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MARCH-APRIL 1998



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OF
LIFE



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Nicole Joly, M.I.C., on the occasion of her mission send-off.

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REJOICING IN LIFE ANEW...

When nature is on the threshold of spring, its heralds multiply daily. The cold winds turn gentle, the ice on the winter streams joins the spring song and our hearts respond to the lilt of the season. The signs of new life that nature offers us bring a message of hope. Spring is a birth time for the world ... a resurrection of new hope! A closer look at the parallels of nature gives us special insight into the mysteries of faith celebrated at this time of the year. The Easter Season now also unfolds!

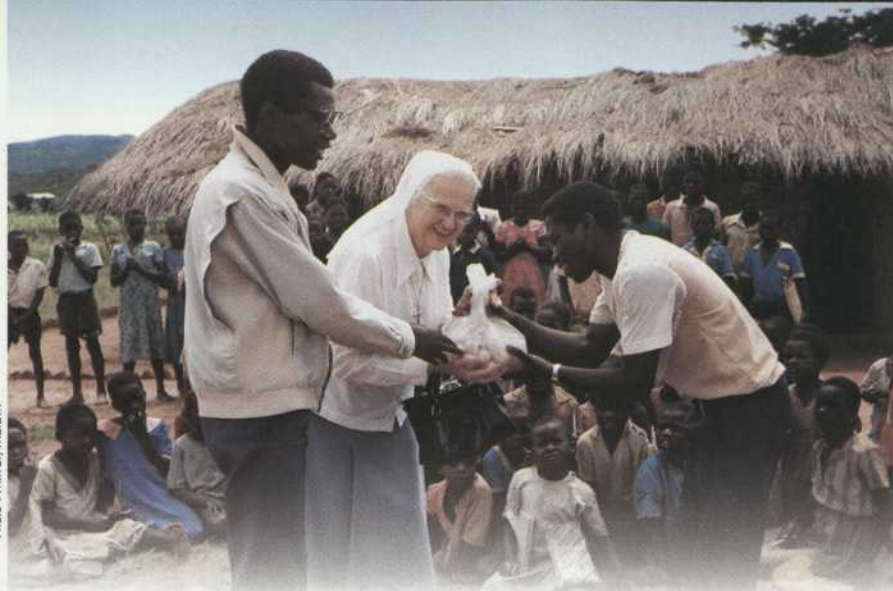
Like the vibrant symphony of joyous sounds that Easter and springtime produce, we hear a message of new life and hope throughout this issue of our magazine. Another refrain picks up this challenging message: 1998 is declared a year of celebration for the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We feel privileged to feature herein some events that witness to the joy, the pain and the struggle for life of people often deprived of their basic rights and comfort ... events that reveal the experience of a loving God, alive and active, tender and compassionate.

As we celebrate the beautiful diversity of our mission world today, we invite you all to share the deep joy we are experiencing: Délia Tétreault, Foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, has been proclaimed **Venerable** by Pope John Paul II. Aware that love goes a long way, she enjoined her missionaries to promote Gospel values, reaching out to peoples across cultures and subcultures.

In myriad ways, we too are sent forth today as witnesses of God's great love. May our daily lives throb with the vitality of the Resurrection. May we respond to the challenge by sharing with others the beauty and the richness of a hope-filled life. And may our hope be ever rooted in an unshakable faith in the Spirit of God who makes all things new.

A Blessed Easter Season! □

Ma. Anthea Raso, M.I.C.



Teachers thank Thérèse Déziel, M.I.C., for the school supplies given to their pupils. Malawi, Africa

A MISSION OF SOLIDARITY

JOHN PAUL II

John Paul II presents here a vision of the development of peoples, particularly of those who struggle to get away from misery. Development is not just a matter of technical and economic advancement. It implies the growth of the whole person. The Gospel makes us aware of our responsibilities in the face of this urgent mission ... love takes a stand and commits itself.

The mission *ad gentes* is still being carried out today, for the most part in the southern regions of the world, where action on behalf of integral development and liberation from all forms of oppression is most urgently needed. The Church has always been able to generate a drive toward progress among the peoples being evangelized. Today, more than in the past, missionaries are being recognized as *promoters of development* by governments and international experts who are impressed by the remarkable results achieved despite the meager means on hand.

