

MIC MISSION NEWS

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1998



IN THE PHILIPPINES...

A large photograph of a woman and four children. The woman, wearing a blue and white polka-dot shirt and a plaid baseball cap, stands behind the children. The four children, three boys and one girl, are sitting on the ground in front of her. They are all smiling and looking towards the camera. In the background, there is a large white church with a prominent dome and a green fence. The scene is set outdoors with trees and hills in the distance.

YOUTH AND MISSION

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Fabiola Cardenas and young Haitians

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VOICES OF COMMITTED YOUTH

Does being young
mean waiting to get old?
Are adults genuinely
concerned about us?
Can we actually make
a difference in the world?
Is there a place for us
in our Church and in society?

These questions, asked by young people from one generation to another, are still being asked by today's youth. Their generation is involved in a search for material necessities and even more, for a meaningful life and goals that will challenge their generosity. Come and see... Jesus extended this invitation when two followers of John the Baptist asked Him, Master, where do you stay? This was also the Holy Father's invitation to the youth of the world at the 12th World Youth Day held in Paris last summer.

As members of the Church, young people want to take part in, and share joint responsibility for bringing God's love to all peoples. They discover the Church in their families, in their parishes, in catecheses, in movements where there is an experience of prayer, solidarity and sharing. They recognize that parish activities, youth movements and mission projects provide a unique environment where they can experience community and its missionary dimension. Through their personal commitment, they become more aware of their responsibilities in the mission of the Church, particularly in witnessing to God's loving presence in the midst of their families, their own peers and the poor.

All these elements enliven the varied experiences of the young people whose sharings we are pleased to feature in this issue of our magazine. We feel privileged to receive and recount their reflections, especially as they seek to discover answers to their questions. Their involvement confirms the important place they occupy in our world today, a world marked by an ever intense solidarity and open fraternal sharing. We rejoice with these committed young people as they disclose to us, in simplicity and truth, the inner wealth and beauty of their hearts and spirits. Listening intently to them, we can echo and make our very own the oft-repeated refrain that permeate their sharings: I had such a wonderful feeling... the feeling that I could change the world only by being 'there'! □

Ma. Anthea Raso, M.I.C.

A Call Ever New



A new generation expresses the desire to meet Christ. Peru

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

In the Church, the presence of young people is a great treasure and a source of vitality for the whole Christian community. At the World Youth Day (WYD) event held in Paris last August, young Catholics, representing their peers from 130 countries, gathered to strengthen their will to build a more caring world and a more peaceful future. This event marked a new step in the grand journey which John Paul II makes with young people for the past 12 years. At this vast gathering, the Pope addressed an ever renewed call to the youth, a call echoed by pastors and concerned adults the world over.

THE CHURCH IS COUNTING ON YOUTH

Dear young people, you have within yourselves the extraordinary capacity of being gift, of giving love and of showing solidarity. The Lord wishes to strengthen this immense generosity which animates your hearts. I invite you to draw from the spring of life which is Christ, in order to discover, each day, ways of serving your brothers and sisters in the midst of the society in which you must assume your

responsibilities as men and women and as believers. In the social, scientific and technical fields, humanity needs you. Take care never to cease perfecting your professional skills, so as to fulfill your tasks with competence. At the same time, do not neglect to deepen your faith, in order to shed light upon every decision made in your personal life and in your collaboration for the good of your brothers and sisters.

Love and service make our lives meaningful and beautiful because we know why and to whom we are committed. By means of your apostolate you offer to your brothers and sisters the Gospel of Love. Wherever giving witness is difficult or impossible in a world which rejects it, you make Christ present by your attitude, because your actions are in harmony with the teaching of the One whom you proclaim.

The Church believes in you and counts on you to be witnesses to the Risen Lord throughout your life. Look to Christ in order to accomplish the mission which the Lord entrusts to you in the world, either as committed lay persons or in the consecrated life. By reflecting on your daily lives and by sharing your experiences, you will feel the presence of God who gently accompanies you... Help one another to affirm your faith and to be the apostles of the Year 2000, reminding the world that the Lord is inviting us to share in His joy and that true happiness lies in giving oneself out of love for others! Play your part in the life of the Church which needs your youth and energy! □

John Paul II



Photo: G. Perron, M.I.C.

Canada - Catechesis for children. Recognizing the youth as active subjects of evangelization

THE PLACE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CHURCH



Youth Ministry - Cuba. These young people live their Christian commitment in society and participate in its renewal.

To enable our youth to take their place in the Church, many people have a key role to play: parents, educators, those responsible for Christian communities and movements.

In the Church, the place that we have the responsibility to offer to young people depends first of all on our attitude towards them and on the place we make for them in our hearts and minds. We often consider the young in a negative way. We notice their absence at church, we are shocked by their culture, we are scandalized by their different behaviour. Not to mention that often, without trying to find the causes of such situations, we quickly make generalizations and fail to appreciate the true worth of their qualities, their commitments, their achievements.

If we make room for them in our

hearts, we will recognize their authenticity, their search for meaning which drives them on, their desire for peace which they nourish, their sense of compassion and of solidarity which they cultivate, their concern for the environment which mobilizes them, the dynamism and creativity of which they are capable. They will take their place in society and in the Church insofar as we go to meet them, insofar as we listen to them, insofar as we allow them to speak, insofar as we live in partnership with them, thereby recognizing them as active subjects of a social renewal and of evangelization.

The place of youth in the Church is built upon the places and networks they already occupy both on the social and ecclesial levels. The attention we give them can help us discover that they already have their place in the Church in projects where they combine fraternity and commitment. A renewed youth ministry will allow them to attain a coherence that will blend their fraternity and commitment to a faith that is proclaimed and celebrated.

From now until then, the routes we offer them to take will be paths of hope. Provided that parish, school, family and organizations collaborate together to make this happen. The future of the parish, school, Christian family and youth organizations depends on this new alliance.

What place is to be given to young people in our Church? The very place that Christ Jesus sets before them. *Come and see*, He said to those seeking and asking Him: *Are you the one who is to come? You are the Church*, John Paul II told the youth gathered at the Olympic Stadium in Montreal in 1984. The youth will take their place in the Church if the Church renews herself along with them, in the freshness and truth of the Gospel.

History reveals how young people whose lives were permeated by the Gospel, such as a Francis of Assisi, a Thérèse of Lisieux, a Frederic Ozanam, contributed to the renewal of the Church and to the commitment of young people to the service of the Kingdom of God. The youth of today are not incapable of great adventures if, with them, we dare to live as the Church. □

Jacques Berthelet, c.s.v.
Bishop of Saint-Jean-Longueuil



Values the youth cultivate: solidarity and presence to others.

(Center, l. to r.):

Andréanne Roy,

Sophia Boissonneault,

Michèle Duchesneau

at Siapo, Philippines

Photo: M.I.C. Philippines

Youth Day in Japan

BY KESAYO SATO, M.I.C.

For young people, the World Youth Day event provides a deep experience of faith, fraternity and commitment. The Church mobilizes itself for them, with them and through them. But what happens afterwards? What pathways are offered so that the young may continue to make headway? Sr. Kesayo Sato, who works with young people in Japan, accompanied a delegation to the WYD of Manila in 1995. She now relates the follow-up of this youth gathering.

We were truly inspired and energized by the exceptional World Youth Day event in Manila. This experience helped us to become aware ever more of our mission. We were sent back to our country to spread God's message of love. Upon returning to Japan, a movement was initiated to continue the impetus and to help us go on further.

JOURNEY TOWARDS LIBERTY

Upon the initiative of Fr. Masahide Haresaku, nearly thirty clubs were formed. A new venue was offered for Catholic Japanese youth to meet and share, particularly on the Gospel. A revival of life in each diocese, parish and group would thus be felt,

thanks to the evangelization of the youth. The experience offered young people the following objectives: to keep in mind the fact of diversity and live out service and tolerance in their own milieu with an evangelical spirit; to share

and spread Gospel values; to build in faith a solid network where relationships are valued.

With Sister Mitsuko Sato, a religious of Marie-Auxiliatrice, Atsushi Tamaru, S.J. seminarian and young lay people: Seiko So, Shuji Karube, Kyoko Ono, Chika Takamie, and Chie Iwata, we all joined in to set in motion the new club *Journey Towards Liberty*. Since then, we have been meeting

twice a month. We want to experience true liberty and grow in openness to others. We seek to be ever alert to the spirit of the Gospel and together we learn to actualize it. Since we wish to become disciples and evangelizers,



*Members of the club Journey Towards Liberty (l. to r.):
1st row - Sr. Urusika, Kyoko Ono, Seiko So, Chie Iwata, Sr. Kesayo Sato;
2nd row - Sr. Mitsuko Sato, Atsushi Tamaru, Jesuit seminarian, Shuji Karube*



Club members continue their faith journey together through prayer and sharing encounters.

while also preparing for the Great Jubilee Year 2000, we reflect deeply on God's call stemming from this special event.

AN INITIAL STEP

The first assembly of the different clubs was held at the Saitama prefecture from the 12th to the 16th of September, 1996. This being the initial gathering of its kind for interested young Catholics in Japan, more than 400 youth from all parts of the country participated. Among them were about fifty from the Philippines, Korea, Malaysia, India and Pakistan.

At this assembly, our club participated actively and made a rich prayer experience. Thanks to the collaboration of Mr. Uematsu, an Anglican member from the Taize group, a prayer hall was set up, and remained open for 24 hours. At the start, few people came to pray but they became more and more numerous the following days. The hall was thus filled with young people at prayer, even to 11 o'clock at night. The thought of all those others drawing away from the Church or showing little interest in it contrasted with the profiles of these prayerful youth - the hope of the Catholic Church of Japan. I felt very strongly that my mission was to carry on journeying and collaborating with them in the club, *Journey Towards Liberty*.

The daily Eucharist was marvellous. The young participants were surprised to live such Eucharistic celebrations so different from those experienced in their own parishes. One wrote: *I realized that it wasn't only the fact of attending the Eucharist that mattered but rather the offering of our praise and thanksgiving together. I felt very comfortable and*



Young people discover the paths of true freedom through the Gospel.
Kyoko Ono (1st l.), Lorna Erickson, M.I.C., Filipina (r.)

