

MIC MISSION NEWS

MARCH-APRIL 1995

**A FUTURE
FULL
OF PROMISE**

75th
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M.I.C. MISSIONARY PRESS
1920-1995

MIC MISSION NEWS

BIMONTHLY MISSION MAGAZINE
PUBLISHED BY THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION
VOL. 22, NO. 2, MARCH - APRIL 1995

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FILM STRIPPING:

Film-O-Progrès, Inc.

PRINTING:

Transcontinental Inc.

SUBSCRIPTION/SUPPORT:

\$ 7 1 year \$ 10

\$ 14 2 years \$ 15

\$ 20 3 years \$ 25

United States and other Countries: \$ 15

TAX RECEIPT:

Registration number: 0940007-47

PRESSE MISSIONNAIRE M.I.C.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

Please send your old and your new

address. When renewing

subscription, include file number.

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ISSUED:

March 1995

PUBLICATION MAIL

Registration No. 0358

ISSN 0315-9655

Member: Association of Roman

Catholic Communicators of Canada

(ARCC)

FRONT COVER:

*Young M.I.C. Sisters
in formation
in Canada -
Internationality: an
asset and a gift to
the future!*

Photo: M. Marcoux, M.I.C.

HOPE BRINGS FORTH ITS FLOWERS

As new sap rises in the bough and bursts the folded buds apart, so will hope bring forth its flowers and joy return into my heart.

Patience Strong

Observing nature closely, we note with keen awareness her signs, each making its advent into our world, which seems always ready for it. And with Easter and spring coming almost hand in hand, we are offered opportunities to give a harmonious welcome to both the celebration of the Resurrection and the arrival of spring. We cannot close our eyes to the spring beauty that unfolds around us. Nor can we close our ears and hearts to the glorious message of Easter! When the world is on the threshold of spring, its harbingers multiply daily. We feel the pulse of life anew and look out with hope toward a broader, brighter view. So, too, with our life in the Church. We look to the dreams that inspire us, the faith that sustains us, and the hope that leads us on. In his book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope*, Pope John Paul II speaks of the Church as a sign of hope and of new communion with God in this world.

Changes which have taken place in the Church and in society over the past 30 years have marked consecrated life profoundly and positively. The World Synod of Bishops held in Rome last October was the universal Church's first opportunity since the Second Vatican Council to reflect on "The Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World". Together, the Synod participants examined how consecrated men and women can respond to the challenges and expectations of our contemporaries in various cultural, social and ecclesial contexts. **A Synod: Journeying Together and Religious Life and its Mission**



Photo:
R. De Montigny,
P.M.E.

in Cuba stress the importance for the Church to be confident regarding the renewal and reflections of her sons and daughters, as well as to encourage and acknowledge the signs of new life that are already evident. **Enlivening the Hope of the Gospel** presents in broad lines how the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception face the future with their specific charism and mission.

The Church has been enriched by the vitality of lay movements and associations within which the consecrated life has found fresh expressions. **Living Witnesses of Our Roots and Holy Week in Candelaria** reveal how associates and lay promoters are grateful and happy to participate and to express their hopes as bearers of the Good News. Recognizing the role of religious women in the Church, the Synod observed that "consecrated life has been a place of promotion on behalf of other women in society and in the Church". **An Appeal From Breña** clearly echoes this awareness.

The Holy Father calls on consecrated men and women to give witness to hope, love and commitment in the world. He affirms that the choice consecrated people make for their life, "especially through the practice of the evangelical counsels of chastity, poverty and obedience, is nothing more than a great choice of love, or even, a superabundance of love". By calling men and women to leave everything in order to follow Him, Jesus initiated a way of life which has been expressed in the various forms of consecration as they developed in the Church through the centuries. In **Rites of Passage**, we see that today, the Lord does not cease to repeat His call "Come follow me!"

Ma. Anthea Raso, M.I.C.

The Synod of Bishops, held in Rome last October, focused on the Consecrated Life as it is lived by the world's religious Institutes, Congregations and Orders.

REPORT

A SYNOD: JOURNEYING TOGETHER

By Bishop Jacques Berthelet, C.S.V.

In the wake of vast changes in the world and in the Church, the Synod examined who the religious are and where they fit in the Church's structure today. The Canadian delegation was composed of seven bishops; two religious women were invited as observers.

The delegation also included three religious who served as resource persons for the Canadian prelates. Auxiliary-Bishop Jacques Berthelet, C.S.V., of St-Jean-Longueuil, a delegate of the Canadian Bishops' Conference, recorded with clarity and precision the experience of this assembly of bishops and delegates from around the world.

That Sunday morning, October 2nd, 1994, a torrential rain fell on Rome. It struck the dome of St. Peter's Basilica and rushed down to flood the inner courts and the square of St. Peter. It was a rare sight. The opening Mass of the 9th ordinary assembly of the Synod of Bishops on **"The Consecrated Life and its Mission in the Church and in the World"** was about to begin. Was this a sign of the abundance of grace which was going to fall upon the Synod or of the torrent of ideas which was to flood the Synod hall in the four coming weeks? In any case, that morning, groups of bishops, men and women religious and faithful people of every colour and style of dress made their way to St. Peter's Basilica like marathon runners crossing the finish line. From that early stage on, we journeyed together. In this initial gathering, the Holy Father commented on the encounter of Jesus with the young man whom He had called with these words: "Follow me!". When we came out of this first gathering, the sun was shining brightly. It continued to shine until the end of the Synod, October 29th.

PARTICIPANTS AT THE SYNOD

The next day, Monday, October 3rd, all of us 350 participants assembled again around the Holy Father in the large hall located above the audience hall, ready to listen to

one another, ready to listen to the Spirit and to search together for what the Spirit is saying to the Church on the consecrated life.

Of course, this Synod was a synod of bishops. There are approximately 225 of us. But a synod of bishops on the consecrated life: this means that around 125 consecrated people, men and women, were also present, not to mention the fact that many bishops are members of Institutes of the consecrated life. The consecrated life is also a gift which we share with other Christian Churches. The Holy Father was thoughtful enough to invite representatives of Institutes of consecrated life of the Sister Churches.

This Synod was a synod of the Catholic Church, which means that all five continents were represented, that all Episcopal conferences had delegates there and that Religious conferences were represented. Moreover, special care had been taken to make sure all forms of consecrated life in all parts of the world were present at the Synod.

PROGRAMME OF THE SYNOD

Bishop Jan Schotte (who became cardinal the day after the Synod) opened the



Canadian delegation to the Synod in Rome - Bishop Jacques Berthelet, C.S.V., 5th left.

assembly with the report of the General Secretary of the Synod; the report of the General Reporter of the Synod, Cardinal Hume, Archbishop of Westminster, was an even stronger kick-off. Going over the most important parts of the working instrument made public a few months before the Synod (in June), Cardinal Hume proposed a number of questions suggested in the *Instrumentum Laboris*, which would call for members of the Synod to take a stand. For two weeks thereafter, from Monday to Saturday between 9 A.M. and 12:30 A.M. and between 5 and 7 P.M., always with the Holy Father, we listened to the input of approximately 250 contributors who normally spoke 8 minutes each, 15 minutes for some 15 experts, and 5 minutes for the representatives of the other Churches.

At the end of this marathon, with the help of his assistants (Fr. P. Zago, O.M.I., Superior General, Br. Johnston, F.E.C., Superior General, and Sr. Ehrlich, an Ursuline Sister of the Roman Union), Cardinal Hume presented a powerful summary of all these contributions. In the third week, the members of the Synod responded to this vision of Cardinal Hume; they criticized it and complemented it. This meant for the 14 linguistic workshops to say what particularly stood out in their minds in those two weeks of hearings, and to even say what may have been forgotten. I shall choose among the numerous elements of the summary, and mention, first, a few characteristic traits of various continents and countries, and then some of the key ideas of the Synod.

DIFFERENT EXPERIENCES AND CONCERNS IN DIFFERENT CONTINENTS

The experience lived by consecrated people under Communist regimes over much of the twentieth century reveals to us what is essential to the consecrated life: a deep faith nourished by the Word of God and the sacramental life; a vigorous fraternal life; a solid bond with the Church, and in particular with the successor of Peter. In these countries, the consecrated life has really been marked by the experience of martyrdom. This experience questions us. What is essential for us in the consecrated life? What are the struggles we carry on that enable us to stay on our feet?

The experience of Africa and Asia reveals the emergence of numerous vocations to the consecrated life, in either indigenous or missionary communities. These communities face the question of the inculturation of the consecrated life and that of the formation of new members. Whatever the answer may be, it challenges the truth of the consecrated life. And this challenge affects the consecrated life in all countries.

In North America, in fact in the Western World, a major challenge consists of living the consecrated life in a secularized society, an autonomous, self-reliant and neutral society with its own values and laws. In this context, the value of the consecrated life lies in the witness it gives, in its truth and in its capacity to show the reasonableness of its plan.



Photo: H. Turcotte, M.I.C.

M.I.C. Sisters from Asia and Africa participate in a renewal session in Canada. The Synod is a call to continue the renewal of consecrated life.



Seminarians in China bear witness to the dawn of faith among God's people in their land.

SOME OF THE KEY IDEAS OF THE SYNOD

The use of the phrase "consecrated life" does not only refer to the religious life; it also refers to all the other forms of life vowed to God through celibacy for the sake of the kingdom of God: the order of virgins, the hermits, the secular institutes and the societies of apostolic life. Of course, there is a need to distinguish more clearly between consecration through the evangelical counsels and the Baptismal consecration, to determine more specifically what is essential to the consecrated life and common to all its forms, and finally to bring out what is particular to each of these forms of consecrated life.

The fundamental equality of all in a Church of communion and in the consecrated life was asserted in many ways during the Synod. This assertion came out especially in the recognition of the fundamental equality of man and woman in the Church and in the acknowledgement that progress is yet to be made for consecrated women to be treated in the same way as men even within the consecrated life. This also came out in the request that in mixed Institutes (made up of brothers and priests), the brothers who so desire and for whom this is the original tradition,

be allowed access to positions as major superiors, which in the current legislation is reserved for priests.