In the social encyclical, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, I stated that the Church does not have technical solutions to offer for the problem of underdevelopment as such. However, she offers her first contribution to the solution of the urgent problem of development when she proclaims the truth about Christ, about herself and about people, applying this truth to a concrete situation. The

Conference of Latin American Bishops at Puebla concluded that *the best service we can offer to our fellow human beings is evangelization, which helps them to live and act as children of God, sets them free from injustices and assists their overall development*. It is not the Church's mission to work directly on the economic, technical or political levels, or to contribute materially to development. Rather, her mission consists essentially in offering people opportunity not to *have more* but to *be more*, by awakening their consciences through the Gospel. *Authentic human development must be rooted in an ever deeper evangelization.* (...)

THE HUMAN BEING IS THE PRINCIPAL AGENT OF DEVELOPMENT

A people's development does not derive primarily from money, technological means or material assistance but from the formation of consciences and the gradual maturing of

ways of thinking and patterns of behavior. While the human being is the principal agent of development, the Church forms consciences: she reveals to peoples the God whom they seek and do not yet know; she shows them the grandeur of the human being created in God's image and loved by Him; she teaches them the equality of all men and women as children of God and the obligation to work for the development of the whole person and of all humankind.

Through the Gospel message, the Church offers a force for liberation which promotes development precisely because it leads to conversion of heart and of ways of thinking, fosters the recognition of each person's dignity, encourages solidarity, commitment and service of one's neighbour, and gives everyone a place in God's plan, which is the building of His Kingdom of peace and justice. (...) This, then, is the biblical perspective of the *new heavens and a new earth* (cf. Is 65:17; 2 Pt 3:13; Rv 21:1), which has been the stimulus and goal for humankind's advancement in history. The individual's development derives from God (...) and must lead back to God. That is why there is a close connection between the proclamation of the Gospel and human promotion.

The contribution of the Church and of evangelization to the development of peoples concerns not only the struggle against material poverty and *underdevelopment* in the South of the world, but also concerns the North, which is prone to a moral and spiritual poverty caused by *overdevelopment*. A certain way of thinking, uninfluenced by a religious outlook and widespread in some parts of today's world, is based on the idea that increasing wealth and the promotion of economic and technical growth is enough for people to develop on the human level. But a soulless development cannot suffice for human beings, and an excess of affluence is as harmful as excessive poverty. This is a *development*



Photo: M. P. Charbonneau, M.I.C.

The sharing of faith and talents strengthens the local Church. Rita Ostiguy, M.I.C. and catechists - Bolivia

model which the North has constructed and is now spreading to the South, where a sense of religion as well as human values are in danger of being overwhelmed by a wave of consumerism.

Fight hunger by changing your lifestyle is a motto which has appeared in Church circles and which shows the people of the rich nations how to become brothers and sisters of the poor. We thus need to turn to a more austere way of life which will favour a new model of development that gives attention to ethical and religious values. To the poor, *missionary activity* brings light and an impulse toward true development, while *the new evangelization* ought to create among the wealthy a realization that the time has arrived for them to become true brothers and

sisters of the poor through the conversion of all to an *integral development* open to the Absolute.

CHARITY, SOURCE AND CRITERION OF MISSION

The Church all over the world wishes to be the Church of the poor ... She wishes to draw out all the truth contained in the Beatitudes of Christ, and especially in the first one: Blessed are the poor in spirit ... She wishes to teach this truth and she wishes to put it into practice, just as Jesus came to do and to teach. (...)

In fidelity to the spirit of the Beatitudes, the Church is called to be on the side of those who are poor and oppressed in any way. I therefore exhort the disciples of Christ and all Christian communities - from families to dioceses, from parishes to religious

institutes - to carry out a sincere review of their lives regarding their solidarity with the poor. At the same time, I express gratitude to the missionaries who, by their loving presence and humble service to people, are working for the integral development of individuals and of society through schools, health-care centers, leprosaria, homes for the handicapped and the elderly, projects for the promotion of women, and other similar apostolates. I thank the priests, religious brothers and sisters, and members of the laity for their dedication, and I also encourage the volunteers from nongovernmental organizations who in ever increasing numbers are devoting themselves to works of charity and human promotion.