Photos: M.I.C., Japan

was touched by the participation of the priests and young people from different countries. The songs, heard for the first time, were filled with melody and newness. Our last Eucharistic celebration had as theme: The Send-Off. And I said to myself: Upon returning to my parish, I shall teach these songs to the members of the choir I direct. Uniting hearts through music will be the starting point of my send-off. I was impressed by the words of Cardinal Shirayani who chose the image of the drop of water to allude to who we are... I felt that though I am but a tiny drop of water in the ocean, this drop of water is in the ocean of God and I am in solidarity with countless other people. I felt this all through the gathering and am most happy and grateful for the gifts received. It is difficult for me to always keep this sentiment in my daily life but the Youth Day experience sustains me and I wish to continue journeying with courage.

AN EXPERIENCE OF PRAYER AND SHARING

In the course of this vast gathering, our group was invited to help the participants live an experience of prayer and sharing. We chose to present a Gospel narration: the encounter of Jesus with the rich young man. This is how this particular episode in the life of Jesus brought valuable

lessons of true liberty to Kyoko Ono:

A short presentation of the last scene of the novel Quo Vadis was made showing the apostle Peter fleeing from Rome where the persecution against the Christians was raging. Along the way, Christ, surrounded by light, appears to him. Peter asks him: QUO VADIS, DOMINE? Where are you go-

ing, Master? And Christ answers: To Rome. For if you abandon my people, I shall go to Rome to be crucified once again. Upon hearing this, Peter then returns to Rome.

The rich young man attempts to meet Jesus and asks what he should do to become perfect. Jesus answers: Leave everything and come follow me. But hearing these words, the young man leaves very sadly. I've always envied this rich young man called directly by Jesus and I was disappointed to see him go off without responding to Jesus' invitation. Today, like the apostle Peter, I want to follow Jesus while asking him the same question: Lord, where are you going? When this thought floods my heart, I feel deep happiness. Up to now, I had vaguely thought that freedom consisted in doing what I wanted. I realize that true freedom lies in desiring what God desires and in accomplishing it. Although true liberty is difficult to achieve, this discovery fills me with immeasurable joy and confidence.

The gathering in Tokyo last October 10-11, attended by 70 participants, unfolded itself in the same manner. Thus, like seeds yet tiny and fragile, members of the various Youth Clubs continue their faith journey, seeking to bring about the great project of God on Japanese soil. □

More Than Just a Trip...



IN COLLABORATION

Action-Jeunesse is a youth group rooted in and committed to the Church of Quebec. This dynamic group allows itself to be questioned by Gospel values and looks forward to a world without frontiers. Last August, in response to the invitation of John Paul II, the members participated in the immense youth gathering in Paris. Mario Dufour, c.s.r., pastor of Saint-Roch Parish in Quebec, introduces the group to us. On their part, the young people relate what captivated them during their extraordinary sojourn in France.

Distance matters little for the young people who accepted the invitation of John Paul II. They want to become Church, to team up and be part of people on the move. Proclaiming themselves as Catholics, they are thus open to the world, prepared to go beyond differences and ready to be identified with and to relate with their peers from other countries.

The group *Action-Jeunesse* has as prime mover a young woman originating from Ethiopia, rightly proud to belong to our Church. Gifted with the ability to assemble, to motivate, to question, to move, she sees far and wide. Hayat Hassan Ali has sought out the best potentials in her peers and together, they have embarked in this Church adventure. In 1995, she participated in the World Youth Day in Manila, Philippines, with 22 young people from Quebec. With the help of Alier Marrero, a

young Canadian from Cuba, she guided their steps in an initiation on the mission presented by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (M.I.C.) in the Philippines. Hayat then continued her journey to Quebec, while Alier carried on to Santo Domingo where he is completing his medical studies. She invited other young people to this new faith adventure in Paris, while he prepared a group in the Dominican Republic. And the teaming-up project came about. The two groups journeyed together to the World Youth Day in Paris. There is the Church, our Church!

*Mario Dufour, Pastor
St-Roch Parish, Quebec*

PREPARING FOR WYD

To participate in the World Youth Day event is a dream that young people have made at one time or



The Action-Jeunesse group. Mario Dubois, c.s.r., (1st row, 1st l.), Hayat Hassan Ali, (2nd row, 2nd l.) Madeleine Rochette, c.n.d., (3rd row, 3rd r.) and Yvonne Pealy, c.n.d. (3rd row, 1st r.) accompanied this Quebec delegation.

another, Yet for many reasons, this dream never became a reality. Our youth group, *Action- Jeunesse*, had the privilege to experience this event and soon understood that partaking in the WYD was much more than a trip to France. It was to be for us a pilgrimage... a spiritual and multicultural experience.

All the group members showed great determination to find the means of sharing in this great event. For months, we prepared ourselves together spiritually, physically and financially. Responding to the invitation of John Paul II who chose the theme of this rendezvous: *Come and See*, we found ourselves in the midst of hundreds of thousands of other youths to express our faith and to live an exceptional experience of fraternity. What a stimulus to action!

We did not wish to journey by ourselves alone. Since we wanted to give a dimension of welcome and sharing to our journey, we invited eight young people from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, to join us. They arrived in Quebec at the beginning of August. In no time, we merged into one group and our two flags were unfurled on high together.

PLACES OF PRAYER AND FRATERNITY

Upon our arrival in Paris on the 9th of August, 1997, we grasped the tone of the WYD of France. We soon discovered the faces of faith and of prayer in spots of famous pilgrimages: the Chapel of the Rue du Bac dedicated to Mary and the Sacred-Heart Church of Montmartre. In

these places rich with souvenirs, each one could remain recollected and pray.

Each WYD group organized their itinerary according to their own interests and tastes, always placing the emphasis on sharing and prayer. Our group chose to spend a few days at the Monastery of Rimont with the Brothers and Sisters of the Community of St. John. Our immersion in this environment of the contemplative life allowed us to journey towards a stronger faith. It was an important preparation to what awaited us in the following days. With our guides - Brother Marie-Stéphane, Brother Grégoire and Sister Véronique, we joined the monks at prayer and shared the Word of God with them. We followed several catecheses, experienced silence in the cloister and even shared meals with the members of this religious community.

Our three guides accompanied us on our visits to several sanctuaries and old churches renowned for their architecture and history: Cluny, Paray-le-Monial... We had the great joy of going to Taizé. Although brief, this stay marked us deeply. The prayerful atmosphere and our meeting there with people of all cultures and religions were very significant! Though at the heart of this milieu isolated from the world, we learned to open ourselves to events taking place in different countries. We celebrated together with melodies and musical instruments unknown to most of us. And especially, we made friends with those whom we wished to remain in contact.



How wonderful to see the Church in its diversity and unity!

IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF MARGUERITE BOURGEOYS

Our pilgrimage involved a second part: a visit to the Diocese of Troy, birthplace of St. Marguerite Bourgeoy who came to Canada in the middle of the 17th century, at the time of the foundation of Montreal. While visiting the famous city of Troy, we have had the opportunity to discover places which marked the life of this great missionary, co-foundress of Montreal and foundress of the first Canadian religious Community, the Congregation de Notre Dame (C.N.D.). It was a truly exceptional event for us, especially as we were accompanied by Sr. Yvonne Pealy and Sr. Madeleine Rochette, members of this Community. We later joined a group of about 400 other young pilgrims who had also chosen to spend a few days in this diocese. Accommodated in different areas by French families who were extremely welcoming, we learned something about the French culture as well as the social and religious situation of the country. This visit allowed us to complete our immediate preparation for the grand meeting with the Pope in Paris.

A FESTIVE CITY

This great rendezvous to which hundreds of thousands of youths responded, was the primary object of our presence in Paris. Before departing from Quebec, during the send-off Mass, Bishop Maurice Couture had told us: *It is not so much the Pope that you are going to meet. You will encounter Jesus Christ.* That's exactly what happened. We allowed ourselves to be touched, we have taken a step, a journey. In the depth of our own heart, each one can point out exactly where the resonance was at its peak during this week of sharing, of praying and of celebration.

For some, the strongest moment was the feeling of being immersed in a vast *cathedral of light* amidst the 750,000 youth who were at the vigil during which John Paul II baptized and confirmed ten young persons coming from the five continents. For others, it was the amazing atmosphere of contemplation preceding the vigil. Others recalled the hearty welcome given to the Pope, others the enthusiasm of the throngs of young people resounding through their songs in the streets and in the subway of Paris. Some were impressed especially by the activities of the youth festival where all forms of art were exploited: various religious spectacles, evenings of prayer, conferences and testimonies.

But if souvenirs take on a different significance for each one of us, they are strong moments never to be forgotten. How can one possibly forget the

thunderous response of the crowd of youth upon hearing: *You are the future and hope of the world!* or else, *The Church has confidence in you!* or still, *Be witnesses to the Gospel, be disciples and witnesses of Christ!* How can one not remember this incomparable experience of standing in the midst of a throng of young Christians, all alike, when so often we feel isolated in our respective milieus? One of the young women in the group expressed her experience thus: *This pilgrimage has been a confirmation of my faith; it is but the beginning of something great. I am prepared to witness by it.*

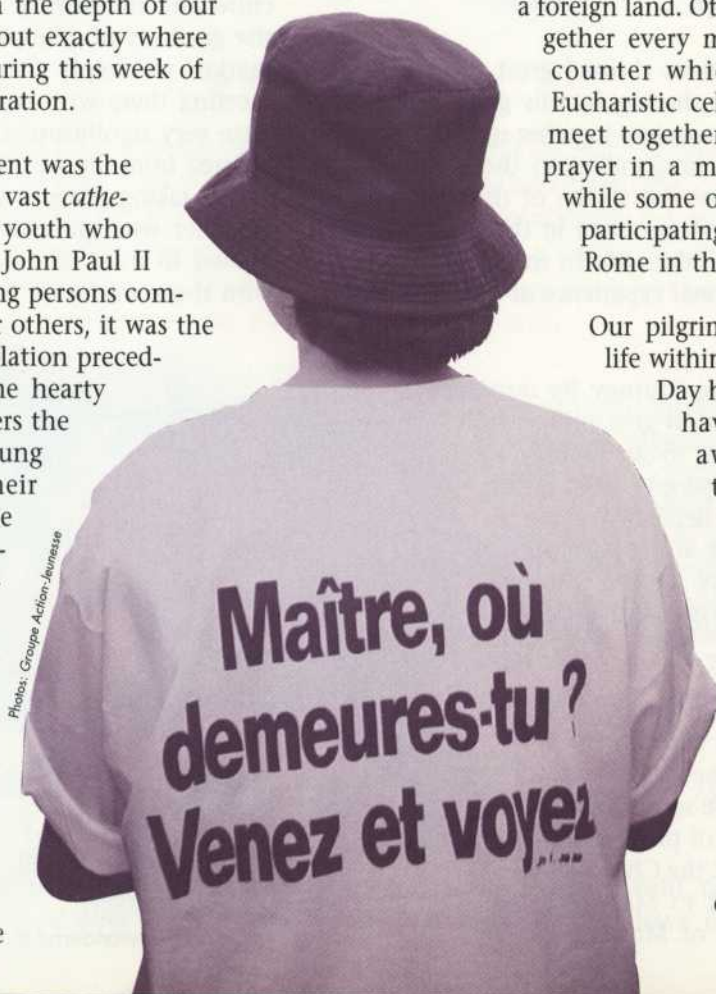
Then came the time of going back to our respective milieus where work or studies awaited us. Before parting, we offered a prayer of thanksgiving in a corner at Mirabel airport. Though we parted with regret, bonds of prayer and friendship continue to unite us.