The statement that the future and credibility of the consecrated life depend on its capacity to live by the demands of evangelical poverty was reiterated many times during the Synod. Along the same lines, we were reminded of the necessity to take up our cross in order to follow Christ, and to follow Him in abnegation and detachment. This is one of the major elements of a spirituality of which the Synod said little, but which was inherent in everyone of its statements. It is in this sense that we must understand the calls of the Synod for conversion, truth and communion in the Church.

These thoughts provide a brief overview of the Synod on the Consecrated Life. As in the case of the Council, it will take a few years to fully appreciate the calls of the Synod to continue our renewal. This Synod gives us hope as we move into the 21st century. It is up to us to take hold of this grace! □



Photo: M.I.C., Madagascar

Numerous M.I.C. vocations in Madagascar manifest the vitality of a Church that has lived under a Socialist regime.

CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and the Team of the M.I.C. Missionary Press offer sincere congratulations and best wishes to the 30 Cardinals, newly appointed by the Holy Father, particularly those of the Dioceses where the M.I.C. Sisters work:

May Our Immaculate Mother, who assisted the

Apostles in their mission, accompany you in your new service for the Church! □ **The Editorial Team**

*Cardinal Jean-Claude Turcotte, Montreal, Canada,
Cardinal Carlos Oviedo Cavada, Santiago, Chile,
Cardinal Jaime Lucas Ortega y Alamino, La Habana, Cuba,
Cardinal Peter Seiichi Shirayanagi, Tokyo, Japan,
Cardinal Armand Gaétan Razafindratandra, Antananarivo, Madagascar,
Cardinal Augusto Vargas Alzamora, Lima, Peru.*

RELIGIOUS LIFE AND ITS MISSION IN CUBA

Sr. Sara Olga, M.I.C., a delegate of the Conference of Religious of Cuba, addresses the Synod Assembly.

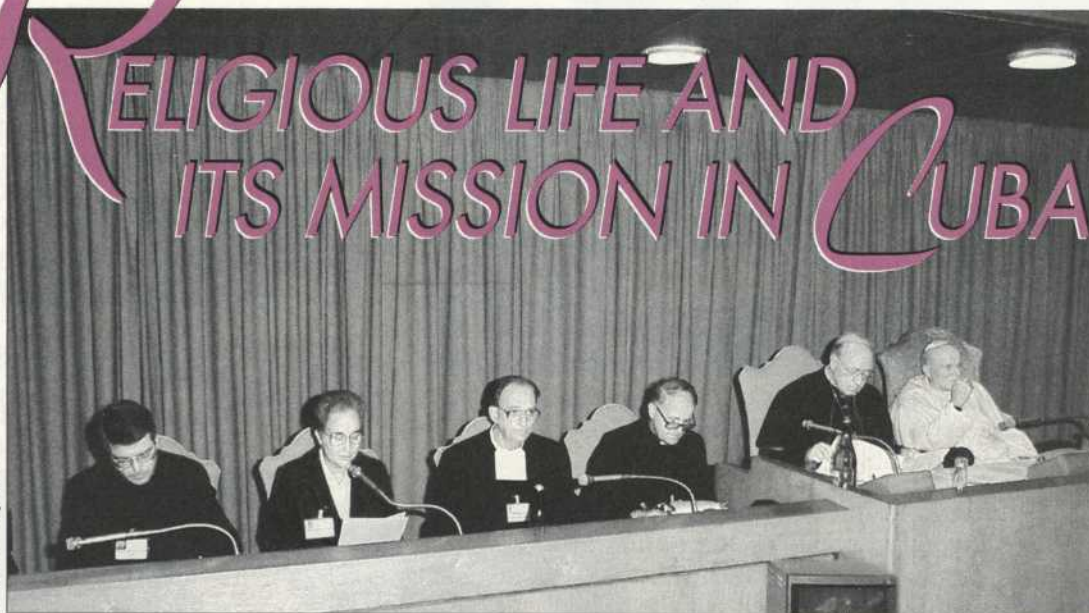


Photo: A. Mari, L'Osservatore Romano

By Sara Olga Perez Numez, M.I.C.

Bishops and other delegates from around the world met in Rome from October 2 to 30, 1994, to attend the Synod of Bishops called by the Holy Father to discuss "The Consecrated Life and its Role in the Church and in the World."

Sister Sara Olga Perez Numez, M.I.C., Regional superior of Cuba, attended the Synod in her capacity as president of the Conference of Religious of Cuba and was one of the delegates to address the Synod Assembly on October 4. Her presentation allows us to look at religious life and its mission in the context of Cuban society.

Holy Father, Cardinals and Bishops, Religious Sisters and Brothers in Christ our Lord:

I address this assembly with a deep feeling of gratitude. My gratitude goes first to God our Father who has allowed this Synod on Religious Life to take place. I am also grateful for its acceptance by the Holy Father and by all the people of God. And I am grateful especially, for this invitation which I received to participate as a delegate of the religious of Cuba, in this "moment of God" which the Synod is. This invitation from the Holy Father is for us a clear sign of the gratuitousness and splendor of our God, and at the same time, it is a call to welcome the grace of this moment as would Mary, our Mother.

SOCIAL AND ECCLESIAL CONTEXT OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN CUBA

From the very start of the Cuban Revolution, even before it was declared openly as

Marxist-Leninist and irreconcilable with Faith, initial confrontations had already started between the State and the Church. An invisible hand coined the phrase: "To go to church is harmful." It went to such extremes that to enter a church, to greet a nun or a priest or welcome them at home were looked upon as 'harmful'. The pressure upon the Church, particularly on lay people, increased unceasingly. Many believers gave in to this intimidation. In this new society, it was almost heroic to live without denying or hiding one's faith. The practice of religion diminished very quickly and fear entered people's hearts, particularly among the faithful.

It has been a painful, but fruitful process indeed. It was not easy to find new ways of being present in a system in which one was excluded, not easy to share in all human activities without identifying the ideology by



Sr. Catherine, a Malagasy M.I.C. in Cuba, experiences with the people "the unifying power" of Our Lady of El Cobre.

which one was inspired, not easy to be credible in the midst of a world of prejudice and misinformation. Nevertheless, deprived of power and without institutions or mass media, the Church often felt the presence and action of the Holy Spirit. She saw the efficacy of God's Word; she discovered the unifying power, for our people, of Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre. This whole spiritual experience led the Church through a journey of conversion, purification and faith.

Poor in personnel, decimated, first, by the expulsions, then by the exodus of a great number of her children and by their massive abandonment of religious practice, the Church did not lose hope. I remember, as a novice, hearing the prophetic words of Bishop Adolfo Rodríguez de Camagüey: "My Sisters, we suffer now the grief of seeing so many of the faithful leave us, bringing their children with them; but the day will come when we will have the joy of receiving in our churches the children of communists who will look for the Good News."

This is what we are living now, 35 years after the Revolution. A great number of our brothers and sisters are coming back and many young people, brought up in materialistic and atheistic surroundings, are waking up to the faith. During the past four years, there has been a noticeable increase in church attendance. The quality of church services is improving. The preparation of catechumens is a fact and a source of hope.

On the other hand, confined until now within the walls of her sanctuaries, the Church is starting to go out to meet the people. This is one of the graces of the celebration of the 5th Centennial of Evangelization in the Americas. To prepare this event, we had to go beyond the boundaries of our churches. With fear and trembling, we knocked at the people's doors. To our surprise, they filled our

empty churches. As we looked at the Cross, we were reunited in Love.

Our Church knows the accumulated suffering the people keep in their hearts. There are so many pressures, so many needs; the grief of so many national struggles, like that of our people who died in foreign lands or of the many others who fled on rafts and were engulfed in our seas. We can add to this the sorrow of hearing distorted news about these events, the sorrow of our prisoners and their relatives, and the sufferings of families separated by ideologies or by the wave of immigration.

It is a fact: the Church in Cuba has grown in solidarity each time it lived Christian charity with those who suffer. The people acknowledge that the Church is close to them. The Church becomes more and more the voice of the people, and they, in turn, find in her a space for freedom and expression. The Church acknowledges the need for her own conversion, and the people meet along their way witnesses who make the Gospel message more credible.

RENEWAL OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN CUBA

In some ways, this social and ecclesial context has shaped religious life in Cuba. Not long before the Second Vatican Council decreed the renewal of religious life, numerous changes had already occurred. In 1961, the nationalization of Catholic colleges and the fear of impending reprisals and violent persecutions provoked a massive exit of religious from the country. Within a week, only 209 of the 2721 nuns and 142 of the 424 men belonging to religious orders remained in Cuba. All at once, all the teaching institutions were closed, as well as most of the welfare centers and the majority of the large convents adjoining colleges and charity shelters.

A new era for religious life is beginning in Cuba. In the midst of uncertainty and insecurity, the bonds of



Sisters Amelia, Maricela and Gloria Teresa plan activities with young parishioners.

ecclesial solidarity and communion are being strengthened. Within the narrow boundaries allowed by the system, new modes of presence and action are being sought. The Second Vatican Council enlightened this process of change, especially with its reflection on the mission of the Church in today's world and its guidelines for the renewal of religious life. A Jesuit priest, Fr. Felicísimo Sánchez is helping us in our study of the Council documents and already, we feel the influence of this study.

By changing the orientation of our mission, because of circumstances, our lifestyle has also changed.

From teaching and social works formerly organized in large establishments, we are moving to a work of Faith

education through small catechism groups in parishes or in neighbourhood religious centres. We are moving to proclaiming the Gospel through the witness of our daily lives rather than through preaching, though we do take advantage of all "open doors" to proclaim it. We are moving to pastoral work among the sick, the elderly and the handicapped children, particularly through visits to homes and hospitals.

Our welfare centres are so few! In all of Cuba, the Church runs seven homes for the elderly, one for handicapped children and a sanatorium for the mentally sick. Yet, what wonderful care is provided in these facilities! Even the leaders of the Revolution consider these centres as models of their kind.



At Holguin, Sr. Jeanne Ostiguy, M.I.C., prepares a young man for Baptism.

Sr. Dinorah Ayala, M.I.C., spends time with a handicapped friend.