It is in fact these works of charity that reveal the soul of all missionary activity: *love*, which has been and remains *the driving force of mission*, and is also the sole criterion for judging what is to be done or not done, changed or not changed. *It is the principle that must direct every action, and the end to which that action must be directed. When we act with a view to charity, or are inspired by charity, nothing is unseemly and everything is good.* □

Excerpts, Encyclical Letter of John Paul II, *Mission of the Redeemer*, Ch. V

Children suffering from malnutrition receive special care from M.I.C. Sisters Angelita Olimba and Judy Saludes. Philippines



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

MISSIONARY INTENTIONS

MARCH 1998

May the witness of the Martyrs of the twentieth century give youth the courage of their faith and the joy to communicate it throughout the world.

APRIL 1998

That the International Community may encourage and protect the religious, ecological and social rights of the peoples of Oceania.

AMOR... Making a Difference

AMOR (Asian-Pacific Meeting of Religious) is a group of more than 50 women religious congregations committed to promote the quality of life of women, youth and the oppressed. Celia Chua, M.I.C. and Ditma Luz Trocio, M.I.C., tell us more about AMOR. Sr. Celia is of Chinese origin, born in the Philippines. She has had a rich experience: in Hong Kong, as a formator in our M.I.C. Community and in Canada, as a member of the General Council. Today, she is Provincial Superior in Taiwan and was appointed executive committee chairperson of AMOR for a 3-year term. Since 15 years, Sr. Ditma Luz, from the Philippines, has been involved in education and in pastoral animation for Filipino migrant workers in Taiwan. She was named for a 3-year term as executive secretary of AMOR.

Could you give us a general idea about AMOR?

Sister Celia: AMOR (Asian-Pacific Meeting of Religious) is a general assembly that represents the religious of Asia and the Pacific. Every two or three years, the delegates of women religious congregations in Asia meet to unite their experiences and their research on the many problems of Asia, regarding particularly the youth, women and the oppressed. AMOR is thus an instrument of animation, of sharing, of communication and conscientization of religious women and their collaborators.

Sr. Ditma Luz: AMOR was officially established and recognized in Hong Kong in 1972, after a difficult period of gestation. Awareness of acute situations of poverty, caused by unjust socio-economic and political systems, has incited the religious of Asia to promote human rights, the dignity of women, the right to life and to a quality of life for all. Through their insertion, animation and education services, women religious engage themselves in the promotion of justice and peace in all forms, at all levels and in all their commitments.

AMOR has celebrated its silver jubilee. During the past 25 years, what were its main achievements?

Sr. Ditma Luz: It is in terms of conscientizing people, of transforming mentalities that one can weigh the impact of AMOR. The meetings mobilize the living forces of the women religious of each country and lead them to act in a concerted way on situations where respect of life and human values are threatened. The program of AMOR meetings combine in a remarkable way the conferences given by resource people, the visits to strategic points of insertion in the different countries, the sharing of experiences and the search for solutions. Here are some themes taken up since 1980:

Faith and Peoples' Struggle for Full Human Development (Sri-Lanka, 1980)

Mission of Women in the Church in Asia and Oceania (Korea, 1985)



Bangalore, India. Sr. Celia (l.) and Sr. Ditma Luz discover the beauty and significance of Indian cultural rites.

Self-Empowerment of Women in Poverty: A Prophetic Response in our Time (Philippines, 1994)
Roots and Shoots of Eco-Feminism: Signs of Hope (India, 1997)

Sister Celia: With the theme on eco-feminism taken by AMOR XI, our vision and our mission as religious were placed in a state of readiness and vigilance. The 91 religious coming from 21 countries - from India to Asia, from the Pacific to Oceania - were deeply motivated to work with women and other organizations concerned with respect for life and feminine values as well as the protection of the environment. In this climate of hope

and fervour the delegates decided that the next AMOR meeting, in the year 2000, will be held in Hiroshima, Japan. It will have as theme: *Reconciliation*. My engagement in AMOR shows me the importance of changing people's mentality so as to arrive with pertinent projects.

You have a three-year mandate as executive committee chairperson and secretary of AMOR respectively. How do you see your role?

Sister Celia: The executive committee is responsible for implementing the resolutions and suggestions of each AMOR meeting. Our actual role now is to animate and coordinate follow-up activities to AMOR XI (*Eco-feminism*) and to prepare AMOR XII (*Reconciliation*).