AND AFTERWARDS?

Such a deep experience must be followed by tomorrow... During our first meeting, we exchanged photos and souvenirs. Then we chose diverse ways of ensuring a follow-up to the WYD in France. A small group will meet together periodically to share their faith. Others commit themselves to give witness of their WYD experience to their fellow-parishioners or to the religious communities who have supported them. Others will intensify their participation by the preparation of special liturgies in their parish. Some were getting ready to live a missionary project in their country or in a foreign land. Others will also come together every month for a meal encounter which will end with a Eucharistic celebration. Others will meet together in adoration or in prayer in a monastic environment while some of us already dream of participating in the next WYD in Rome in the year 2000.

Our pilgrimage stirred up much life within us. The World Youth Day has just begun... for we haven't as yet become aware of everything that this deep experience has offered us. The flame ablaze in our hearts will not be smothered. On the contrary, it will make us better channels of peace and witnesses of love in the milieus where we are! □

Groupe Action-Jeunesse,
Quebec



Photos: Groupe Action-Jeunesse

They Opened Their Hearts To Us

IN COLLABORATION

Summer '97! Eighteen young women from Quebec, members of the Groupe Solidarité-Haïti, committed themselves to an experience of friendship and sharing with the Haitian people. Five intense weeks of discoveries and enriching experiences! They share with us vivid memories treasured in their hearts ...

To ensure a smooth landing at Port-au-Prince, the group prepared for this mission experience with care. During the year, activities on formation and financing mobilized the participants and the M.I.C. Sisters involved in this project: Srs. Jeannine Bélair, Gaétane Perron and Jeanne-Françoise Alabré, Haitian, presently studying in Montreal. Days of information to become familiar with the reality that awaited them, allowed each young woman to foresee the luggage - psychological, professional and spiritual - required for the journey. In the course of days, the mission took form: setting off to live and to help, to share with the people and to be open to the values of another culture.

THE JOY OF MEETING

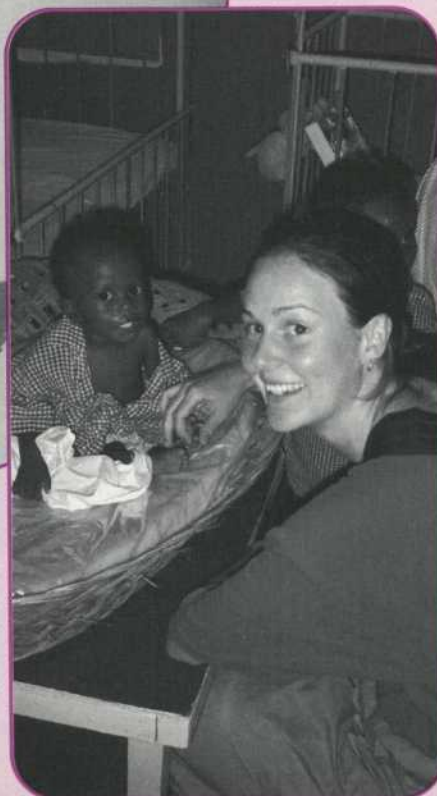
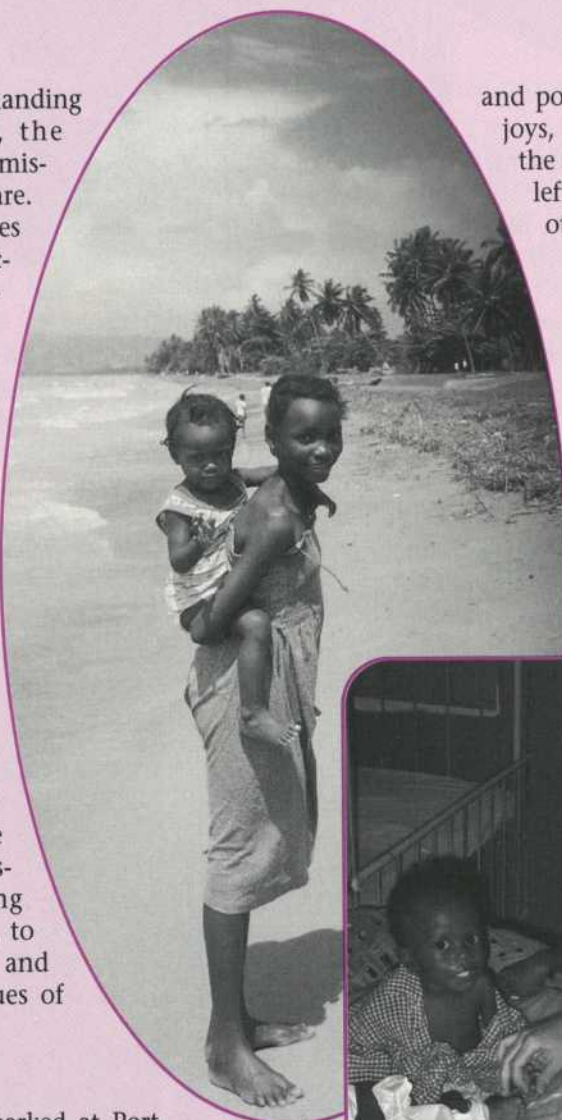
As the group disembarked at Port-au-Prince, the sun shone brightly, the heat was torrid. Each one rejoiced to discover the rich natural beauty of the island and its fascinating culture. The warm welcome of the M.I.C. Sisters made everyone feel at home. The project started off without delay, thanks to the well-planned organization of Roselène Lagredelle, M.I.C. She chose favorable places of insertion and planned an agenda for the exploration of the country. She made it possible for the young women to catch glimpses of the social

and political realities in Haiti: the people's hopes, joys, their struggle to rebuild the country. From the onset, the group was divided into two. Ten left for Cayes, located in the south while the other eight remained at the capital city.

Welcomed by different M.I.C. communities, each one integrated herself in a working team with enthusiasm: health centers, schools, a social formation center. *They gave themselves without reserve in their professional commitment, claims Sr. Jeanne-Françoise. The sick felt understood and loved; the students expressed their affection and joy. A student in architecture even made a plan for a house which a foreman in the locality implemented with success.* To better

grasp the ambiance of the country and the profile of cities and villages, nothing proved better than to visit places of interest, to participate in popular feasts and in religious ceremonies, and to encounter the people. *We encouraged the young ladies to meet the people in their actual situations, says Sr. Jeanne-Françoise. This is what allowed life to flow. We took time to visit people and listen to them. Nothing had stopped the young visitors in their*

Coming close to individuals in their day-to-day life: an essential element in getting to know a people.



Haitian children transmit a message of courage and hope. With them, J.-F. Alabré, M.I.C.



Improvising a classroom to quench young adults' thirst for learning ...



desire to love. With audacity and generosity, they adapted and got involved beyond all expectations. What was important for them was the person. Very cordial relationships were established between the people of my country and the group. They understood the cultural values that circulated in the daily life of the people: being satisfied with little, maintaining joy in face of hardships, keeping a sense of humour, and the richness of faith which upheld their desire and ability to stand fast despite rough wind and high water.

A stay of five weeks was indeed very short but yet sufficient to learn many a valuable lesson of life, says Sr. Jeannine. The young women were deeply marked by the strength of life manifested by the Haitian people. This was evident everywhere, thanks to the people's great faith in God which provided them the strength and courage to always carry on despite obstacles.

The people were happy to see us, declared the young women. Their first reaction upon seeing us walking down the streets or in the shanty towns, was to stop to look at us while asking: Who are they? Where do they come from? Why? The exchanges, once begun, continued very cordially. The poor took the opportunity to talk about their problems. Looking forward to a better future, a good number of them started to dream upon hearing the words *Projet Solidarité-Haïti*. On our part, we had nothing concrete to offer, yet our interest and our friendship eased many a complaint.

A PEAK PERIOD OF DISCOVERIES

At Chantal, Anne and Sara, both student nurses, lived a full-time experience at the dispensary: The place was very busy. Each day, sick people of all ages, from babies only a few days old to people of age 90 were welcomed and cared for. We tried to help them the best we could... we would have wanted to do more! Nearby, at Charpentier, two other student nurses, Nathalie and Christel, and two doctors, Catherine and Sonia, realized the ravages caused by malnutrition. Numerous patients sick with malaria or typhoid fever required their attention. Consultations and good care facilitated the sharing. The visiting medical

team learned much about the health situation in Haiti. They were especially impressed by the sense of solidarity shown to the sick. Each patient was accompanied by several members of the family and often, by friends. Meanwhile, at the dispensary pharmacy, Stéphanie discovered some Haitian beliefs and customs concerning illness and treatment. On their part, responding to the needs of the moment, Fabiola and Stéphanie helped out both at the dispensary and at the school.

In the educational field, Anne-Marie, Sophie, Annick and Veronik met some courageous children. Their joy of life and smiles made them particularly captivating. The affectionate attention they so candidly offered to others was indeed touching. I was moved by their generosity and their way of sharing, says Veronik. One day, a little girl, anxious that I might not be given a bowl of rice, offered to share hers with me. She who didn't have her three meals for the day was ready to share with me! I now better understand their values - generosity, human warmth and sharing. I was privileged to live these values with them during five weeks, among the most beautiful of my life!