Home visits are occasions to bring the Good News - Sr. Claire Carrier, M.I.C., baptises Elinier; his godmother, Sr. Fabienne Bernatchez, M.I.C.



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

Community life is becoming simpler, more fraternal and closer to the people. More open interpersonal relationships are being established, inside as well as outside the religious community. New religious houses, many of which are in the sacristies of churches, are more and more open to the people. This proximity brings about a revision, discernment and renewal of our lifestyle.

Our vowed consecration to the Lord is strongly questioned by the milieu. What can be the meaning of a consecration to *Someone* who does not even exist for them? Situations such as this help us to deepen our vocation. It is only through an authentic experience of faith in the One and Triune God that we can live the radical following of Christ joyfully, in total freedom and complete dedication. All of this also has an impact on our prayer life. We learn to share the Word of God among us in our religious community and with the people, to put it into practice through concrete deeds and to celebrate its efficacy in the Eucharist.

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN CUBA

As stated in the document of the Cuban National Ecclesial Meeting of 1986, the first contribution of religious life to the Church is its own consecration. To give meaning to our vows in the "here and now" of our reality has been a constant concern for us.

Countering the excessive valuation of human love which permeates our society, our

vow of chastity is a sign which people understand solely because of our availability, solidarity and generosity.

Countering anguish and despair due to the scarcity of basic goods, to an unsafe and unpredictable future and to hopelessness, our vow of poverty, which makes sharing a reality, speaks for itself to simple people.

Countering apathy in work and the lack of creativity, our vow of obedience leads us to reflect because of the joy and dedication it brings in serving others.

How beautiful is the testimony of our consecrated life! It is, however, called to a constant integration of the "essence of our consecration" into a reality which challenges because of the loss of human values, the deterioration of the human person, the lack of religious formation, the despair and lack of perspective on the part of the people; because of poverty at all levels and the need for a social plan that will unite everyone in respect, freedom and dialogue. We are called to live the demands of an ongoing conversion that we may welcome the thoughts and feelings of Christ and translate them into concrete actions proclaiming the dignity of the human person and the truth concerning Christ and the Church.

All this becomes a strong call for the development of our own charisms with the creativity of the Spirit himself who inspired them. It makes us aware of the importance of a solid and inculturated formation, both initial and ongoing, without forgetting the need for an authentic discernment of vocation.

Considering the magnitude of the task on hand, we feel even more strongly the scarcity of personnel. How can this great mission be fulfilled when the number of religious, both men and women, is seven times less than it was in 1961, whereas the

Photo: M.I.C., Cuba



The profession of perpetual vows of Sr. Gloria Perez, M.I.C., bears witness to the radical following of Christ.

Cuban population has doubled in number? To overcome this poverty, we hope against all hope in the Father's Providence and also in the generous response of religious Institutes to the invitation of the Church in Cuba.

GRATITUDE AND APPEAL OF THE CHURCH IN CUBA

In closing, I give thanks once again to the Holy Father for this invitation and for giving me the chance to express myself. Thanks also to all the Institutes of consecrated life present in Cuba. Your help is great and valuable! However, we need immediate help in terms of personnel, even for a limited period, or financial aid which would enable us to offer services in their training and formation.

I take this opportunity to share with you what I consider to be the best contribution of our Church to the universal Church: i.e. our experience of fraternity and ecclesial communion among the Bishops, priests, religious and lay people. This experience, emerging from our mixed culture, grows amid hardships and is oriented towards unity in diversity.

I ask our Mother of Charity of *El Cobre* to accompany this Synod Assembly so that, with Her, we may learn how to accept the new approach which the Spirit wants to teach us concerning the religious life and its mission in the Church and in the world. □



Sr. Sara Olga expresses her gratitude to the Holy Father and presents the needs of the Church in Cuba.

Photo: A. Mari, L'Osservatore Romano

PROJECT



Students of Marie-de-la-Providence College: "Without the education of a people, no national plan or development proposal is possible!"

After 30 years, there is a need to expand!



Sr. Murielle Dubé, M.I.C. is confident that a bright future awaits Marie-de-la-Providence College!



AN APPEAL FROM BREÑA

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception arrived in Breña, Lima, on August 30, 1962. Soon after their arrival, they met with architects and contractors who started the construction of a residence for the Sisters and a college.

On April 1, 1963, three hundred girls started school at Marie-de-la-Providence College.

More than 30 years have passed since then... Today, the M.I.C. Sisters of Peru speak of the dynamic life that has sprouted and blossomed in the College over the years.

However, there is a pressing need for additional space ... hence this appeal on behalf of the College and school community.

MISSIONARY PRESENCE AT BREÑA

In the early 60's, my family, like many others, moved from the countryside to the city of Lima. People coming from different regions of the country who did not find a place in the center of the city were forced to settle in zones bordering the capital. We settled in the already densely populated district of Breña. In 1963, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception arrived on the scene with the plan to found a college. You

can imagine what this meant for the families of Breña... the chance to have a good education! The opening of Marie-de-la-Providence College answered a need of the people. For the Sisters, it was a way of proclaiming the gratuitous love of God who accompanies His people in their sufferings and hopes.

The years passed and Peru went through an economic, political and social crisis. In this

critical context, the population of Breña increased, the alleys multiplied and poverty became more evident! In 1972, I nevertheless studied with much determination at Marie-de-la-Providence College! In 1982, I joined the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. During 4 years of formation, I taught in the same classrooms where I had previously been a student. I thus appreciate the real value of the means of evangelization and development that we have. Those are the means through which we contribute in the formation of new generations who will make choices that favour our people and forge a new society - a society of justice, peace and solidarity according to God's marvelous plan!

Today, while we are still under the shock of the terror and violence which cut down so many innocent lives, new and urgent needs emerge:

- A deep crisis in the education system of the country.
- Education perceived by government as a social expense which is not very productive; the budget is reduced notwithstanding the fact that the school age population continues to increase.
- Teachers are getting poorer; their buying power has diminished by 85.3% in the last 13 years. The economic problem has a terrible consequence: the teachers' work is depreciated.
- Young people consider the school as the bridge which links them to the university and to the world of work. Unfortunately, the poor quality of the educational system and the economic crisis transform their aspirations to a better lifestyle into short-lived dreams.

They need to gather around the Word of God, to let themselves be transformed and questioned by it in their daily lives and to commit themselves in a coherent manner in favour of their people.

More than ever, to take on a plan of education is

to choose life. Without the education of a people, no national plan or development proposal is possible! To take on an education plan is to row against the current, in order to achieve a society more worthy of sons and daughters of God! Yes, Marie-de-la-Providence College responds to a very real need of the people of Breña and of the Church: an education steeped in love for a solidarity that knows no boundaries!

Rosario Zari, M.I.C.

A FUTURE TEACHER'S WISH

The subject of the "College" stirs deep feelings in my heart for I want very much to become a teacher. I feel that I am part of this M.I.C. project and I'm convinced of the importance and value of education. Beginning with what I am in my poverty, I offer to support and help those who need me.

- We need the child's innocence!
- We need the hope of young people!
- We need the God of Life!

*Ana Alvarado,
M.I.C. novice*

PASTORAL WORK IN VIEW OF THE FUTURE

I'm involved in the pastoral programme at Marie-de-la-Providence College. Following the example of the



Tania Diaz Vela, novice (5th left) and animators of the Holy Childhood and Youth Without Frontiers



For lack of an auditorium, assemblies and activities are held in the open court.

M.I.C. Sisters who came before me, I want to promote a school pastoral programme aimed at a holistic formation of the students. It includes the affective, social and spiritual dimensions of the human person. This holistic formation is already started and I strongly believe that here in Peru, women have a primary role. Working with children and young women is truly working for the future of Peru!

In 1992, something new was undertaken. In collaboration with the representative of the Jesuit College of Breña, we started, little by little, a combined pastoral programme which includes various types of activities: children missionaries, youth without frontiers, small Christian communities, preparation for Confirmation, young M.I.C. associates and M.I.C. associates, social and pastoral work with former students! The teachers, students and group animators participate actively. There is a surge of energy!

Following the example of Délia Tétreault, we want to light a great fire so that young people and children, happy to be loved by God, will become missionaries according to their age, milieu and possibilities. The different activities complement the academic subjects and enable each one of our students to go forward in the footsteps of the risen Jesus.

Dolorès St-Cyr, M.I.C.

PAVING A PATH OF HOPE

I participated in the pastoral work of the College and I can say that this experience has taught me to love and welcome it as part of my life. A pastoral activity which is realized is a gift of God. It is people coming alive! In one way or another, all are doing their part. Young women and children, while receiving good courses, experience and share a God who loves them and invites them to build community. They discover meaning in their lives in a society which is drastically marked by injustice and violence.

Marie-de-la-Providence College belongs to the people of the popular zone of Breña more than it belongs to us. We are there to respond to their needs. Let us get on with our task! God has placed in our hands an undertaking which is a path of hope!

Tania Diaz Vela, M.I.C. novice

GIVING WITNESS TO LIFE

It is impossible to keep to myself what I have seen and heard!... I came from Cuba about a year and a half ago. I am not in the education ministry. Can I then give an appreciation of Marie-de-la-Providence College? Yes, because I am a witness of the life and inspiration of this undertaking! Sound teaching is offered here... teachings of the Good News! Spiritual and material support are provided to

the people. My Sisters are faithful to the evangelical approach of Our Lord Jesus. Since my arrival in Peru, I had the privilege to participate in their pastoral activities. They have transmitted to countless people the desire to live the mission in the manner of Mary, filled with wonder at the grace of God in their lives! The groups of Associates (SMIC) and young Associates (JAS-MIC) commit themselves, prepare or request someone to guide them in order to share with others the gift of Faith.

Christ lives! I feel and see His dynamic presence at Napo 1124.

Gloria Sulet, M.I.C.

ABUNDANT FRUIT

Thirty years have passed! The missionary dynamism shown by the M.I.C. pioneers has multiplied over the years. Education, pastoral and social activities have borne fruit. Young women commit themselves to be of service to society. There is an increase of vocations to the M.I.C. life! Almost without realizing it, life bursts forth, stronger and breaking through the



M.I.C. Sisters Carmen Uipan and Mésina Paulémon (right) during a meeting on vocations held at the College.