Sr. Ditma Luz: The Asian Secretariat Center (ASC) carries out plans that are presented and decided on at the AMOR meetings. It sends out a quarterly newsletter. It keeps alive AMOR's experience of solidarity with the women in Asia-Pacific and tries to create bonds with other groups having the same objectives.

What did you find most significant during your last meeting in Bangalore?

Sister Celia: The fieldwork experience opened our eyes to the oppression of women and aggression against the environment. Participants were sent out in small groups to visit some zones near Bangalore where different forms of distress are being picked up and attended to by several women congregations:

- villages of the *dalit* (lowest on the social ladder) where the men render bonded labour to rich landlords and where the women are slaves to their husbands;
- single mothers and women battered by alcoholic husbands;
- the *Maitre Sagan Ashram* (Ocean of Friendship) where,

through prayer, meditation and inter-religious dialogue, the poor and the oppressed are given a new lease on life;

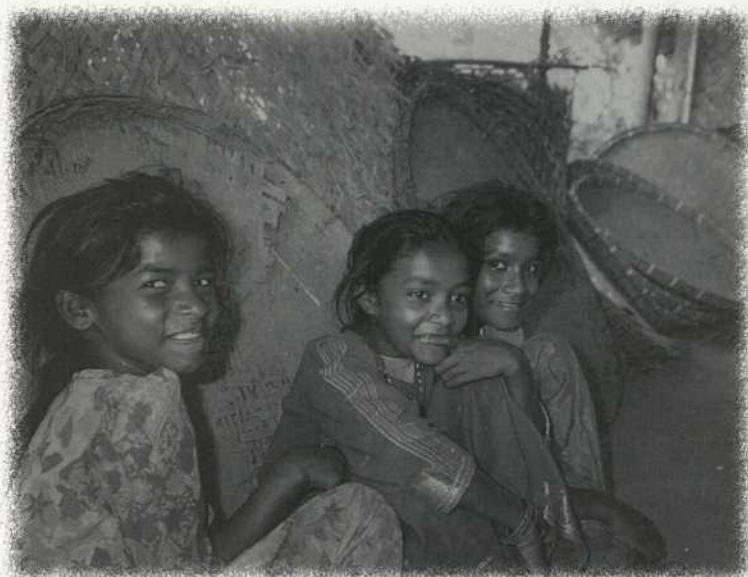
- centers for street children, the abandoned and jobless, the lepers.

Sr. Ditma Luz: I greatly enjoyed our two-day exposure program at the *Maitre Sagan Ashram*. This center welcomes people of all creeds and offers health services. Its holistic approach enhances relationship with God, with humankind and with nature. The meditation center is magnificent, full of symbols which favour reflection on life and relationship with the Creator. I experienced how all the participants felt bonded to one another by this new type of spirituality.

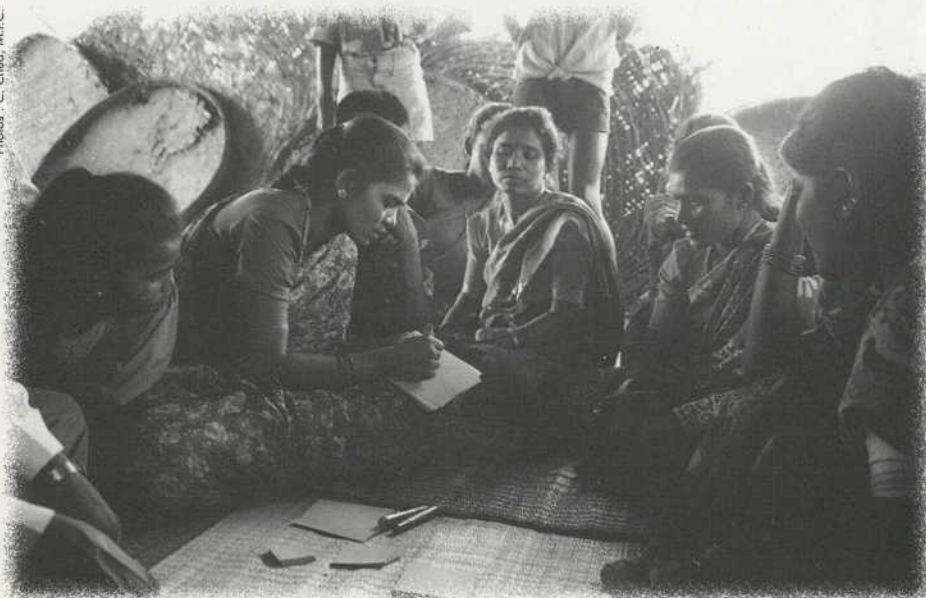
Sister Celia: To express how AMOR incites us to think about our mission and to live it fully, I wish like to echo a piece of poetry inspired by the meetings:

*You are artisans of the earth and
artists of the universe. Be not afraid.
Enter into the dance, enter into life.
You are creators of the life that
I have placed in your hands.
(...) Go to the whole world, Daughters
of My life, and set out to work
so that the entire universe become
a harmonious space where the
patient journey of the living unfolds
and spreads out in peace toward
My resemblance and My beauty. □*

Editor's note: Text taken from interviews held in Taiwan and in Canada



On behalf of young girls belonging to the low caste, a clarion call against exploitation and violation



Village women benefit from a literacy program.



For Sr. Rosenelle (r.), a mission of hope!

To Keep Hope Alive

BY ROSENELLE LAGREDELLE, M.I.C.

Working among the poorest of the poor, Sr. Rosenelle Lagredelle, Haitian, is well aware of the struggles that have to be carried on for the life of her people. Formerly, the efforts involved conscientization activities aimed at coming out of dictatorship and solidarity with the most vulnerable: peasant groups, basic Church communities, street children. Now, more attention is given to problems of poverty in a slum area of Port-au-Prince. Haiti, she says, is a country that asks questions and challenges one to make choices.

Choosing to work in Haiti, this country so dear to my heart, means opting permanently for a process of discernment because here, everything has to be done. My four years of service as directress of the Pastoral Institute of Port-au-Prince and a much longer period on the Justice and Peace Committee of the Haitian Conference of Religious, have prepared me to opt for the poorest of the poor. This choice is imperative in the context of a generalized crisis that prevails in every institution of the country, where hunger and misery are everywhere and inflation, insecurity and injustice abound.

In the cities, particularly the Capital, internal migration is draining the peasant population dispossessed of its land and in search of better living conditions. Also, in a zone in the outskirts of Delmas are a number of illiterate peasant women trying to survive by means of small businesses despite an insufficient income.

ON THE STRENGTH OF THEIR SOLIDARITY

Fully in line with our M.I.C. Pastoral Plan and with the vision of the New Evangelization, my choice of projects for the education of the poor, especially women, is beginning

to take shape. One of these projects is to guide a group of women in becoming more aware of their rights and role in the future of Haitian society. Their steady attendance at the weekly meetings shows their interest. Listen to what they say: *This is*



Various programs are offered to women for their formation toward self-sufficiency.

a time for us women to be together, to get to know one another, to look at our problems and, for a few hours, to leave the care of the children to the fathers. To their delight, they realize the strength of their solidarity, the confidence that is growing among them and new ways of facing their daily responsibilities.

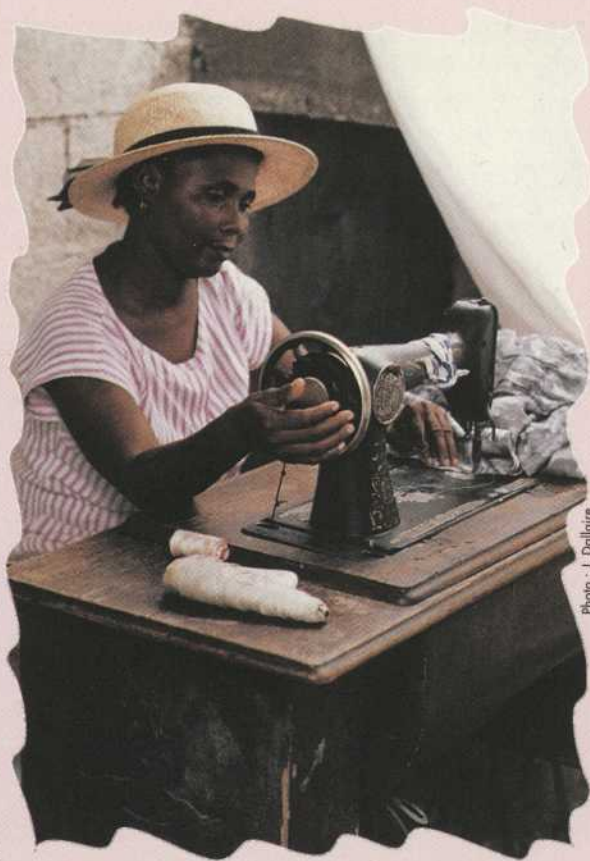
We must also say that Haiti has a very high percentage of illiteracy and that women are the ones most deprived of the bread of education. I have therefore opened four literacy centers where some sixty women can get an education. At the heart of the initiative is the effort to promote among them the awareness of their dignity and worth as women and to bring about a change of mentality in both the men and the women.

