news came that my young pupil has brain tumor. The doctors wanted to try medical treatment because to operate would be too risky. The parents were very saddened to see their first-born son affected by such a grave illness.

The whole family is Buddhist but Lyo Kang Li has learned about Jesus in his Kindergarten class. Upon hearing that he has cancer, he told his mother: "We will pray to Jesus". The boy blessed himself and told Jesus the secrets he kept in his heart.

I visited Lyo Kang Li every week. His illness progressed so quickly; he could no longer walk and had difficulty in talking. Since he has always followed religion lessons at the Kindergarten and loved Jesus, we asked his parents if they wished that



Lyo Kang Li, 'drummer boy' during the graduation activities at the Kindergarten school in Kuanshi.

their child be baptized. His mother totally opposed the idea.

On the feast of the Holy Family, Lyo Kang Li returned home after a 10-day stay at the hospital. We visited him bringing a small Christmas gift and a little manger. He was surrounded by his family and seemed almost lifeless, quite exhausted after the trip home.

Despite his weakness, he recognized us and was happy to receive his small gift. As we gave him the little manger, his face radiated with joy and he found strength enough to say the names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. And he added: *"Jesus, I love you."* A few moments passed and while we chatted with his parents, he repeated three times: *"Jesus, take me in your arms and walk with me."* We were touched to hear such words. He seemed to tell us: *"I want to become a Christian. I love Jesus and I want to go with Him".*

Using his words, we assured him that Jesus loves little children and walks with them. And we asked him once again: *"Do you love Jesus very much?"* In a low voice he answered: *"I love Him. Jesus, take me in your arms..."* Knowing Lyo Kang Li's

desire for Jesus, I poured water on his forehead pronouncing the words: *"Peter, I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit."*

I then told my young friend: *"Now you are truly in the arms of Jesus. He is in your heart and walks with you."* He kept silent and while looking at his small manger he repeated with deep peace and calmness: *"I love Jesus and Mary... thank you for bringing me a gift."*

Lyo Kang Li (Peter) died peacefully during the period of preparation for the day of the Lunar Year. He was deeply loved by his family and nothing was spared to give him, according to Chinese customs, a solemn funeral. *

Françoise Larouche, M.I.C.

**Sr. Françoise Larouche, M.I.C., helps young artisans
to try out hammers and nails.**



What is CHRISTMAS?



I recall one Christmas day in Peru... a baby boy was born. Following the delivery, the exhausted mother wept over her own helplessness; the father was away, unaware of the child's coming; the brothers and sisters were out begging for food. This little one had no home; the whole village was destroyed.

I recall another Christmas day... a 16-year old boy was taken away while playing ball with friends from the neighborhood. He had won the match. While returning home, someone approached him, inviting him to follow — with a promise for the future, a chance to become someone, even a hero for his country. A search was made but he was never found. His name has been added to the list of thousands of missing persons.

I also recall one other Christmas day... a woman I met along the road greeted me and invited me to her home. She related her story: "My husband was killed two years ago. He was a night watchman helping to protect the village against terrorists. Three months ago, at 6 o'clock in the morning, I found my son on the ground, his body massacred and lifeless. My three other children fled to Argentina. They refuse to return. I am alone."

And, I remember...

On an October day, a healthy baby was born in a humble farm house. The villager told his wife: "Linda, it's the most beautiful day of our lives; in our poor home a child of love is born!"

One day in July, I heard a young man declare: "My country is at war, my people are miserable but I want to bring to this world my daily effort, my desire to live, my joy, my dreams..."

On an April day, a man came to me and said: "Since 6 months now, I've changed my ways — I've stopped drinking and left the gang. I've become dedicated to my family, I am much more happy!"



J.O. Ortiz



C. Garceau, M.I.C.



E. Plamondon, M.I.C.

What is Christmas? A feast of peace, of love and of joy!

Yes, it can be Christmas every day! At every moment on our planet, a human being suffers, but also at every moment a child, a young person, an adult welcomes life, receives a gesture of love and of forgiveness, surmounts difficulties and smiles at the joy of sharing, of love and friendship.

*May this Christmastide bring blessed new days where God's love, peace and joy are shared, especially with those most in need! **

Marie-Paul Ross, M.I.C.

UNITED STATES



L. Corsini

***Children
and
Weddings***

***"One laugh of a child will
make the holiest day more
sacred still."***

R.G. Ingersoll

Editor's note: Josefina Garcia-Cobb, the writer of the following feature article, resides in Fairfield, Iowa. A journalist by profession, she received her elementary and secondary schooling at the Immaculate Conception Academy of Manila. The Academy, founded in 1946, is under the direction of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in the Philippines.

The wedding planners warned about children in weddings: they'd steal the scene from you, yell in the middle of the ceremony, poke their fingers into the wedding cake and wipe them clean on your wedding dress. But some of our dearest friends are children — it would be sad not to have them on our Big Day.

The wedding planners could be right, though: Arthur and Jennifer might tickle my groom, Keith, all over and knock him down as they always do when they see him. Our baby friends might cry in chorus while we're taking our vows. I might end up babysitting at the reception while the parents are socializing.

Nonetheless, we ended up having the "munchkins", as Keith likes to call them, occupy the chapel's front rows and assist in the wedding ceremony.

Of all our children entourage, Ida, 5, was the only one who had been to a wedding. So asking the others to take special part in our wedding was like asking a fish to fly.