Photos: M.I.C., Peru

walls. The results? As it keeps growing in every way, the College has a crying need of extra space! As a Peruvian, I feel that this is an urgent matter!

Ederlina Torres del Aguila, M.I.C.

A GESTURE OF SOLIDARITY

Following Mary's example when she said to Jesus: "They have no wine," we confide this concern to you, dear friends and readers. An expansion of Marie-de-la-Providence College will enable it to continue its mission of education in a popular milieu. Together with the whole school community and the people of Breña, thank you in advance with all our hearts for your solidarity with us in the mission. □

*Murielle Dubé, M.I.C.,
Provincial Superior*

A PLANNED GIFT • A GIFT OF THE HEART

For the benefit of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception:

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- ✓ enable you to reduce your taxes
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♥ Heartfelt Thanks



Photo: L. Laberge, M.I.C.

A bouquet of flowers for the Way of the Cross

HOLY WEEK IN CANDELARIA

By Louise Laberge, M.I.C.



Photo: J. Pinto

Sr. Louise Laberge with a Bolivian family

In Bolivian villages, popular religiosity has maintained a deep Christian content. Accompanying four lay 'promoters', Sister Louise Laberge had the privilege of joining the Quechua people of Candelaria in their celebration of Holy Week. She faithfully kept a journal and now opens a few pages for us.

WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK

I arrived at Candelaria on Wednesday of Holy Week. A place was reserved for me in a room which serves as a dormitory. It is with great joy that I share the life of these young women from the village. My greatest difficulty is with the language! The people speak Quechua, their ancestral dialect, and I know nothing of it!

The village is 3,400 metres above sea level. We have cold weather! In their gardens, the people grow mostly potatoes, large beans and the papaliza, a root crop similar to our potato. Though most of the families raise sheep and poultry, I saw a few cows in the fields. We are now in autumn, the season for harvesting potatoes. Everything being done by hand, the

whole family helps with the work in the fields.

HOLY THURSDAY

To help save gas, I didn't use warm water this morning. I placed a pail of water out in the sun, but by 10 o'clock, the water was hardly lukewarm... and I could barely wash my face.

There is no resident priest in this area. The women promoters, who received their training at our Institute, led the prayers of Holy Week. The ceremony started in the evening. Young people and adults reenacted the Washing of the Feet, the Last Supper and the Condemnation of Jesus. During the 45-minute

presentation, various participants played the parts of Jesus, the apostles, religious authorities and other characters. Bath towels, curtains, and even our bed sheets were used for costumes. The spectators were very attentive and the celebration ended with a song and a prayer. Then, rice, milk and bread were served to the young people who had participated in the presentation.

GOOD FRIDAY

The sun didn't come out at all this day and it was colder than yesterday. My companions were kept busy all morning preparing our dinner. I helped them peel potatoes. At dinner time, there was a lot of good food on the table. According to a custom



Lay promoters from the Rural Education Institute commit themselves to help the people deepen their Christian faith.

practiced in certain places in Bolivia, twelve dishes were served in remembrance of the Apostles. The menu, which did not include meat, had potatoes, rice and pasta in abundance. Good Friday is one of the rare occasions when the villagers have enough food to satisfy their hunger. After this hearty meal, my young friends suggested that I drink water for, according to their belief, water has a purifying power during the hour preceding the death of Jesus.

The Way of the Cross started in the streets at 3 o'clock. The women wore their mourning clothes. The men vied with one another to carry the cross along with a statue of the Blessed Virgin, also dressed in black. At each station, a family had prepared a table which served as a stand

for the statue. Once the statue had been placed on the table, flowers were offered and incense was burned. At 6 o'clock in the evening, we entered the chapel and went up the central aisle on our knees to kiss the crucifix. Everything was done in silence and with utmost respect.

HOLY SATURDAY

On this day, the weather was magnificent! I went for a walk and met other foreigners, members of a sect. They also had come to celebrate Holy Week in Candelaria. We shyly greeted one another and continued each on our own way. I discreetly glanced inside some of the homes through the open doors. Vegetables were stacked on the floor on one side, and on the other side was a bed. What great poverty in this countryside! This was also obvious from the tattered clothes worn by most of the villagers.

In the evening, we celebrated the Glory of the Risen Lord. A large group of young people were present. At the start of the celebration, a fire prepared outside the chapel was kept burning by people throwing pieces of wood in the blaze and saying together: "With this piece of wood, may my lies be burnt", ...or "my drunkenness", etc... This ritual of begging forgiveness lasted a long time. I admired the simplicity and seriousness of those who spoke. Then, with great joy, the whole assembly sang the Alleluia!

The Holy Week ceremonies were led by

'promoters' i.e. young women, 19 to 22 years of age, with just a few years of education, who are really eager to spread the Word of God and to help their sisters and brothers in the villages. During these solemn days, they became messengers for the Catholic people. How I admired their conviction and audacity! These young women joyfully spread the Good News just as the women did during the time of Jesus!

EASTER SUNDAY

At breakfast, I was so surprised to find carnation petals soaking in my cup of water! My companions informed me that Easter is a day of great joy and in order to express that happiness, we soak flower petals and drink the water. After breakfast, we boarded a bus and went to a large village 30 kilometers away, where we attended the Easter Mass. The mayor and his wife sat in special pews in the church.

Young people reenact the Washing of the Feet.



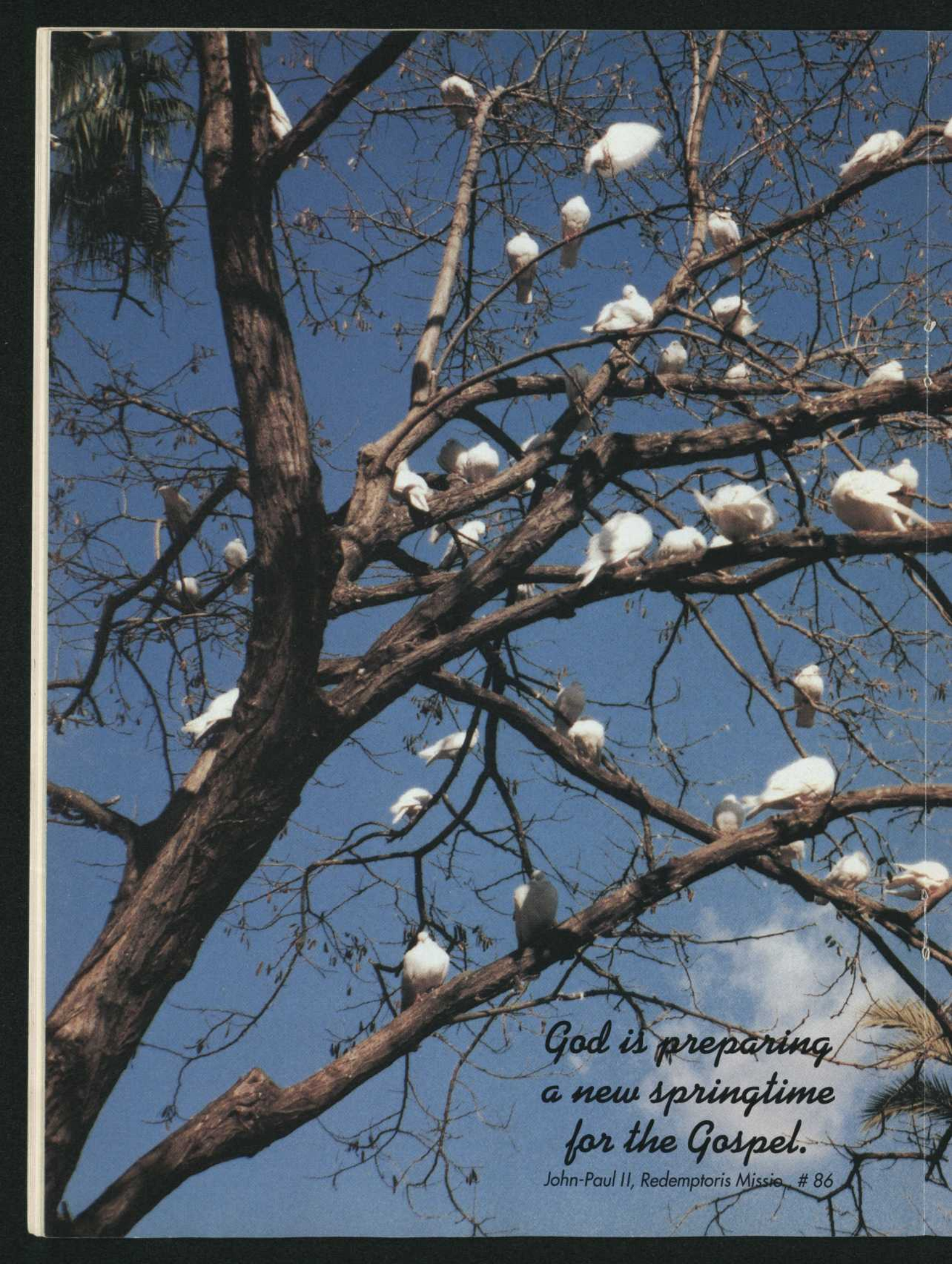
We were delighted to live these Holy Days with the poor, who are so dear to the Heart of Jesus and also to ours. I lived these days very intensely. Commodities were scarce, yet, I was at ease in such simplicity. I hope to have the chance to live other similar experiences for they draw me closer to the love of God the Father and of my Bolivian sisters and brothers. □



In Candelaria, the Way of the Cross includes many local customs and beliefs.

Photos: L. Laberge, M.I.C.

Photo: J. P. Pina

A photograph of a large, dark tree with many white birds perched on its branches. The birds are mostly white and appear to be of various species, possibly doves or pigeons. They are scattered across the branches, some sitting alone and others in small groups. The background is a clear, bright blue sky. The tree's branches are thick and dark, with some smaller, thinner branches extending outwards. The overall scene is peaceful and serene.