Remembrances of Haiti intensely dwell within me, confides Annick. The most beautiful faces of children still appear before me in my memory... I again see their look, full of hope, with the sunlight all around them. There they were, pulling my skirt while we sat on the benches in the church or again, trying to touch my hair; and, on the street, holding out their hands to receive some pennies or to let me know that they were really there, at my side. Then there were the children at Delmas. Each morning, on my arrival in our little classroom, they greeted me in their melodious voices: Good morning, Miss Annick, how are you? My passion for teaching has grown... I feel such affection for these little girls. I loved them from the start!

LESSONS OF LIFE

The religious dimension has also had its place during the lively Masses where the sound of the drum rhythmized life. Each Sunday was a feast, as it is for the Haitian people. And since life does not offer lasting joy, nor peace, nor security, the people turn towards Jesus Christ, the Saviour. *Their faith in God has transformed me, recounts Fabiola. Though the people are in dire poverty, I have seen them sing, dance, smile and above all, continue to live. What interior richness they possess! For me, they radiated God's presence and love.*

The group members were deeply touched by the warm welcome of the people they have met. *Haiti is a country rich in sharing, in mutual help, in smiles, declares Christel. The Haitians welcomed us with open arms. They allowed us to participate in their activities and accompanied us in our outings. The M.I.C. Sisters were fantastic. They guided us around and talked lengthily about Haiti, all of which gave us a better understanding of the situation in that country.*

These young women derived great benefit from their short visit to Haiti. They were captivated by the Haitian people's great message of hope, of resistance, of appreciation of life. One has to have confidence in life to look for other solutions when things do not go smoothly since one can always do otherwise... And the Haitian people try to do otherwise, they want to change things. Liberated from dictatorship, they now struggle to be free

from hunger, injustice, illiteracy, indebtedness and corruption. The initial phase of democracy remains difficult. To rebuild a country demands time, finances, great solidarity and courage. This reality is present everywhere.

- *Today, I am aware of the difficulties that the Haitian people undergo. I have been a witness of their struggle against misery. - Stéphanie -*
- *One does not know sufficiently the problems confronting the people. At the heart of their difficult situation, they are exceptional people who deserve that we take the time to better understand them. What treasures I discovered in the people I have met. I have but to recall the young girls I taught at Immaculate Conception School..., the people I met on the street each morning..., the women of Cité Soleil to whom I taught reading and writing. I found in them the true richness of Haiti. - Anne-Marie -*
- *I created unique bonds of friendship with the people. They represented for me the most beautiful example of hope that I've ever had up to now! Hope gives them life. There is always something to hope for! I have gathered an immense wealth during this trip. - Nathalie -*

Back in Quebec, the experience continues in a different way. The young women love to meet one another, recall their lived experience in Haiti and continue to be in solidarity. Sr. Jeanne-Françoise has this to say: *On behalf of my people, I am deeply grateful to all the young ladies who have shared their knowledge, time and especially their friendship with the people of my country. In so short a time, they understood much of the Haitian reality and discovered what comprises its richness and beauty. For this, I thank them with all my heart! □*

Comments gathered by
Céline Gauvin, M.I.C.



Visiting local places of interest adds to a better understanding of a country's profile. Jeannine Bélair, M.I.C. (1st row, 2nd l.), Jeanne-Françoise Alabré (2nd row, 1st r.) and members of the Groupe Solidarité-Haïti

Mwen aveg! (I am blind) - name of a passenger jeep chosen to illustrate the speed at which some drivers circulate. People catch the message: Pedestrians, watch out, I'm a fast driver!



Photos: Groupe Solidarité-Haïti

A LONG-NURTURED PROJECT

BY AGATHE DURAND, M.I.C.



Isabelle Faucher

Since last September, Isabelle Faucher works with the street children at the Comedor Center in Pucallpa, Peru. For her, this long-harboured dream is finally a reality! But what does such a commitment mean? Why go as a lay missionary? Sr. Agathe Durand presents Isabelle's testimony and sheds light on these questions.

The missionary laity is a reality quite alive in the Church today. Christian men and women journey along, feeling called to share with others beyond their own frontiers, the best of what they have received gratuitously: life, faith, happiness, health, a meaning to their life.

Ever since my return from Africa, hardly a year ago, to work in the Church in the accompaniment of lay missionaries has become my mission, my daily preoccupation. What might be described as *records of the missionary laity* represent names, faces, long-term projects, commitments with various teams, a logistic dimension, a follow-up with participants varying in ages and situations.

Among many, I would like you to meet Isabelle Faucher. This 29-year-old speech therapist spent six years to prepare herself. Throughout this period of preparation, she discerned the call, integrated her personal life, strengthened her faith, settled some studies-related financial obligations, started a career and identified her ecclesial roots. Just prior to her departure for Peru, she shared this perspective in her life with some members of the Christian community of St-André-Apôtre in Montreal.

WHAT IS OF IMPORTANCE

Two weeks from now, I will be flying towards Pucallpa, Peru. I will work at the Comedor Center (comedor means dining room). Besides offering meals at a minimum price to street children, the Center is a place for integral formation which helps the children become aware of their reality and regain their dignity, thus enabling them to find their own place in society.

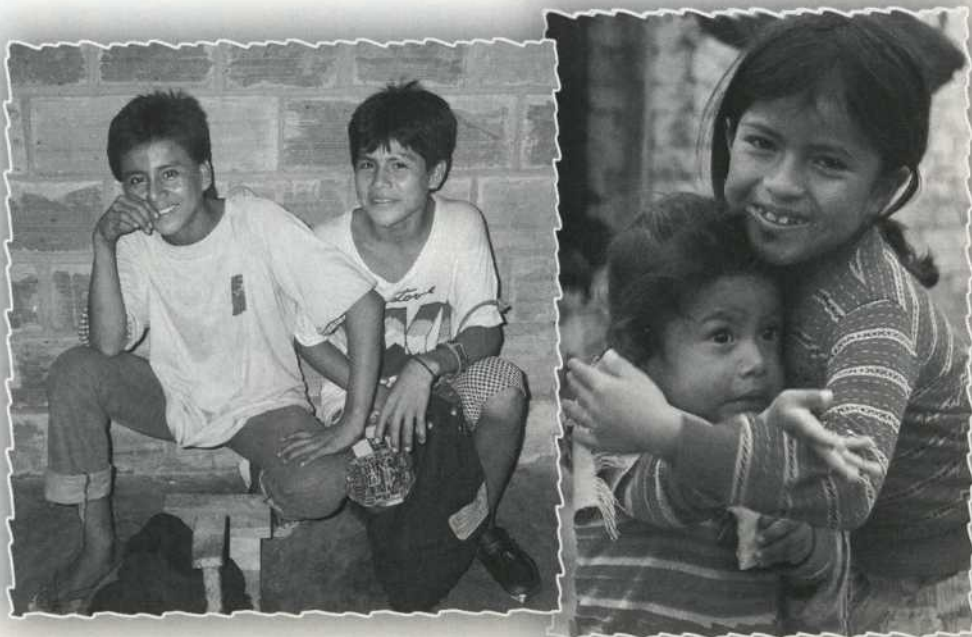
As yet, I do not know what specific tasks I will undertake. When on the spot, I will see where my skills can be put to good use. Here in Canada, I've taught for five years to children who

have difficulty in learning, especially mentally deficient children.

It is most important for me to leave as a missionary, in the name of my faith. As a believer, I want to share my faith. I feel called to witness the presence of God to street children, as each believer is invited to do so in daily life, with the people around them in their own surroundings.

As well, it is very important to leave in collaboration with a community of

From day to day, children teach us what they need to be happy.



religious. We are partners in the same Church and are thus invited to work together for greater justice and peace. I believe that we need one another.

For six years now, I've received a formation - missionary, spiritual and human - in a mixed group linked with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. This formation has led me to see God differently. God is a liberator, not a judge nor a moralizer. He is ever present in our lives, inviting us to journey along with Him,

to allow ourselves to be transformed so as to be happier and become witnesses to His presence. I've learnt to seek His will, to discern what brings joy, what gives meaning to my life. God is also communal. He invites us to share our being, our beliefs, our hopes, our realities as well as our problems and concerns.

My mind and heart are overflowing with all these convictions as I depart for Peru. I go to better know the Peruvians, to better understand their

reality, to become more jointly responsible, to share my gifts with them. I go because I believe in God's call. I beseech him to guide me and help me to always turn to him in full confidence.

A MUTUAL ENRICHMENT

Since then, news have reached us from Peru. I am most happy to be here. I was given a superb welcome. - I'm discovering new things that impress me. - I feel part of the projects and social gatherings undertaken by the apostolic vicariate on behalf of street children... and others. Those who observe Isabelle at work see her as simple, attentive, eager to learn the language. At Pucallpa, she becomes a unique link in the network of day-to-day solidarity. Perhaps enough to make others dream!

When a limitless dream is given careful thought and the feet and hands to transform it into sharing overwhelming love, street children find a home and bread, friends and pride along with hope. When the dream is tinted with the Gospel, the blind see, the lame walk, the poor discover the Good News for themselves. Moreover, missionaries see their lives being transformed, freed by giving others the liberty to allow God to be God in their life. ☐



Photo - A. Durand, M.I.C.

A group of lay missionaries in training. Agathe Durand, M.I.C. (standing, 2nd r.)