"*Whaaat is thaaat?*" five-year-old Michael asked, puzzled, when I asked if he'd like to be our ring bearer. Arthur, 5, had his lips puckered and his eyebrows crossed when he was trying on the attire his mother made for the wedding. "*I don't know how I'm gonna feel,*" said feisty, sour-faced Jennifer, 7,

when I tried to inspire her to have fun at the wedding. Ida refused to wear her *patadyong*, a Philippine costume which I thought would add color to the wedding's international flavor.

We were having a double ceremony with dear friends from Japan, Yuko and Atsushi Takahashi. Together, our guest lists represented all but two — the Arctic and Antarctic — of the planet's continents.

At the rehearsal on the night before the wedding, four-year-old Vishal broke into tears of terror when his turn came to walk down the aisle. His father, Deepak, had to lead him by the hand to the altar. The whole Bakshi family stood by Vishal.

Vishal's wide Indian eyes, however, continued to drown in tears, his controlled sobs torn between obedience and discomfort. "*This is all very new to him,*" explained Deepak, who throughout the rehearsal kept wiping his son's tears with neither a trace of displeasure nor a word of reprimand. Although Keith and I were concerned about the effect this would have on Vishal's little heart, we left the matter to him and his family. Whatever Vishal's wish would be our wish, too.

Came wedding day, as the processional (a special counter-

point arrangement of "Puff the Magic Dragon" and "Pachelbel Canon") played, there was Vishal, valiant in his blue *punjabi*, leading the "munchkin" pack. Instead of tears, he had twinkles in his eyes and a smile that outshone the chapel's chandeliers. Why the change of heart?

When the Bakshis got home late at night after the rehearsal, Deepak relates, Vishal's older brother, Arpan, had a word with Vishal. "*Think about it, Vishal,*" said Arpan. "*It's all up to you now. If you do it, great. If you don't, I'll have to do it.*" Over breakfast the next morning, Vishal announced that he would do it. As coin bearer, he was to carry and hand over to the priest a set of silver coins for blessing. This is a Philippine tradition to symbolize prosperity in marriage.

The rest of the children, including those who came with their feeding bottles, observed the hour-long ceremony without an incident. Michael and Arthur may have had trouble walking straight down the aisle; they zigzagged through it, but so did I. After the ceremony, who else but little Ida would have the

temerity to pull my dress at the reception line and ask who would clean up the chapel after she and Jennifer had littered the aisle with flower petals.

True enough, I babysat at the reception, carrying three-month-old Toby as his mother ate, and had kids pulling my wedding dress, asking for plates, spoons, and forks, and why the cake was late? When the cake finally arrived, the kids formed a barricade around it with dessert plates and forks in hand.

Joining them was the biggest kid of all, my husband Keith, who was anxious to start the cake-cutting ceremony. Instead of ceremonially proceeding through it, he playfully poked his finger into the cake and landed a dollop of whipped cream on my nose. I, Yuko and Atsushi followed suit. Everybody got a big kick out of it. But it's the children's laughter that continues to echo in the heart of our marriage, and Vishal's decision to smile instead of cry through it all. *

Josefina Garcia-Cobb

Cover credits:

Front: M-T. Beaudette, M.I.C.

A street scene in Sichuan, China

Back: M-P. Charbonneau, M.I.C.

Sr. Cécile Ménard, M.I.C. shows a young friend how to make Christmas lanterns. (Haiti)



In Memoriam

Salesian Missions

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, we pray in faith and hope that our missionaries who, like John the Baptist, announced to nations the coming of Jesus, may rejoice with the Lord in His glory.

We invite you, dear friends, to join us in prayer for our M.I.C. Sisters who died during the past year:

*Marie-Antoinette Bolduc
Corinne Bourassa
Alphonsine Chénard
Jeanne d'Arc Gauthier
Eliane Gravel
Annette Groulx*

*Agnès Guénette
Cécile Nicole
Marguerite Ouellet
Marie-Thérèse Roux
Marcelle St-Arnaud*

Missionary Intentions 1994

November

The Gospel in Asia

That the preaching of the Gospel in Asia encounter deep and sincere acceptance and be abundantly fruitful.

December

Special Synod For Africa

That the special Synod for Africa strengthen communion, collaboration and a missionary spirit in the Churches of that continent.



Mr. Claude Brunette looks over the magazine layout with Sisters Helene Labelle and Ma. Anthea Raso.

A Note of Thanks

Our heartfelt gratitude to Mr. Claude Brunette! During the past ten years, the MIC MISSION NEWS staff constantly availed of his professional expertise and valuable assistance in preparing the layouts of the different issues.

Our sincere thanks, too, to Mr. Gaëtan Matte and the personnel at Imprimatéc, for their much-appreciated production and printing services.

The MIC MISSION NEWS Team

75th
anniversary

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1920-1995

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*masses are offered
each week
for your intentions
and for the deceased
members of your family.*



The light of Christ has come into the world!

THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

If you wish to contact us, here are a few addresses:

The Generalate
121 Maplewood Avenue
Outremont, Quebec
Canada H2V 2M2

MIC Sisters
236 Glynn Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario
Canada K1K 1S3

MIC Sisters
2950 Prince Edward Street
Vancouver, British Columbia
Canada V5T 3N3

Provincial House
P.O. Box 47
Mzimba, Malawi
Central Africa

MIC Sisters
P.O. Box 510107
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Provincial House
P.O. Box 468
1502 Greenhills
Metro Manila, Philippines

Provincial House
Tak Oi Convent
8 Tsz Wan Shan Road
Kowloon, Hong Kong

Provincial House
13-16 Fukazawa 8
Chome Setagaya-ku
Tokyo 158, Japan

MIC Sisters
30, Lane 148
Fu-Hsing South Road,
Section 2
Taipei 10641, Taiwan