*God is preparing
a new springtime
for the Gospel.*

John-Paul II, Redemptoris Missio # 86



Photo: H. Turcotte, M.I.C.



Photo: T. Lortie, M.I.C.

Internationality, an
unmistakable reality
during the M.I.C.
General Chapter



Photo: M.I.C., Cuba

Sr. Marie-
Hélène Roy

ENLIVENING THE HOPE OF THE GOSPEL

By Marie-Hélène Roy, M.I.C.

The General Chapter of our Institute, held in Montreal in August 1994, was attended by delegates of the 15 countries where we serve.

This M.I.C. international meeting focused on the theme, "In a Long Magnificat, Choosing our Future Together". Sister Marie-Hélène Roy, a delegate, presents the most important decisions of the Chapter: the major orientation, the priorities and the mission statements which are the bases of apostolic solidarity and a source of unity throughout the Institute. Recognizing the richness of our spirituality of thanksgiving, we welcome the challenge of sharing it with others, with the audacity of Christian hope.

As consecrated religious, we still have our place today in the Church and in society. As Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, "we find today a new consciousness of the cosmos, calling for new space on the frontier and new prophetic options."⁽¹⁾ As religious of apostolic life, the Lord invites us to embody both reality and the Gospel, inviting our world to become more and more conscious of the Christian hope it contains.

AT THE HEART OF THE WORLD AND OF THE CHURCH

Ever since the foundation of the Institute in 1902 and since the Second Vatican Council, we have constantly been "on the alert" to discern the signs of the times and the calls of our world and of the Church, in order to offer, along with our very selves, a meaningful and hope-filled response... in those places

where we have commitments. Since 1991, we went to work once again throughout the Institute, this time by means of two major projects which received special confirmation at our General Chapter in August 1994.

These two projects, which are now at the stage of implementation in every country where we work, are:

- to develop and implement a Pastoral Plan for now and for the future. We were asked to "Choose our Future Together" and to keep a listening ear for the Spirit in this "Kairos" moment, a moment of grace for us, in order to reaffirm our relevance at this time of the history of the peoples with whom we work.
- to prepare a Pedagogical Guide that would enable us to deepen and transmit a Marian and missionary Spirituality of Thanksgiving.

What a wealth of hope to be shared with the People of God and with all peoples! This spirituality makes us aware of the action of God in today's world and it transforms us to such an extent that we cannot but commit ourselves that others may participate in the Hope of the Gospel.

OUR UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION

The Synod on the Consecrated Life held in Rome in the fall of 1994 will help us to continue our reflection in view of an increasingly meaningful commitment, one that is pregnant with hope. What is required of us, now as at the time of Mother Têtreault, is a solidly established identity, audacity and creativity. We are called as consecrated women to come together into one body and to stand "on the frontier" in order to discover the new paradigms of the world, of the Church and of the religious life. We are called to commit ourselves with the same fervour as those who came before us. Of course our life involves risk, it involves the unknown. But what challenges lie before us! What possibilities are open to us to turn to good account for people of various nations the gratuitousness of the faith we received, the gratuitousness of the Gospel and of hope and love. All this being done with competence and especially, with respect for the cultures in which we work.

Yes, we love our world, our Church and our planet... They are **sacred places** where we see the presence of the Lord. And we want to make our unique contribution, through what we are, in *Marian and missionary Thanksgiving*.

Walking in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, we want to provide a deeper consciousness - one that is also more adjusted to reality - of the mystery of Life and Love which throbs in our world, in our Church and on our planet.

We want to bear witness to the Gospel until all creation is

transformed into the fullness of life in Christ: **To be in the Church and in the world a perpetual Thanksgiving, in our own name and in that of all our sisters and brothers.**

AREAS OF COMMITMENT

Internationality, which is particular to us, also brings changes in the way we participate in the building of God's Kingdom today and in the future. We also see M.I.C. Sisters today in various continents, in the area of international and national communications as well as in the fields of education and health care, with the immigrants and the refugees. Our multicultural reality, as well as that of the cultures acquired by many of us through experience, is totally relevant in this respect.

There is ample space in our world for us to be with those who are in search of meaning, or involved in the defense of human rights, especially the rights of women and of ethnic minorities. We have our place in the promotion of justice and peace. Our spirituality of Thanksgiving makes it almost natural for us to be respectful

of and committed to nature and ecology. Youth is also one of our preferred areas of commitment. Is it not the hope of the future?

A HOPE-FILLED RESPONSE

Our response to today's needs are expressed in our Statements of Mission and Commitments. Together, in an earnest search for God's will for us today and tomorrow, we have gone through a discernment process on the needs and the cries of our world and on the ways we should respond to them communally within the Church. Each of the "Provinces" of the countries where we work has declared its own "Mission Statement" derived from this awareness, as well as the Commitments that will actualize this Statement. It is our particular way of taking up the challenge to bring to our world the audacity of Christian hope. Thanks to the Holy Spirit, these "Mission Statements" are a source of vitality and a breath of hope in our journey towards the third millennium.

(1) Quoted by Sister Helen Lombard, S.G.S., 1992, *Donum Dei* #34, p.92



M.I.C. Sisters chosen during the Chapter for leadership roles at the level of the Institute:
(Top row): Sr. Évangeline Plamondon, Superior General; Sr. Sylvia Dupuis, Vicar General; Sr. Maria Vie Chua, Assistant General; (2nd row): Sr. France Royer-Martel, Assistant General; Sr. Mésina Paulémon, Assistant General; Sr. Gisèle Leduc, Bursar General; Sr. Thérèse Lavoie, Secretary General

INSTITUTE OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS

MAJOR ORIENTATION 1994-2000: MOVED BY THE SPIRITUALITY OF THANKSGIVING,
TO RENEW THE DYNAMISM OF OUR COMMITMENT
AS CONSECRATED WOMEN FOR THE MISSION
IN THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD OF TODAY.

CANADA

In a spirit of thanksgiving, in the manner of Mary, and in faithfulness to our common mission, this is how we state our mission:

- Together, to be open to the Word of God and the cries of our pluralistic and multicultural society, in order to better cooperate with the missionary activity of the local Church and participate in the ad extra mission.

PROVINCE OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSION STATEMENTS:

MALAWI - ZAMBIA

In a Spirit of Thanksgiving and in fidelity to our founding charism we declare that our mission is:

- To be entirely focused on witnessing and proclaiming Christ to those who do not know Him and collaborating in the growth and maturation of our local Churches so that they become truly African and truly open to the universality of the Church.

PROVINCE OF OUR LADY OF AFRICA

CANADA

Engaged in the common mission of the Institute and giving importance to partnership with the laity at the heart of a pluralistic and multicultural society and of a Church called to a new evangelization, we declare that our mission today is:

- To live to the end of our days our religious consecration for the work of evangelization and missionary animation with the dynamism of thanksgiving in a Marian way.

PROVINCE OF OUR LADY OF THE MISSIONS

BOLIVIA - CHILE - PERU

Faithful to the call of Christ and to the charism of our Foundress, Délia Tétreault, our mission is:

- With Mary, in Thanksgiving, to commit ourselves with audacity to the "Missionary Hour"⁽¹⁾ of Latin America in order to give the Father sons and daughters who will praise His goodness.⁽²⁾

PROVINCE OF OUR LADY OF PEACE

1. Cf. Santo Domingo, #295

2. Cf. Letters of Délia Tétreault, Sept. 14th, 1916

CANADA

In the footsteps of our Foundress, Délia Tétreault, spirit-filled and praising God with a thankful heart we are called to:

- Be witnesses to Christ in a multicultural society;
- Proclaim the Good News through evangelization;
- Re-awaken the faith of a de-christianized and materialistic society.

VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA

HAITI

As witnesses of God's gratuitousness and hope, in a spirit of thanksgiving, with Mary, we want to:

- Make Jesus Christ known and loved by the non-Christians and the non-evangelized of our country, where the oppressed seek to be liberated;
- Participate in the missionary activity of the Church according to the vision of the New Evangelization within and outside our country.

PROVINCE OF OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP

S OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

HONG KONG

We declare that:

- In this time of fear and uncertainty in our society, we shall participate in the evangelizing mission of the local Church among non-Christians and Christians.
- In a spirit of thanksgiving, like Mary, we shall accompany them and encourage them to trust and to hope in the God of History.

PROVINCE MARY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

MADAGASCAR

In the midst of a people thirsting for truth, justice, freedom and democracy in an authentic *fihavanana* (road to communion), we declare that our mission in the Church is:

- In thanksgiving, with Mary, to make known Jesus Christ who liberates and to develop missionary dynamism.

DÉLIA-TÉTREAUPT PROVINCE

TAIWAN

Firmly rooted in these convictions and aware of the rich Chinese cultural background and of Taiwan's rapidly changing society, we participate in the Evangelizing activity of our local Church. Thus, we joyfully declare that our mission is:

- To proclaim Jesus Christ and his Good News to those who do not know Him
- by discovering with the people the action of God ever present in their midst, and by learning to live the Gospel values with them in creative and culturally relevant ways.
- To accompany the Christians in the deepening and sharing of their faith
- so that they may be empowered, as individuals and as faith communities, to actively bear witness to Jesus Christ and the Gospel.

PROVINCE OF OUR LADY OF THE VISITATION

PHILIPPINES

Immersed in a predominantly Catholic population yearning for the fullness of life in God, yet living the realities of widespread poverty, divisive conflicts, marginalized cultural minorities and the exodus of Filipino workers, we declare that our mission is:

- To evangelize the non-Christians and re-evangelize the Christians, in a spirit of Thanksgiving, wherever we are sent.