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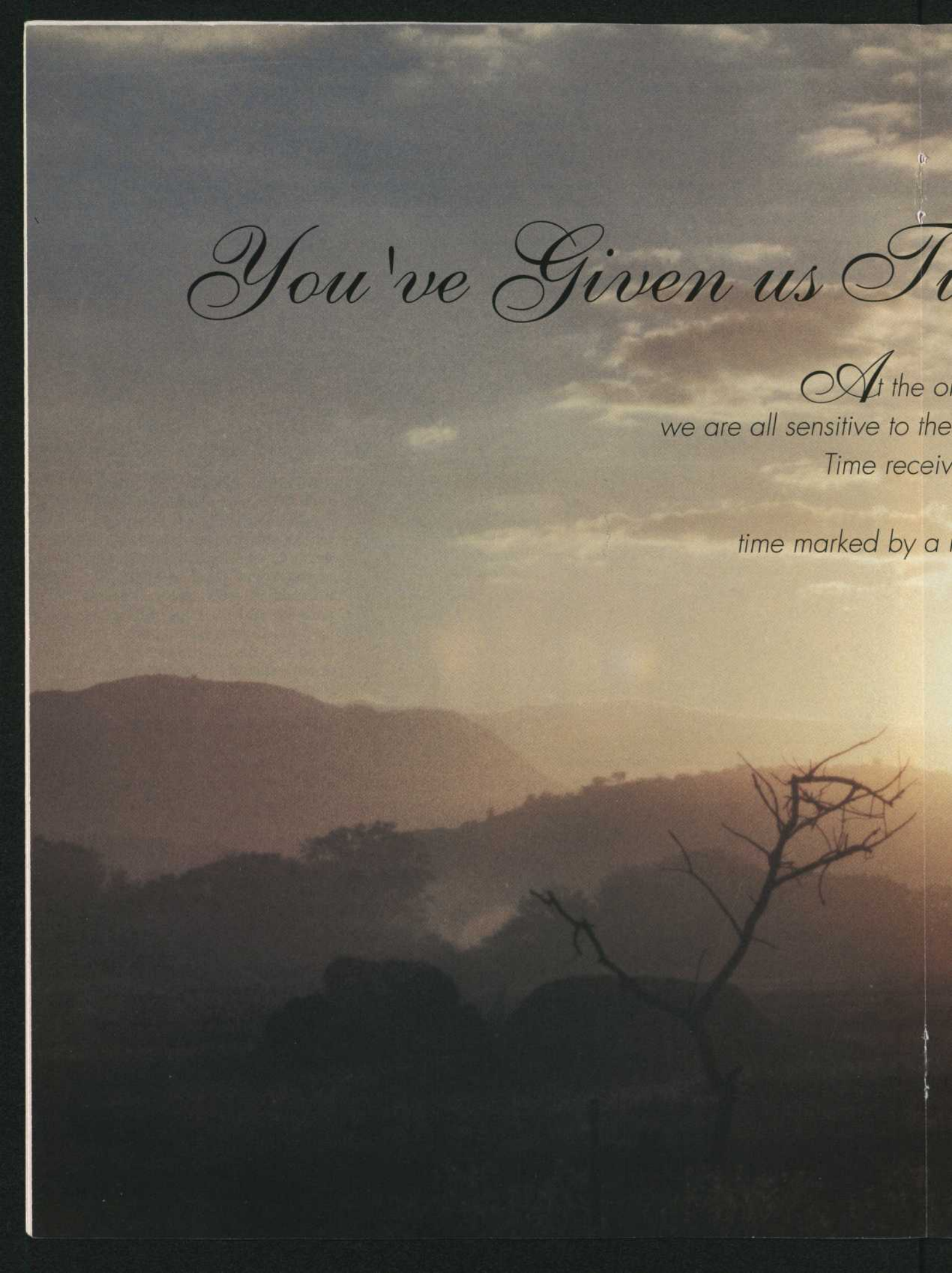
APT.: _____

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♥ HEARTFELT THANKS ♥



You've Given us Time

*A*t the on
we are all sensitive to the
Time receiv

time marked by a

Time...

the onset of a new year,
to the "fleeting of time"...
received, given by God,
time lived by Jesus,
by a measure of eternity.

*Even before my eyes
welcomed the light,
before my first steps
could measure space,
You spread before me
the vast carpet of days and years
like a path ever open.
Be praised, You who gave us time.*

*Each moment I can discover You
on the face of your Son.
He also was familiar with the stages of our existence:
moments when we begin to assert ourselves
as much as those when we form deep relationships.
Having come to set fire on our earth,
He untiringly taught us that
faithfulness demands a great deal of patience.
Be praised, You who dwell in time.*

*One day, You will fold up in a unique instant
every single second You will have granted me to live.
I wish that the remaining ones would
deepen my desire,
increase my impatience
to know You as You know me.
Be praised now and forever,
You who scatter light on the horizon of our lives,
beyond time. □*

*François Sejourne
Prier, January 1995*

A Faith That



BY CHRISTIAN BEAULIEU

At one time or another, a dream sets us on our way. To carry on day after day requires a deep-seated belief in this dream, but even more, a staunch belief in ourselves... in others... in God. Mary, the first believer, puts before us very clearly how to journey along our path in confidence and faith. As Christian Beaulieu points out, a faith which leads us the whole way to the end of our dreams.

How beautiful was the faith of the gentle Mary when God asked her to become the mother of His Son! This narration of the angel's message (Lk 1: 26-38) well illustrates the faith, the boldness, the audacity of young persons when responding to the Lord's invitations! What promise did the young Myriam of Nazareth hear at the tender age of 13 or 14? What did the angel anticipate for her at the time of this prodigious encounter? *The Holy Spirit will rest upon you and you will give birth to a Saviour.* And Mary believed the angel's words!

Do you know what astonishes me? It is her capacity for marvel, for surprise, for surrender. Her faith in the Promise! She believes in the impossible! She lives the great risk of total surrender of self! *Surely, surely... God will gratify my wishes to the full,* did she not repeat tirelessly. *Yes! Yes! may it be done as You have spoken!*

Soon afterward Mary readied herself and hurried off to a town in the hilly country of Judea. Sure of the Word of God, sure of the Promise, she then started to run! Yet, all was against her: her young age, her inexperience, the unknown route, the mountains to be crossed. Ah! how wonderful to see her take such a risk! Who has ever truly realized that confidence gives wings, moves mountains, turns hesitation into action, drives forward, gives a sense of urgency? Young persons and those with childlike hearts take such risks!

It is not the first time nor the last, however, that the Lord our God makes such daring demands, such exceeding bounds, such leaps into the unknown. This total surrender of self to the Word of the loving God, many lived it before. Think of

Abraham: *He left without knowing where he was heading for!* Remember Moses, Isaac, Joseph, Peter... and many others! No, it isn't the first time that believers are driven where they do not wish to go.

ALL OF US HAVE HAD DREAMS...

Yes, others, very young still, in the springtime of their lives, have felt this call, this irresistible thrust to risk all: Samuel, David, Daniel, Jeremiah... later, in the long history of our Church: St. John, the fragile Agnes, the young Agatha, the intrepid Joan of Arc... And more recently yet, Therese of the Child Jesus, Dom Bosco, Maximilian Kolbe... We recall the beautiful dream of Délia Tétreault while still a child and how this permeated her whole life... Indeed, in still many others, childhood dreams have grown. Yes, all have had dreams. All have borne great projects sown in their heart by the Spirit.

And every one of us, if we are still *young at heart*, are carried away by a great dream, by a passion. It is particular to the young to dream, to hope, to expect the impossible. Moreover, who does not dream the best for one's future, for one's married life, one's children, one's profession? What does each one of us dream about when still young at heart? What is the most vivid, the most ardent desire within our heart?

FROM DREAM TO REALITY

All of us have had a dream. But there exists a great range between this dream and reality. We haven't yet reached the goal. There will be problems, storms, resistances, darkness, changes. There will be shadows in the scenery. Nothing of what we hoped for is ever fully realized. Readjustments

Moves Mountains

and going out of one's way will be required. But for those who accept to have their dreams purified, great expectations can be realized.

Martin Luther King, for example, was aware of that. The Spirit spoke to him unceasingly of peace, of a solidarity to be built between Blacks and Whites. He was aware of being blessed and chosen as an instrument of peace in their midst. He had to pay the great price - death - to realize this fraternal project. Yes, it happens that the realization of one's dreams involves the gift of one's own life. It leads to dying in the physical sense of the word. Like Martin Luther King, many men and women suffered death and they, too, live on today through their dream. Oscar Romero, Maximilian Kolbe, the seven Trappists killed in Algeria recently... and many more.

And even if physical death is not always demanded, what letting go, what transcendence, what self-denial to accept. What difficult passages to overcome. What Isaacs to sacrifice. Briefly, what dying to consent to! This dying takes a thousand and one forms. Parting with a husband we've dreamt about, parting with children such as we had envisioned them, parting with ideal health. Giving up a long-nurtured project, giving up one's comforts, advantages and vested interests... Dying to all resentment! Dying to all bitterness! Dying to self-complacency. All these moments of letting go are indeed difficult to accept. They transcend us. *Who is God to act in such a manner?* we would like to exclaim. Yes, we often have to give up the realization of our dreams as we had hoped for.

TO JOURNEY IN FAITH...

Mary sets for us an example of perfect confidence, of total availability in face of changes to be lived. She leads us along the way. She invites us to face the challenges, to go forward into the unknown, to pass on from fear to boldness. She herself experienced this very deeply in her flesh when foretold that a dagger would pierce her heart. Also, when her life was totally upset upon losing her Son in the temple. Or again, when standing at the foot of the

cross and profoundly broken, she saw Him die. Suddenly, the Promise of God became so incomprehensible. She was forced to close her heart to any argument which deemed impossible the realization of the project sown in her heart by the Spirit. *He shall be called the Son of the Most High and he will reign on the throne of David, his Father.*

It is nothing else than to journey in faith, in confidence, in all availability! The path cannot be traced. One needs to live in incertitude and take risks. At times the tension is so great that

we forget the certitude of a Presence at our side all along the way. How many are the setbacks in love, how many are the spiritual failures because we have overlooked the promises made at the very start. Only a blossoming faith will allow us to walk on the water of our difficulties. It will make us move mountains. It will help us perform miracles. Only this firm belief will lead us to realize our dreams all the way. □

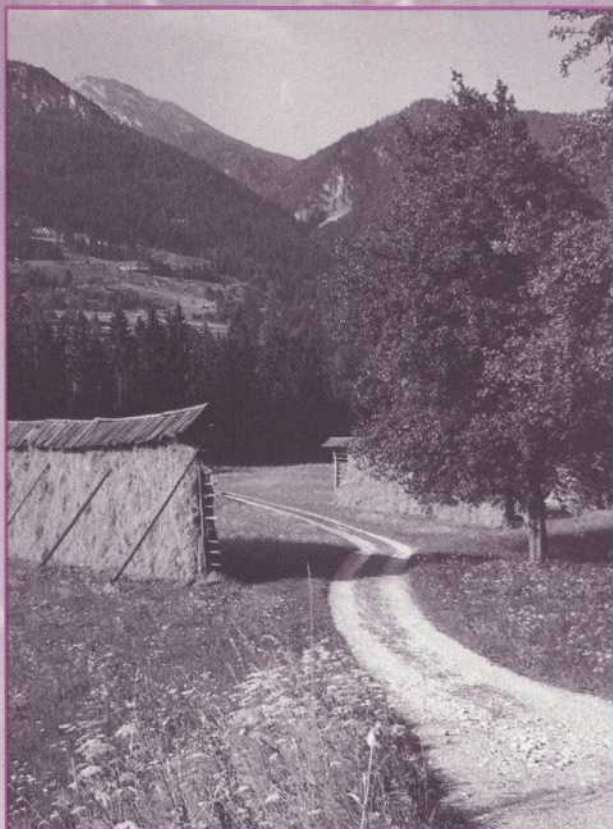


Photo: E. Heldens

THEY KEPT THEIR PROMISE

From January 10-15, 1995, a delegation of young Canadians left for the Philippines to join the World Youth Day in Manila. They stayed with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (M.I.C.) in Greenhills, Metro Manila. The Sisters introduced them to their work among the Mangyan tribe of Siapo and Calamintao in Mindoro Oriental. In September 1996, heeding the call to work with the tribal people in this M.I.C. mission, three young men from Charlevoix, Quebec, returned to the Philippines. For seven months, they took part in the missionary work of the Sisters in Siapo. Here are the responses of Mathieu Bouchard, Guy Tremblay and Sébastien Bradet to our questions regarding their mission experience.