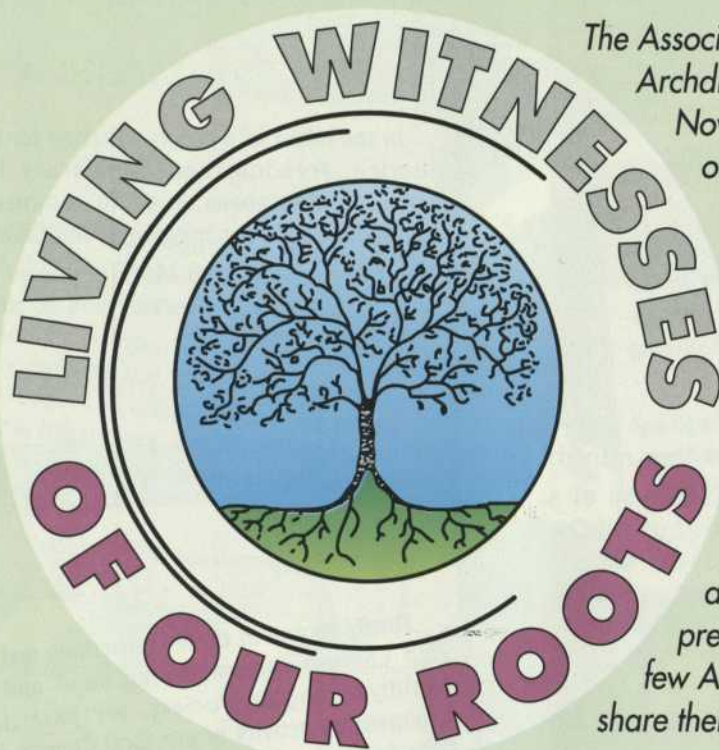
ST. JOSEPH PROVINCE

CUBA

We declare that our mission today is:

- To recognize and reveal the grace of God present in the world, so that our people may be reborn in the gratuitous love of the Father, participate in the Church's Mission and that, together, we may celebrate the feast of universal fraternity. ☐

REGION OF OUR LADY OF CHARITY



The Associates of religious communities of the Archdiocese of Montreal held a colloquium last November at St. Joseph's Oratory. The goal of this colloquium was "to live and get others to live an experience of Church". It was a joy for these religious communities to celebrate together with their Associates - men and women, single or married, eager to belong in order to participate. The Associates, on their part, shared how they felt in harmony of ideals with one particular religious family because of its charism and spirituality. Sr. Léonie Therrien presents the highlights of this event and a few Associates of our Community (ASMIC) share their personal motivations and aspirations.

By Léonie Therrien, M.I.C.

Like a star rising in the East, some six hundred Associates of 35 religious communities of the Archdiocese of Montreal rose up, the 1st weekend of November, and went to St. Joseph's Oratory to live and get others to live an experience of Church. "Living Witnesses of our Roots" was the main theme of this great gathering, which was the culmination of a whole year of intense preparation. Thanks to Sr. Jeannine Bussi res, S.P., initiator of the project, the committees went to work to prepare the upcoming event through the study of three documents: To Know our Roots, To Actualize our Roots, and To Vitalize our Roots. The weekend opened on the 4th of November with an evening of prayer organized by the Associates of the "Recluses Missionnaires Contemplatives"; this headed the Colloquium toward a successful completion.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

In an effort to live and get others to live an experience of Church, some time was spent identifying throughout the centuries the different religious communities founded under the inspiration and by the strength of the Spirit to respond to the needs of the times:

health care, education, social works, promotion of women, missionary outreach... Fr. Pierre Francoeur, C.S.V., placed his listeners in the proper context by painting a picture of each of the centuries in question.

What would society have been like over the centuries had not lay people moved into action in response to the cry of the little ones, of the poor and of the sick, to organize and ensure life?... Gradually, these groups of lay people were transformed into religious communities recognized by the Church. Those same religious communities were now happy to celebrate, during this weekend, the faithfulness of the Holy Spirit to the Church of Jesus Christ in their Associates, men and women, single or married, who came to knock on their doors requesting to belong in order to participate, as they felt in harmony of ideals with one particular religious family because of its charism and spirituality.

BEING AN ASSOCIATE OF A COMMUNITY: A CALL AND A MISSION

Fr. Gaston Pinard, C.S.V., defined most appropriately during this Colloquium what an Associate is..

- An Associate is a companion (*cum panis* = with... bread) who breaks with others the bread of friendship after making it together with them. The Associates hold the Congregation in their hearts and the Congregation holds them in its heart.
- To be an Associate is to join with another in communion, like a small section of an orange... It is to enter into a movement and into a state of unanimity. It is something of the order of physical and spiritual being.
- The Associate participates, so to speak, in the origins of the Congregation, in its history, destiny and mission, in its prophetic character, in its authority and charism, in its joys, longings and projects.

Finally, Fr. Pinard defined what an Associate essentially is:

- An Associate is a *lay person who belongs to and participates in* the Church and the Congregation by the seal of his or her Baptism and by a promise, and who answers the loving call of Christ in the world of today in a spirit of evangelization, inspired by the Holy Spirit. Such an Association is a new project for the religious life. For the Church of His Son, God the Father opens the religious life in a new way to the world. The Church enters into a new season of the religious life, a new springtime, a new Pentecost, a new Pasch. By divine calling, the Associates enter into the Church and become this Church of God. They owe it to themselves to respect and even enter into the charism of the founder or foundress and into that of the missionary action of the Church.

SHARING OF EXPERIENCES AND IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

Another important stage of this Colloquium was the grouping of Associates, first in inter-community, and then in single community groups. What richness there was in this sharing of experiences on one hand, and on the other hand, in this coming to awareness: the richness of entering into the charism, spirituality and common mission of an Institute or Congregation and of working out projects and new ideas for the future. There was a marvellous awakening and collaboration, which had to be recorded in the Acts of the Colloquium, for this meeting must not remain fruitless.

The offering of the Acts of the Colloquium during the closing Eucharist celebrated by Bishop Jude St-Antoine and, at the end of the Mass, the sending of the Associates to our world in need of evangelization, were two powerful signs that, together, they had just *lived and got others*

to live an experience of Church. The goal of the Colloquium had been fully reached!

Among those persons invited to give a witness during the Eucharist, Mr. Vincent Lacroix, an Associate of our Community (ASMIC), found the right words to express the dynamism which motivates him:

'Give me a foothold and I will lift the world', said Charles de Foucault. Nothing equals the strength that comes from an 'Association' such as the one I know with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, whose spirituality is one of thanksgiving with missionary and Marian colours according to the spirit of DéliaTétreault, foundress of the Institute. For us who live by this spirituality,... for me,... it is a support of primary importance today.

What do I get out of it?... The meetings we have at regular intervals encourage us to learn about Jesus and Mary and to make them known, and to recognize their beneficial action and presence in our lives. They enable us to do what we call the "consciousness examen" in order to discover the grace of God in action in our lives and to give Him thanks.

What have I gained from it?... I got to know Délia Tétreault, a woman, born in Marieville, Quebec, who led the Church of Canada into maturity by founding, in 1902, the first missionary community of Canadian origin and by requesting of the Canadian Bishops of the time, the foundation of the 'Société des Missions Étrangères', which came into existence in 1921. I am in awe at the sight of how the Holy Spirit worked in this woman, and through her all across the world. We know that at the time of the foundation, in the early years of this century, this Institute was given the entire world as its field of apostolate. I am inspired by her audacity, her faith and her courage which, at the turn of the century, sent hundreds of missionaries to



The ASMICs share in the M.I.C. spirituality of thanksgiving. Sr. Léonie Therrien (3rd left), Mr. Vincent Lacroix (1st left)



Together with their animators, young Associates (JASMIC) returning from Bolivia joyfully recall their missionary experience. Sr. Gaëtane Perron, M.I.C. (standing at right) - Coordinator of ASMIC and JASMIC in Canada.



Photo: M.I.C., Peru
For these JASMICs of Peru, being Associates is a call and a mission.



Photo: ASMIC, Canada
Louise and Robert Gauthier are happy and grateful to participate in the M.I.C. charism and mission.

far-away China for life. Let us recall what the means of communication were in those days... I always admire and am nourished by her writings - her numerous writings which are always an evangelical source from which we can draw during our meetings.

Such wonderment leads me to action. Today, I and other lay people become aware of the urgency and importance of being missionaries in our respective milieus by living a Christian life that raises questions around us. This gives us opportunities to share our faith and to question others. I think that as Associates of a missionary community we have a very specific mission. We must transmit the heritage of faith... as we received it. (...)"

When asked to put into words the spiritual experience they had lived that weekend, Robert and Louise Gauthier, ASMIC Associates for 11 years, put it in these terms:

Robert - I realized that it was not by chance that I was journeying with the M.I.C. Yes, after hearing about the various charisms, I really understood that my place is with you, M.I.C. Sisters. "To work for God's sacred interests, to give thanks for His blessings, and to do so for myself and for the whole world" is something which speaks to me, enlivens me and makes my life meaningful. When some of the participants presented their projects for the future to the assembly, this gave other Associates new ideas and helped them to find projects that are related to the charism of the Congregation with which they are associated.

Louise - I would like to thank the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception for allowing Robert and me to share in the spirituality of Mother Délia, and by this very fact, to have a common challenge and mission, that of

"Proclaiming the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ to those who do not know it". The definition of what is an Associate given by Fr. Pinard enlightened me; through the bond of my belonging to the community and participating in it, I become in some way a part of the community. I must therefore respect the charism of the Foundress and her missionary action just as an M.I.C. does. Thus my "life should be a perpetual hymn of thanksgiving" as Mother Délia requires. And I must follow her in her Marian spirituality of missionary thanksgiving.

During the Colloquium, we attended an exposé on the origins of the religious communities; this enabled us to know the charism of each one. I was very surprised when I realized that a multitude of social needs were filled by the fields of activity of each of the communities. We took part in a workshop on vitalizing our roots: M.I.C. and ASMIC. Here are the new ideas our group came up with:

- To proclaim Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him
- to create links in writing between ASMICs of different countries*
- to be partners in a more immediate way in two M.I.C. projects: the M.I.C. Missionary Press and ALPA (Welcoming and contacts for newly arrived people).

At the end of the Colloquium, all participants were invited to make their comments and to present the new projects that had been initiated during the Colloquium. A young 30-year-old woman shared how hopeful the gathering had made her feel for the future of her peers as Christians: highly educated people in quest of a spiritual life. The Colloquium made me discover that there is a multitude of Associates in the Archdiocese of Montreal, which represents a great human resource in our society. These Associates are prepared to invest in the Church of Montreal in order to spread *Joy, Love and Hope* among the poor, the destitute, the marginalized and all those in need. □

* The M.I.C. Institute has more than 200 adult Associates (ASMIC) and 17 young Associates (JASMIC). More than a hundred others are in the preparatory stage. We have Associates in Quebec, Madagascar, Haiti, Taiwan, Cuba, Peru, Bolivia and Chile. (Statistics, General Chapter 1994)



Photo: H. Turcotte, M.I.C.
In Canada, a good number of ASMIC members are from the Philippines. With them is their animator, Sr. Madeleine Delorme, M.I.C. (center).

Photos: E. O'Neill, M.I.C.



Mr. Roger Laroque, brother of Sr. Anne-Marie (Pont-Viau), gladly welcomes Sr. Jeanne Pelletier on her regular visit.

Sr. Jeanne shares sewing tips with a Peruvian friend.

Newsbriefs and Excerpts from Letters

CANADA

VOLUNTEER WORK KNOWS NO AGE!

After thirty-six years of missionary work in other countries - eleven years in Cuba, twenty years in Guatemala and five years in Peru - Sr. Jeanne Pelletier, M.I.C., still tries to put her talents and time at the service of people in her own homeland.

Having returned to Quebec in 1989, she serves wherever the need is most felt. Her collaboration is greatly appreciated in the Department of Gerontology at Christ the King Hospital when there are social activities for the elderly patients and at Courchesne Hospital where she accompanies the sick from one hospital to the other for their medical check-up and laboratory tests. Besides bringing the Holy Eucharist to the sick in their homes and visiting people who are alone, her knowledge of Spanish helps out of awkward situations more than one newly arrived person in the country. Indeed, Sister Jeanne hopes to pursue the mission joyfully "till the end of her days"!

Sr. Evelyn O'Neill, M.I.C.



"At your age?", I am asked. Does one grow old in time? After 65, does the heart muscle weaken? Mine has the momentum to go towards... Haiti! Don't worry, I have a recharger with me and that's allowed. I set time aside every day to be with the Lord and I let Him take charge. Hasn't Jesus Himself said: "I have come to bring fire to the earth, and how I wish it were already ablaze!" Lk 12,49. But this is not the fire used to light my cigarette; it is the Holy Spirit's flame enabling me to see others in the light of Jesus and to spread His warmth more effectively.

HAITI

BACK IN HAITI

In December 1994, Rachel Traversy, an M.I.C. Associate (ASMIC), left once again for Haiti. Before her departure, she expressed her motivations and best wishes to her family and friends.

Why do I go back? Someone called me and I responded. Not by chance though. I know and I understand. The signs are clear and I allow myself to be carried by the breath of the Holy Spirit. I respond with a joyful and sincere YES! I go... following God's will.



Rachel Traversy,
ASMIC

I ask you to kindly remember me in your prayers. This will be a sweet blessing to share with my adopted sisters and brothers. Together, we will work at the harvest. What a grace! The months spent in prayer at the school of Our Blessed Mother give me wings. Remember that I will be with you in spirit. I place my wishes for each one of you before Jesus and ask Mother Mary to bless you abundantly, according to your needs. My prayerful wishes will be wrapped in memories and trimmed with affection. Thanks to each and everyone for your fraternal support. If I could name all the blessings I have received, the list would be endless! Thanks, with all my heart! □

Rachel Traversy

RITES OF PASSAGE

By Jeannine Forcier, M.I.C.

The Church continually looks for ways to inculturate the faith by taking into account the customs and traditions of peoples. In Africa, there are particular rites that mark a person's passage from one phase of life to another. For us M.I.C.s, internationality and inculturation are integral aspects of the challenges and graces of our religious missionary life, which we want to nourish and cultivate. Sr. Jeannine Forcier describes the meaningful celebrations marking the entrance of our African aspirants to the postulancy and of the postulants to the novitiate.

ENTRANCE RITE TO THE POSTULANCY

An African rite of passage was adapted to our Celebration of the Word for the entrance of three aspirants to the Postulate. Midway into the chapel, a line of demarcation was drawn on the floor with white maize flour, a basic necessity in this part of Africa. The aspirants, standing on the far side of the line, were asked what they were seeking. They replied that they were seeking entrance into the adult world. Having been granted permission by the Provincial Superior with the words: "Come, and see", the three laid down at their feet the symbols of childhood which they were carrying and crossed over the demarcation line.

After a short dialogue between the Provincial Superior and the aspirants concerning the step to be taken, the latter received the medal of the Blessed Virgin Mary, symbol of the stage of formation they were about to begin. Together, the aspirants offered a prayer of consecration and then signed the 'ad hoc' register, confirming their entrance. All the Sisters present warmly welcomed the three new postulants, Agnes Mutemba, Cecilia Mzumara and Ruth Nyalaze.

Mrs. Elizabeth Mzumara, mother of Cecilia, one of the new postulants, then proceeded with the rite of passage in her role of counsellor and parent. She held in her hands symbols appropriate to this step: a *mtiko* (wooden spatula used to stir the maize meal

Photos: M.I.C., Malawi & Zambia



At Mzimba, Malawi, Srs. Suzanne Leclair and Jeannine Forcier warmly welcome the aspirants Cecilia, Agnes and Ruth.

The entrance to the postulancy incorporates elements of an African rite of passage - The three aspirants and Mrs. Mzumara, representing the parents.



In Chipata, Zambia, a twofold celebration: the entrance of Charity Zimba and Victoria Mwansa to the novitiate and the silver jubilee of Sr. Lise Lamarque. Together, they offer clay pots - symbols of their life - to the Lord.

when it is being cooked) and a *likezo* (wooden spoon the size of a saucer used to share the thick porridge or *sima*). After recalling the material use of these utensils, Mrs. Mzumara gave a Christian spiritual interpretation of the use of these same utensils applied to the life of the young women journeying toward religious life.

She explained that they were symbols of **service** - that of preparing spiritual food for those who hunger for God and used to share this food with the orphan, the poor, the wealthy, the labourers, the professionals, the young and the elderly. She mentioned Gospel values and attitudes needed to pursue the journey of religious life. After expressing her wishes to the postulants, she asked God to bless them, and Mary, our Blessed Mother, to accompany them. She then told the Sisters that she was commending these young women into our hands to assist them as they journeyed in the way of discernment so as to better know and accomplish God's will.

ENTRANCE RITE TO THE NOVITIATE

During the Celebration of the Word where the theme was "The Potter", an African rite of passage was introduced to mark the entrance to the Novitiate of our two

postulants, Charity Zimba and Victoria Mwansa. Students of the Homecraft and Leadership Centre led the procession into the chapel singing the hymn, 'You Are Chosen,' and dancing to the rhythm of drums and *visekesi* (reed and grain instruments). The postulants followed, each carrying an unbaked clay pot. With them was Sr. Lise Lamarche, who was celebrating her silver jubilee. She carried an earthen pot already baked and well decorated.

Sr. Suzanne Leclair, Provincial Superior, asked them what they were seeking and each one answered. The postulants showed their unbaked clay pots, explaining that they needed moulding and fashioning in order to become more Christlike, more according to the image of God and capable of doing His will. Sister Lise showed her decorated pot explaining how God had worked in her in the past 25 years and how she greatly desired that He continue beautifying her according to His will and dream for her. The three then handed over their pots to Sister Suzanne who laid them at the foot of the altar.

The postulants then sat on a reed mat. Mr. and Mrs. Phiri, a Zambian couple from Chipata dedicated to the Family Life Movement in the Diocese, represented the parents of the candidates for the Novitiate. They came forward carrying a small charcoal burner containing red hot embers. They took their places near the postulants.

Mrs. Phiri explained to

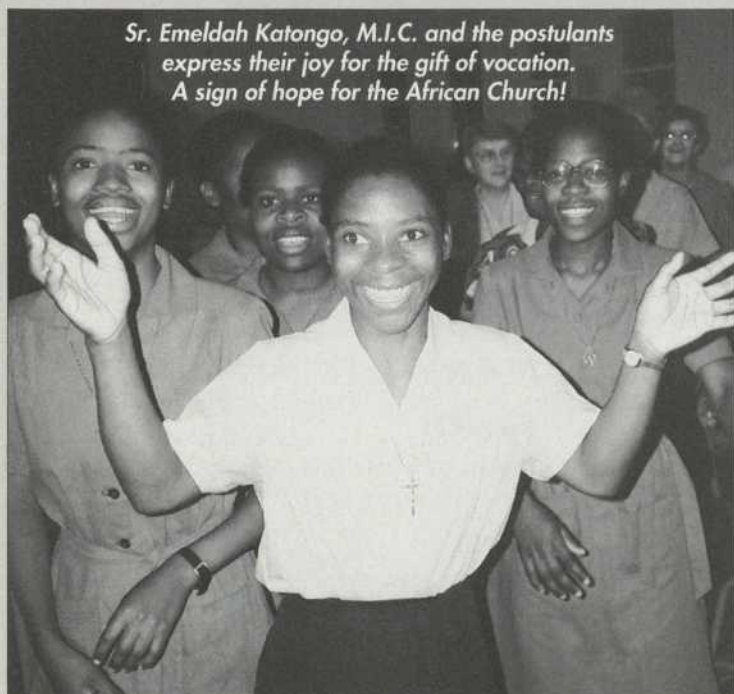
them the properties of fire in the baking of clay pots. She told them that God uses people and events to help Him fashion pots and vases. The firing of the pots is also done through the intermediary of people and events. So it is with us in our lives. Everything contributes to the solidifying and beautifying of a person, even suffering, hardships, trials and challenges if that person allows herself to be moulded and fired. It is a long process and the Novitiate years are a good initiation. She advised the novices to surrender themselves entirely to God, the Divine Potter. She encouraged them to be open and flexible in the hands of Sister Yolanda Oducado, M.I.C., Directress of the Novitiate, who would accompany and guide them along the way.

Mr. Phiri shared glimpses of their journey as a couple, stressing particularly the values of openness, trust, dialogue, forgiveness and reconciliation. He then made a parallel with the journey Charity and Victoria were about to undertake and their need for these same values. He informed Sister Yolanda about certain African cultural traits so that as their spiritual mother, she might understand the African novices and guide them with justice and compassion.