Why did you return to the Philippines and choose to work with the Mangyan people of Mindoro?

M. It all started with our experience of the World Youth Day in Manila. I was touched by these words of John Paul II: "Each one has a mission." While with the Mangyans, I had a better understanding of the Lord's invitation. The few days spent in their midst have been decisive. These people, very poor economically, are rich in human values. They have given me the taste to live with them an adventure on a larger scale.



Working together in solidarity with the Mangyans: (l. to r.) M.I.C. Sisters Lilia Frondoza and Delia Regidor; Irene Bonpin, Chinese, Hiro Kawashima from Japan, Guy, Sébastien and Mathieu

G. In Mindoro, we lived four days of intensive intercultural exchanges. The speeches of the Mangyans revealed to me how they underestimate themselves and how they have developed a certain inferiority complex in the company of people, like us, who call ourselves civilized. A lively burst of compassion surged in me! At this moment, my life took on a different turn. I felt I could give something more, do mission work as a youth.

S. I was attracted by the very simple life of the Mangyans, by their welcoming attitude and their spirit of sharing. This initial experience has helped me see how I could be of help to them. Our primary purpose in returning was to live with the Mangyans. We didn't want to change the world, we just wanted to take time to be with them, work with them and if possible, help them to install a system of irrigation.

Returning to Quebec, Mathieu, Sébastien and Guy organized a fund-raising project on behalf of the people of Siapo. The amount collected provided for the purchase of two strong Jetmatic water pumps which the young men installed with the help of the tribal chief, Mayor Senyabo. The pumps can supply sufficient water for the irrigation of the rice fields and 70 homes (around 800 individuals), whatever be the weather. During this longer sojourn in Siapo, the young men also succeeded to plant more than 300 trees producing a variety of fruits such as mangoes, coconuts and guavas.

How did you adapt to the lifestyle of the Mangyan people?

G. I adapted quickly. The little knowledge I had about these people and the area was a good preparation. The manner of thinking and the life of the Mangyans deal with essentials which

I like to translate in these words: simplicity, authenticity and gratuitousness. This wisdom is of an inestimable price. To discover together that we are human beings equal in dignity and to live it in truth have facilitated our mutual understanding. At this stage, our actions and gestures have become significant and understandable for one another.

M. We had as a common objective to be a simple presence among these people. What was important for me was to respect their way of thinking and of living. Their low self-esteem and the grave injustices of which they are victims from the part of certain inhabitants of Mindoro impelled us to rebuild communication and trust. On my arrival at the place, I immediately realized there would be a language barrier since I do not speak any Tagalog. It was frustrating to give instructions that could not be understood



Activities to support life in a Mangyan village



and, moreover, want to praise quite a number of young learners who could not grasp my appreciation.

S. I had the surprise of my life on finding out that the Mangyans eat only one meal per day. Mothers gave their small children a kind of dried fruit to quench their hunger. Older children kept several pieces of the fruit hanging like a pendant around their neck - to nibble at whenever they were hungry. Sr. Elizabeth Dominguez, M.I.C., who has worked with the Mangyans, explained how the disappearance of the forests, their only source of food, make the situation extremely difficult during the dry season. Formerly nomads, the Mangyans have now started to cultivate rice and vegetables. But without rivers or any water sources nearby, they could cultivate only during the rainy season. During the dry months, food was scarce. At least twice during our stay, trees in the nearby surroundings were burnt down, pushing away the peaceloving Mangyans farther from their ancestral land.

What have you learned from this experience?

G. When I look at my experience as a whole, I am happy to say that our presence among the Mangyans was significant of solidarity and of respect. We have contributed to realize an irrigation project for their fields. Water, essential to their survival, can be canalized. Our attention, our friendship and encouragement have

revived their joy of living and stirred up the enthusiasm which the children seemed to have lost. These people who never feel to be on the same footing as others they meet, have always been considered, by us, as dignified human beings in no way different from others. And we have worked to help them to consider themselves as such. For me today, this experience confirms the fact that different cultures (language, mentality, customs) which seem to divide us are not obstacles for those who choose to follow Christ!

M. I realize to what point sharing the life of a people can be beneficial. I have learned much from the Mangyan culture and I have also learned to appreciate my own. Since my return last April, I have been sharing this experience with other people of all ages. My message remains ever the same: opening ourselves to other cultures teaches us a great deal about the people we meet as well as who we really are in fact.

S. We have helped the Mangyans to irrigate their fields and to earn some money. But we have not contributed only to the irrigation. Our purpose was that they earn their own living and be able to take action on their own initiative. The Mangyans suffer a lot of discrimination.

When taking the 'jeepneys', they sit on the roof, keeping themselves apart from the other passengers. We wanted them to consider themselves as human beings, as our brothers and that they realize that God loves them. I hope to return to the Philippines to get news about my friends, to see how they are doing. □

Editor's note: Text adapted from interviews held in the Philippines and in Canada



Photos: M.I.C. Philippines

Making the forest green - slogan of 35 young members of the Green Club organized by Mathieu in Siapo. Together, they transplant, water and care for the seedlings.



Family members of Sébastien, Mathieu and Guy welcome the Filipina M.I.C.s on a visit to Baie-St-Paul. In the group, Sr. Librada (2nd row, 1st l.), Sr. Madeleine Bertrand, p.f.m., project coordinator (2nd row, 2nd l.) and André Gagné, parish priest (2nd row, 4th l.)

Below is a letter addressed by Librada Bantilan, M.I.C., to the parish priest and members of the Christian community of Baie-St-Paul, Charlevoix, Quebec, following the experience of Mathieu, Sébastien, and Guy among the Mangyan people.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

When we welcomed Mathieu Bouchard, Sébastien Bradet and Guy Tremblay as partners in the mission, we had no idea what their stay with us would bring about, neither to them nor to us. However, we were ready to face their hasty departure. We foresaw a superficial and difficult immersion among the Mangyans, a Philippine ethnic group. Our prejudice made our welcome condescending and protective. We were thinking of

the total homesickness that these young missionaries would have to live while giving up the comforts of Canada. Would they be able to adjust to a life and environment very different from what they could have imagined? Might not the jungle life of Mindoro expose them to suffering and boredom due to isolation and lack of support of family and close friends?

We were amazed at the way that these young men accepted the challenges of adaptation. We cannot relate to you all the victories of fidelity to the mission that was confided to them. Nevertheless, we must point out what really transformed the life of the persons who were touched by the presence of Sébastien, Guy and Mathieu.

First and foremost, we, the M.I.C. Sisters of the Philippines were the first beneficiaries of this missionary cooperation brought about by the youth of your Church. Their lifestyle and their missionary zeal renewed our faith in youth for a challenging Church, for a future in solidarity. We sincerely believe that young people like those of Charlevoix are real architects of a better future that we wish for all of us.

There is also the witnessing for our students of Manila. These young ladies were impressed and really shaken up by the series of spontaneous sharings on mission today given by Mathieu. One of them wrote: God must really exist! Otherwise, how could you ever explain that young men like Mathieu, Guy and Sébastien would sacrifice a whole semester of school, choose to live in such a far-off and deprived milieu like that of Mindoro serving strangers, the Mangyans, who are not even their compatriots?

Your youth have also left indelible traces in the hearts of the Mangyans with whom they lived in solidarity and as equals. Formerly, these tribal people considered themselves as inferior to other people. Now they acknowledge that they are brothers and sisters of the tall white persons. They have found new motivations and new hope to sow the seeds in their land, a task which is unfamiliar to them. Being nomads, they preferred living by hunting and gathering wild fruits; now they are in the process of becoming acculturated to a sedentary life. On receiving two waterpumps to irrigate their fields, they are encouraged in their efforts. Thank you for your generous help which provided the Mangyans with a simple and practical method of irrigation.

Your community has found a powerful means to re-instate youth in their mission of the Church. Accept our congratulations for their dynamism and creativity! What you have accomplished as Church by Mathieu, Sébastien and Guy really challenges us. May the Lord bless you abundantly.

With grateful thanks,

*The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Philippines
by: Librada T. Bantilan, M.I.C., Provincial Superior*

WE HAVE HAD THE CHANCE



Photo: M.I.C. Philippines

Planting rice in a Mangyan field in Siapo. (L. to r.): Andréanne and Michèle

BY ANDRÉANNE ROY AND MICHÈLE DUCHESNEAU

Both from Baie-St-Paul, Andréanne Roy and Michèle Duchesneau have just returned from a two-month stay on the island of Mindoro, Philippines. Along with the M.I.C. Sisters working with the Mangyans, they, too, had a taste of living and working with these tribal people. They share with us the highlights of their enriching and unforgettable encounter with new-found friends.

After a whole year of dreaming dreams and preparation, we finally boarded a plane, flying off happily towards the Philippines. We were in for an adventure overflowing with surprises and discoveries. Upon our arrival, the warm welcome of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception gave us a foretaste of the richness of the Filipino heart.

UNITED AS ONE FAMILY

It was on Mindoro island where the biggest part of our stay unfolded itself and that our encounter with the Mangyans was realized. Setting out for two villages, Siapo and Calamintao, we lived with Sr. Lilia Frondosa, a Filipino M.I.C., who has been working with the Mangyans for 12 years. She briefed us on the culture, rites and customs of the Mangyans. We spent much time with the children and together we planted rice and vegetables. We intoned French songs and they in turn taught us tunes in Tagalog, their own maternal language. Each weekend we left the Mangyan village and returned to Santa Cruz. To see the church in this town overflowing with people of all ages amazed us. Although we've forgotten the title of a song they sang, we recall one of the phrases: *We are all together as one family*. That's exactly the feeling we had throughout the summer, even though we were from Canada and they lived in the Philippines. Similar in several ways, yet not speaking the same language, we managed to understand one another by smiles, gestures and a few words in Tagalog.