Charity and Victoria left the chapel and came back wearing the novices' dress. Each answered the questions put to them by the Provincial Superior and proceeded to read their Act of Consecration. They received a wooden Cross, symbol of Christ's love for them and of their acceptance of the cross in their lives; a chain and medal of the Immaculate Conception, symbol of their belonging to the M.I.C. Institute, and a white veil, symbol of their entrance into religious life.

All the Sisters welcomed the new novices. The Celebration of the Word continued with hymns, Scripture readings and intercessory prayers. A vibrant Magnificat concluded this memorable event! □

Sr. Emeldah Katongo, M.I.C. and the postulants express their joy for the gift of vocation. A sign of hope for the African Church!



M.I.C.s IN FORMATION:

POSTULANTS			
NOVICES			
SCOLASTICS			
COUNTRY			
CANADA	2		
CUBA	3	4	2
HONG KONG		1	
TAIWAN		2	
PHILIPPINES	7	3	
HAITI	6	3	5
BOLIVIA	2		1
CHILE	3		
PERU	1	3	2
MALAWI			3
ZAMBIA	2	2	
MADAGASCAR	7	3	3
TOTAL:	33	21	16

M.I.C. STATISTICS DECEMBER 1994



Today, there are M.I.C. Sisters from 17 countries, living the mission in 15 different countries. - Sr. Atsuko Sagara, M.I.C. from Japan works in the Philippines.

Photo: T. Lortie, M.I.C.

Before making their final commitment, M.I.C.s from different countries spend a year of formation at the International Scholasticate in Longueuil, Quebec.



Photo: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

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THANK YOU FOR YOUR SOLIDARITY

M.I.C. personnel come from places where the missionaries have sown seeds - Sr. Emmanuela Vincent from Haiti shares tender moments with Srs. Marie-Paule Blanchet and Helene De Serres in Pont Viau.



1995 MISSIONARY INTENTIONS

MARCH

God of life, may the young Churches of Africa grow ever more alive in their faith and missionary zeal.

APRIL

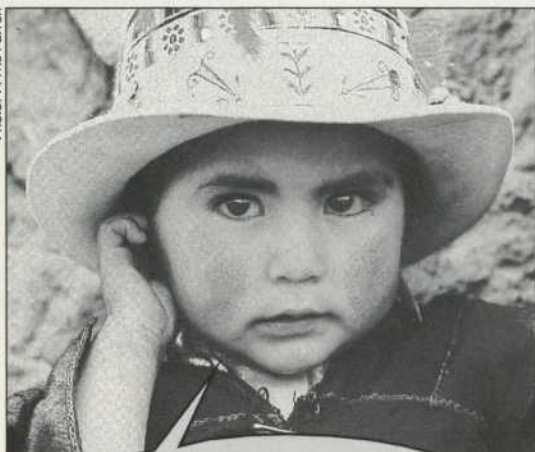
Lord Jesus, in this Year of Tolerance proclaimed by the United Nations, may your Spirit deepen in the Churches and in society the respect of beliefs and convictions.

INTERACTION

We're at the age of high technology and ultramodern means of communication. But how about joining in this simple "interActivity"!

Responding to the mini-quiz and contest question below is a way to interAct with us at MIC MISSION NEWS!

Photo: P. Mc Farren



Match each definition in A with the corresponding word in B:

A.

1. Assembly of priests convened by the bishop to deliberate on matters pertaining to the diocese or the universal Church - gathering in Rome around a theme of current interest, for a certain number of bishops convened by the Pope. Competent people, men and women, are also invited. ☐
2. Assembly of religious - men and women - or canons to deliberate on matters concerning their community. ☐
3. Assembly of bishops and theologians convened by the Pope to take a stand on dogmatic, moral or disciplinary questions. ☐
4. Organized debate organized with a number of participants smaller than for a congress. ☐
5. Group of people united in view of a determined goal. ☐

B.

- a) Colloquium
- b) Synod
- c) Council
- d) Association
- e) Chapter

Responses on page 31

Contest:
WHAT DO THE
INITIALS **ASMIC**
STAND FOR?

SEND
THE ANSWER TO THIS
QUESTION BEFORE
APRIL 28, 1995:

PRIZES!

Photo: Agency, Bolivia



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RAFFLE: MAY 1st 1995- 2 WINNERS
NAMES WILL APPEAR IN THE MAY-JUNE 1995 ISSUE.

- BOOK ON DÉLIA TÉTREULT OR 'COMIC STRIPS' (FOR CHILDREN) ON DÉLIA TÉTREULT
- STATIONERY, BOOKMARKS OR GREETING CARDS WITH SAYINGS OF DÉLIA TÉTREULT.

COMPLIMENTS OF THE OFFICE OF THE CAUSE OF DÉLIA-TÉTREULT.

Called Home by the Father

Photo: J.-d'A. Turcotte



SISTER MARIA VACHON, M.I.C.
(SAINT-LÉONIDAS)

On this lovely feast of All Saints Day, when the Church celebrates the victory of God's elect, our dear Sister Maria quietly left us to join the multitude of our brothers and sisters who, like her, have proclaimed Jesus Christ along their life's journey. Characterized by a deep spirit of faith coupled with a strong will, Sister Maria overcame the trials along her way by surrendering silently to the will of God to whom she had dedicated her whole life.

Born in Saint-Joseph de Beauce, on January 18, 1915, she studied with the Sisters of Charity of Quebec. She taught for a few years and joined our Institute on August 8, 1938. For 15 years, she worked at the Office of the Pontifical Missionary Works for Children in Quebec and Montreal, giving herself totally to the task in a fully apostolic spirit. In 1968 she was called to collaborate at the General Secretariat, this time in the field of statistics. In 1980, besides giving language courses to immigrants in Quebec, she did the accounting at our M.I.C. Center and at the Chinese Mission. She also devoted some of her time to a few handicapped people.

Sister Maria spent her whole missionary life in Canada, and during a good part of it, was confined behind a desk. It was hard for her to give up her dream of bringing the Gospel to far-away missions. Year after year she convinced herself that one can be a missionary everywhere by being faithful to God's Will. Gifted with a strong personality, a sensitivity filled with gentleness and an attentive and generous charity, she served with joy and availability the cause of the missionary Church. A strong Marian devotion, permeated with simplicity and trust, sustained her in her faith. Her rosary was always close at hand! She died at the M.I.C. residence in Verchères, on November 1, 1994 at the age of 79 having lived 56 years in religious life. □



SISTER BERTHE DÉSAULNIERS, M.I.C.
(MARIE-LOUISE-DE-JÉSUS)

Sister Berthe's life, which spans almost the whole of the 20th century, was made up of joys and trials, fidelity and courage, through periods of darkness and light. Born in Shawinigan Falls on April 9, 1906, she studied with the Sisters of Providence in St. Ursule and obtained her teaching certificate from the Ursulines of Trois-Rivières. Feeling called to far-away missions and desiring to dedicate her life to the evangelization of non-Christians, she joined our Institute on August 2, 1924. However, as stated in the Scriptures, "God's ways are not always our ways..." Sister Berthe's whole missionary life would be spent within the limits of Quebec and divided into two long periods: twenty years of "public life", followed by half a century of "hidden life"...

From 1927 to 1947, Sister Berthe visited towns and villages of our beautiful Province to make young students aware of the Pontifical Works of the Holy Childhood and Propagation of the Faith. Her warm and convincing words touched the hearts of her young listeners and disposed them to fraternal sharing. Families were also the object of her apostolic zeal. Promoting our publication, LE PRECURSEUR, she visited thousands of homes to solicit subscriptions and to arouse interest in our missions of the Far-East which were then in full expansion. Having accomplished this mission, she was called upon for various internal services at the Mother House and in our houses of Joliette, Trois-Rivières, Quebec and Pont-Viau: care of the sick, closed retreats, library work. Being of a generous nature, Sister Berthe gave herself unsparingly everywhere!

A woman of great faith, strongly attached to tradition, wishing to do God's will, grateful for the least blessing from God and the least attention received from her companions, she loved to repeat on all occasions: "How good is the good Lord!..." To a companion who paid her a last visit the night she was called to her eternal reward, she said: "Thanksgiving is my vocation!" She died at Délia-Tétreault Pavilion in Pont-Viau on December 10, 1994, at the age of 88 after 70 years of religious life. □

Cécile Legault, M.I.C., Necrologist

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

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THE GENERALATE & MISSION PROCURE
121 Maplewood Avenue
Outremont, Qc Canada
H2V 2M2

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314, Chemin Côte Ste-Catherine
Outremont, Qc Canada
H2V 2B4

**OFFICE OF THE CAUSE OF
DÉLIA-TÉTREAU**
100 Place Juge Desnoyers
Pont Viau, Laval, Qc, Canada
H7G 1A4

AFRICA

PROVINCIAL HOUSE
P.O. Box 47, Mzimba
Malawi, Central Africa

CUBA

CALLE 146, No 904 - ENTRE 9 Y 11
Mariano 16, Ciudad de la Habana
Cuba, 12100

HAITI

MAISON PROVINCIALE (DELMAS)
C.P. 1085, Port-au-Prince
Haïti, Les Antilles

HONG KONG

PROVINCIAL HOUSE
Good Hope Convent
381, Jat's Incline
Kowloon, Hong Kong

JAPAN

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

MADAGASCAR

Maison Provinciale
Lot 11-J-4 bis, Ivandry
Antananarivo, Madagascar 101

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

SOUTH AMERICA

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Francisco de Orellana 338
Lima 5
Perú, America del Sur

TAIWAN

Provincial House
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Taipei 106, Taiwan, R.O.C.



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Peru: At a retreat for young
women from Huancayo,
Pucallpa and Lima

Photo: J. Baily, M.I.C.

With Hope

*Looking toward the third millennium, we turn with special
affection to young people.*

*We hope that they will be firmly united to Jesus Christ with
conviction and enthusiasm, especially in the consecrated life.*

*May they be able to bring the treasure of the Gospel
courageously to tomorrow's world.*

*To you, dear young people, who love to dream, we propose our
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