ESSENTIAL VALUES

During our stay with the Mangyans, we were in contact with poverty but we also worked with people who, together, busied themselves to change their situation. We were made aware of the work carried out by the M.I.C. Sisters in the Philippines. For example, in Siapo, Sr. Lilia Frondosa encouraged the Mangyans to plant several harvests of vegetables and fruits, using a suitable farming technique. The seeds and trees now planted will one day provide the Mangyans and their families something to eat. All along our stay, we encountered people who, like the Mangyans of Siapo, endeavour to do something to better their lives, be it Mangyans of Calamintao who look after a store or the fishermen who with Sr. Elizabeth Dominguez, Filipina M.I.C., attempt to overcome difficulties resulting from the rainy season. Needless to say, we have learnt a lot from these people.

We've discovered a great deal about the Mangyan people simply by being with them. We have realized that the wealth of a people cannot be calculated moneywise and that it is important to be appreciative of people around us. Michèle and I have already returned to Canada but our friend Sophie Boissonneault has decided to spend another six months with the Mangyans. When we now look at the world map, we recall in this little corner of Asia, all the warm smiles which reveal that we also can be happy if we profit fully of life like our Filipino friends. □

Why Go So Far?

BY JEANNE-ODETTE RASOARIMANANA, M.I.C.

Jeanne-Odet Rasoarimanana, a Malagasy M.I.C., offered herself for the mission of Bolivia where today she works at the Rural Institute of Education of Cochabamba. How has this come about? Why go so far away when the Church of Madagascar has a shortage of missionaries? Her passage through Montreal in January, 1997, just prior to taking off for Bolivia, was an occasion to share her lived experience with M.I.C. companions. Here are the salient points of her sharing.

Before departing from Madagascar, I had a missionary send-off in my small village of Anbano. All my relatives and the whole Christian community of the area came to celebrate the event with me and the M.I.C. Sisters. The church being too small for the whole congregation, two celebrations were organized - one for the children and one for adults. Luckily, we had sufficient time for these celebrations. My father gave me his blessing - a very important custom for us in Madagascar. His blessing signified his acceptance of my project and his solidarity on my behalf. His gesture also represented his wishes for a safe journey and success in my future mission. For me, these moments were very precious and meaningful.

My father, a former catechist at Anbano, is now retired. Besides his work at the Kopra factory in Antsirabe, he supervised the good functioning of the parish. With two or three helpers, he visited the people in their homes, conducted the Sunday celebration and prepared children for their First Communion. His commitment to the

Church marked me greatly. He has transmitted to me a vibrant faith which I would like to share with the Bolivian people.

During that day of celebration, we took time to talk about Bolivia as well as about the people who are expecting my arrival. I do not go there alone for I am supported by the prayer and encouragement of my family and the parishioners of Anbano.

BEING A RELIGIOUS MISSIONARY

I do remember that at age 11, I wanted to become a religious. At that time, I was an active member of the Eucharistic Youth Movement and I experienced joy in sharing my faith and in committing myself with other boys and girls. At age 12, I was delegated for a Eucharistic Youth Congress in Antsirabe. It was an unforgettable experience. In high school, I joined the *Équipes Chrétiens d'Aujourd'hui* because I wanted to follow Christ and help others. Of these meetings with young people my age, I recall my spirit of joy, of faith and desire to be involved in apostolic activities.



Sr. Jeanne-Odet receives her father's blessing on the occasion of her profession of final vows as an M.I.C.

The decisive point in my call to missionary life took place during an encounter with the M.I.C. team at the Novitiate of Antsirabe. I was invited to work with the Sisters in preparing the young ones of my parish for their First Communion. I joined my companions every Sunday morning to teach catechesis to the children. What I learned from the Sisters about the spirituality of the M.I.C. Community was similar to what I wished to live out myself: joy, openness to people, commitment for the growth of faith. At the end of my experience, I confided to my parents my desire to become a religious. They responded: *You will go to the boarding school of Antsirabe to complete your secondary schooling and to prepare yourself.* Each day I rode along on the makeshift back seat of a bicycle with my father who was heading for the factory at Antsirabe. This long ride proved quite a feat.

In 1975, I joined the M.I.C.s at the age of 18. At the beginning, I lived a period of discernment and formation to the religious life. Then,



*The joy of sharing and service.
Sr. Jeanne-Odette and a young Malagasy*

upon completion of my novitiate, I worked at several centers for the promotion of women. The formation of the Malagasy woman is important and I attempted to teach the young women sewing, cooking, housekeeping and management. I enjoyed this work immensely. The opportunity to follow a training in domestic science during a missionary service of two years in Haiti also brought me a great deal of joy. My commitment with basic ecclesial communities (BEC) has marked me. Through this ministry, I

lived an enriching experience of community life as well as sharing the Word of God.

PREPARING FOR A MISSION SEND-OFF

In 1994, our Community pondered with great attention on all the missionary work realized in Madagascar. Many questionnaires had to be answered, group encounters to be lived out. Together, we set up a new pastoral project. It gave me the opportunity to revise my priorities. A look at the distribution of the M.I.C. personnel made me realize that I was called to live a change, a new departure. But which one exactly? With my Provincial Superior, I studied the needs in other countries where we minister and asked myself where I could possibly bring my collaboration. I opted for Bolivia. Through the project proposed to me, I readily saw the continuation of my apostolate in Madagascar: the formation of the peasant woman, the BEC. I knew very well that with one M.I.C. less in Madagascar, others would have to see to the continuation of the ministry entrusted to me. We were in solidarity with regards to the distribution of ministries and such is the process for the building of the Church. My option to go to Bolivia was considered an exchange between two Churches, between two M.I.C. groups, since at that very same time, a young M.I.C. from Peru was preparing to come to Madagascar.

To better accomplish my future ministry in Bolivia, I then followed a two-year course at the Antanimena Center for Social Formation, in Antananarive. This was necessary and beneficial to me as it offered new ways of analysing the social reality, of animating groups, of finding new types of commitments for popular milieus. The study of

Spanish was included in this formation course.

WITH THE CAMPESINAS OF BOLIVIA

The privilege of living and working with the *campesinas* of Cochabamba gives me great pleasure. I realize that I have a lot to learn about their country, their culture, their religion. I find it important to be attentive to their needs, to their projects and to help them realize their aspirations. I look forward to work with them so that they may take their place in Bolivian society. They will enrich me by their culture and through me, Madagascar will share its own values - an exchange between two cultures and hopefully, for the benefit of us all. □



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

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*Prior to her departure for Bolivia, a family photo for
Sr. Jeanne-Odette and her parents*

In the Garden of God

*Parting here on earth
foreshadows a
rendezvous in eternity*

Délia Tétreault, M.I.C.

Sister Jeanne Béland (Marie-Anne)

Jeanne was born at Louiseville, county of Maskinongé, on the 5th of January, 1909. She joined the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and became a member of our Institute on September 8, 1934.



During close to 18 years, she devoted her time to community services in our retreat houses of Quebec and at the Mother House. In 1952, she served on night duty at the Chinese Hospital, Montreal. Two years later, she worked at our sewing circle in Granby and collaborated in missionary animation.

Appointed to our orphanage of Port-au-Prince, Haiti in 1957, she cared for the young boarders for whom she had the responsibility. The following year, her services were requested for *La Charité S'il Vous Plaît* of Cayes, a residence for the

elderly and handicapped persons. She looked after the food supplies and clothing, as well as the harvest of vegetables and rice. In these day-to-day tasks, her gentle kindness and affection for the elderly and the employees were clearly evident.

After a good 8-year stay in Haïti, Sr. Jeanne returned to Canada due to poor health. At the age of 56 she began a long period of illness which lasted all of 32 years. She derived from prayer, from community and family affection, the strength necessary to fulfill her last and difficult mission.

Filled with thanksgiving to her God and with gratitude to those who supported her with their love, she died at our Infirmary of Pont-Viau on July 12, 1997 at the age of 88 after 65 years in religious life.

Sister Gratia Blanchette (Marie-Célina)



Gratia was born in Taftville, Connecticut, U.S.A., on the 1st of June, 1894 and spent her childhood and youth in Drummondville, Quebec.

She became a member of the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception on February 11, 1915.

At the age of 21, she departed for China. A competent educator and catechist, she soon won the affection of her students who opened their hearts to receive the Christian faith. Her missionary course was marked by unbelievable difficulties: the civil war in 1916, nine years of Sino-Japanese conflicts followed by the coming of the communists and expulsion of the missionaries in 1951.

During these trying years, Sr. Gratia looked after nearly 200 refugees and directed a shelter for 800 mental patients. Providentially, the Red Cross

came to her help. Then, from 1944 to 1947 she directed the leprosarium in Shek Lung.

During the 22 years spent at the school and the orphanage in Canton, Sr. Gratia cared for thousands of children. She had the joy of giving religious instruction and of baptizing more than 1200 adults among whom were three young girls who later became Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception.

Arriving in Hong Kong after having been expelled from Canton in 1951, she devoted herself once again to education, supervised the construction of a school and generously participated in the work of evangelization for more than 20 years. She finally returned to Canada in 1973 and remained actively involved till quite well on in years - talks on China, writings, interviews by the media, arts and crafts, painting. She was called to her eternal reward at Pont-Viau on July 15, 1997 at the age of 103, having lived 84 years in religious life.

Sister Ida-Line Beaulieu (Marie-Blanche)

Ida-Line was born at St-Urbain, Châteauguay on July 5, 1917. Her childhood years were marked by a desire to study and an irresistible call to become a missionary. At the age of 20, she decided to enter the novitiate of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.



Secretariat for the Pontifical Works of the Missions, all of which contributed to developing the missionary spirit among the youth and adults. In 1953, Sr. Ida-Line began a long teaching career. Gentle and calm, she was gifted in captivating the attention and interest of her students.

students, her dedication was crowned with success.

In 1993, she retired at our residence in Joliette where she devoted herself to sewing. Throughout her illness and oncoming death, she remained peaceful and fully surrendered to the Will of God. She died at Jean-Talon Hospital, Montreal on August 31, 1997, at the age of 80, after 60 years in religious life. Sr. Ida-Line's fragile health did not allow her to leave for the missions but she realized her missionary dream by her successive commitments and total gift of self.

At the very beginning of her religious life, she devoted herself earnestly to missionary animation. The promotion of our own magazine, LE PRÉCURSEUR, visits in schools and involvement at the National

In 1969, she was called upon to give French courses to the immigrants. Without hesitation, she learned the new methods of teaching the language. With the immigrants as with her previous

Sister Florine Morin (Marie-du-Perpétuel-Secours)

Florine was born at St-Herménégilde, Sherbrooke, on September 3, 1905. Studious and gifted for music, she obtained her academic diploma in 1922, then her laureate in piano in 1926. At the age of 25, she joined the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.

In 1934, she was named for Manchuria and consecrated three years to the study of Mandarin. At Fakou, a small boarding school under her direction, she prepared many students for Baptism and First Communion. At Païtchengtse, she then took on a service of authority that was prolonged during the whole Sino-Japanese war (1941-1950). She

maintained a climate of serenity in the midst of countless difficulties: lack of security as well as means of communication, scarcity of food and heating facilities. Moreover, before the departure of the Japanese, she spent four days in prison. Then came the communists, followed by the expulsion of missionaries in 1951 and their return to Canada.

After a well deserved home leave, Sr. Florine departed for Taiwan. She undertook different approaches which proved to be fruitful for evangelization: teaching in a homecraft school and organizing a



sewing center which provided work in sewing and embroidery for nearly thirty women. Later, the teaching of piano, a favorite pastime, became her principal occupation.

Having returned to Canada in 1977, she pursued her apostolate by visits to the sick and the handicapped. She was called to her eternal reward at Pont-Viau on the 8th of September, 1997 at the age of 92 after having lived 67 years in religious life. Her constant appeals to Mary helped her fulfill her missionary journey in deep faith and confident surrender to the Will of God.

Sister Cécile Lemay (Sainte-Croix)

Born at Sainte-Croix, Lotbinière, diocese of Quebec, on the 22th of September, 1910, Cécile grew up happily in a family of 12 children. She joined the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception on February 1st, 1934.



the religious clothing for the newly professed sisters. In our shelters for the elderly and handicapped people, she combined her care for the sick and her sewing abilities. With what devotion and what compassion she surrounded the patients confided to her, seeking to relieve their suffering, to alleviate their infirmities, and at the appointed time, assisting them to receive the mystery and gift of death.

On her return to Canada, she was most available during many years for community services. During her retirement days, she

spent long moments in prayer. Sr. Cécile journeyed in our midst quietly, always keeping very alive her missionary ideal.

A spiritual guide offered this testimony: *Sr. Cécile was outspoken and honest, yet thoughtful and simple, always accepting her condition as the Will of God. Her intimacy with the Good Lord, made fruitful by grace, gave every single and most humble service an infinite value.* She passed away at the Cité de la Santé Hospital, Laval, on September 12, 1997, at the age of 87 after 63 years in religious life. □

Jeanne Guinois, M.I.C.

For more than thirty years, she devoted herself to her main occupation of sewing, in our different houses of Quebec. She also attended to the children of our *Patronage* in Granby. In 1968 she was appointed to our mission of Haiti where she fulfilled her usual ministry. At the novitiate in Port-au-Prince, she prepared

NEWSBRIEFS... FROM HERE AND ELSEWHERE



Photo M.I.C., Hong Kong

Sr. Lucie and delegates with the flag of Hong Kong

HONG KONG

MASTER, WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

BY LUCIE GAGNÉ, M.I.C.

A delegation of 250 young people of Hong Kong participated in the World Youth Day in Paris. Two M.I.C. Sisters accompanied them: Lucie Gagné and Nicole Beaulieu. Sr. Lucie gives us the highlights of this exceptional journey to France... a pilgrimage uniquely marked by visits to different monasteries, by the depth of the prayer and faith encounters and especially, by the meeting with John Paul II in Paris.

Following the invitation of a priest, Sr. Nicole and I had the privilege to accompany a group of young people of Hong Kong to the World Youth Day in Paris. Our knowledge of English, Chinese and French facilitated the encounter. The event was important for these high school and university students as well as for young professionals. During several months, intense preparation for this exceptional moment took place in an effort to realize their hope of renewal and deepening of their faith.

On August 6, we departed for Paris where we were awaited. The warm welcome received impressed us. Everything had been foreseen and by 8 o'clock the following day, we set out on our way to Taizé where we spent three days. We truly experienced the presence of the Lord. We discovered Him alive in the hearts of the young people we met. That weekend, there were some 6000 participants coming from 65 different countries. Many came to Taizé to discover what was important in

their life while others had already opted to embark on a faith adventure with the Lord Jesus. The young people truly revived our hope for a future world of peace and reconciliation. We were touched by the simplicity of the prayer celebrations, by the support given by the Brothers and by the atmosphere of joy in the sharings. Moreover, we had the privilege of witnessing the perpetual commitment of a Taizé brother from Portugal.

During the following days, we discovered other celebrated places of prayer and pilgrimage and thus had the opportunity to partake in the prayers of men and women who have chosen the contemplative life. We prayed and chatted with them in Vezeley, Taizé, Carmel-de-la-Paix (Mazille), Carmel de Montmartre (Paris) and, for some, at the Carmel de Lisieux. We were touched to have been welcomed into their monastery and to have realized to what extent they are attuned to the happenings of our contemporary world. These contemplative men and women witnessed to a life totally centered on the essential. They reminded us, as St. Exupéry expressed so well, that *one only rightly sees well with the heart and that the essential is invisible to the eyes*. At the Carmel-de-la-Paix (Mazille), the ceremony of final profession of a religious from Hong Kong deeply impressed us.

Whether in the diocese of Chartres or that of Paris, we felt heartily welcomed by the families with whom we stayed and by the parishioners in the different churches we visited. Deep bonds of friendship formed among the participants will live on in our hearts. Called from all nations to live fraternity together, we truly belonged to one and the same family.

In Paris, the highest point of our experience was that of the prayer vigil with John Paul II at Longchamps. On that occasion, the Pope baptized and confirmed ten young people from different countries. On the stage was a large luminous cross that changed colours throughout the Paschal Vigil celebration. Before leaving us, the Holy Father invited us to continue to pray and reminded us to take some sleep. It was quite a touching sight - that of hundreds of thousands of young people from all over the world praying together in this open space, not only under the shimmering stars, but most especially under this luminous giant cross! This experience is still very vivid in my memory. Like the disciples after the Resurrection, we have been sent along different paths of the world to go and proclaim the Good News that God is always with us till the end of the world. With hearts overflowing with joy and gratitude, we continue to recall the magnificent WYD of France. □

MY FRIEND GENGIS

By LÉA NELSON, M.I.C.

Gengis is a happy 10-year-old boy. His openness, his outgoing personality and determination are admirable. He knows how to make friends and keeps in touch with them. Sr. Léa, M.I.C. of Haiti, has a special place for him in her heart. She tells us why!

Since nearly three years, I've been involved in missionary animation in Quebec. Along with Gisèle Vachon, M.I.C., I take off on rounds of parishes and schools. It was during one of these long missionary trips that I met Gengis and we became friends.

During a trip to Baie-Comeau, I was invited to meet the students of Gengis' school. I mentioned God's vast dream to gather all children in one family. I likewise related how our Foundress, Délia Tétreault, welcomed women of different nationalities so that God's lovely dream might come true. I told the school children that when we go out of our way to bring joy and happiness to others, we are missionaries like Jesus. This period of sharing was followed by the Our Father in Créole. The young ones were without prejudice and gave me a fine welcome permeated with warmth and openness. I discovered within them rich soil open to welcome the Gospel.

At church on Sunday, I gave the homily for the feast of Pentecost. After the Mass, Gengis came to congratulate me saying: *Your work is beautiful, Léa. It is quite interesting to hear you speak. How I would like to offer myself to become a collaborator for your magazine LE PRÉCURSEUR!* I handed him a few copies having in mind to make Délia Tétreault and her missionary work in different countries better known. Since then, Gengis has been participating in our promotion work. He is eager to find subscriptions and he writes about his experience as a collaborator.

I'm glad to share with you one of his letters. Therein you meet Gengis, full of enthusiasm, ever so eager to be helpful. His openness and love for missionaries have helped him find his very own way of transmitting and sharing the message. I am proud to have him as a friend! □

Greetings, Léa!
Yesterday, May 18, I managed to find two subscriptions. Many people mistook me for a witness of Jehovah. Today, May 19, I continued to give magazines to people who wanted them. If not, I kept them for others who would want to subscribe. I may possibly have two more subscriptions since my girlfriend is greatly interested. Don't forget that I am fond of you.
From your friend
Gengis.



Gengis Grenier and his Mom

Photo: Grenier Family

MISSIONARY INTENTIONS

JANUARY 1998

May the progress and development of the peoples of Africa be achieved through justice, fraternity and peace.

FEBRUARY 1998

May young Christian communities find qualified and competent formators for seminaries and higher education centers.

PINK FLAKE AND WHITE FLAKE

Plenty of good news are found in the magazine. Try to find the projects enclosed in the flakes.

QUESTION
PEOPLE WHO HAVE READ THIS MAGAZINE. ASK THEM TO TELL YOU ABOUT THE BEAUTIFUL DISCOVERIES THEY HAVE MADE IN THE COUNTRIES VISITED. JOT DOWN YOUR FINDINGS.



1. The children of Haiti are happy

because _____

2. Annick and Véronique who met them are happy

because _____

3. Guy, Mathieu and Sébastien, who set out to live with the Mangyan people are happy

because _____

4. The Mangyan people, who are meek and peaceful are happy

because _____

5. The young people who gathered in Paris to pray and reflect together are happy

because _____

Many happy events happen in your own home.

Write down your discoveries.

6. _____ are happy

because _____

7. _____ are happy

because _____

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Photo : E. Plamondon, M.I.C.

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Their dynamism enriches society
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Photo: M.I.C., Philippines

Mathieu Bouchard and young Mangyans, Siapo, Mindoro, Philippines

*We are young... we harbour a dream
of a caring world and of a Church open to change.
But fulfilling this dream demands a change of heart.
The future of our precious legacy rests upon our gift of self,
prayer and humility revealed in our day-to-day life.
We recommend that from now on, in anticipation
of the Jubilee Year 2000, today's youth become
channels of the peace of Christ.*

Delegates to the 6th International Youth Forum, Palaiseau, France

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