BUILDING SOMETHING TOGETHER

My concern for the poor also urges me to care about the people of the slum area surrounding our residence. I have started visiting them. The first visit, though, was not a success. With me was a Sister of another nationality. She was greeted with a shower of aggressive words. Embarrassed because of their dire poverty, the young people of the slums said: *We do not want to sell our misery to outsiders. Foreigners come here to take our pictures and put us on film, and then go home and show us off in their exhibits. They enjoy looking at our poverty. And they added: You can come in, but she can't ...* I refused to be personally welcomed and to have my companion rejected. After talking matters over, they finally opened their doors and their hearts. Since then, they feel honoured to introduce the groups of people who come to visit with me.

My visiting the neighbourhood, trying to get close to and develop friendship with these people raised a whole world of expectations. I found it necessary, in our first encounters, to specify clearly what we could

realize together. We spoke of a literacy program, meetings with the women, efforts to sanitize the area by having latrines built, the water channelled and drainage systems installed. As a result of multiple efforts, some projects are already underway. In 1998, 150 latrines will be built in this slum area. I am trying to obtain funds for the construction of small stairs from the people's huts to the main road. In some areas at present,



The beauty and courage of the Haitian woman

whether they like it or not, people have to crawl on their stomach up very steep hills to get to the road. It is also urgent to see to the building of a canal, as water used for daily needs now flows through the small market causing a lot of damage. These projects were deemed a priority by the people themselves. And although the education project for the youth and children has not raised any response, it still remains a necessity.

All needs to be done in this milieu and to dare go there empty-handed is to expect to struggle with the people to transform their situation, to invent with them ways of

freeing themselves from their misery. Investing in this way helps the people understand that what matters is not to receive donations but to contribute their own share. Each one must participate. This demands building together, slowly perhaps, but together. This long process favours mutual respect, fraternity and autonomy.

ACTIVITIES THAT BRING PEOPLE TOGETHER

All this work finds meaning and cohesion in the heart of a Christian community which I animate along with an active pastoral team of twelve adults. We get together for the Sunday Eucharistic celebrations but we also favour other encounters. We organize recreational outings for the children and adults, movies, a mini-fair in view of generating funds for the school needs of underprivileged students and of creating some revolving funds for poor families. We offer training on first aid, conferences, discussion groups on the choices to be made in life, days of recollection and listening to the Word of God. These are the types of activities that bring us together. They sprang from our desire to love and to serve other people as Jesus invites us.

They constantly draw us to the Gospel, the Good News that liberates and recreates.

Why do I prefer these types of commitment and not respond to other urgent requests? *I came that they may have Life and have it to the full.* (Jn 10:10). These words of Jesus explain my deep feelings, my commitment: to make life flow, to be accountable for the hope that is alive in me, to be present to the poor, to create joy and happiness even in the midst of great difficulties. I thus want to make the poor feel that they are important to me, and especially important to God and loved by Him. I urge them to be both subjects and actors of their own history. □

PASSAGEWAYS TO DEMOCRACY

By DORIS TWYMAN, M.I.C.



Sr. Doris Twyman has been in Malawi, Central Africa, for the past 30 years. From the very start, she got deeply involved with the Young Christian Students (YCS). The members of this Catholic Action movement are very active in the high schools and colleges of the country. With the shift to democracy, the need for sound civic education is felt in Malawi, says Sr. Doris, and for the YCS, this is a priority.

Liberty! Democracy! These words raise a great deal of hope and stir up dreams of a better life. Wherever they are heard, they awaken the deep yearnings of the human heart. However, the call to democracy and freedom also gives rise to many shocks, discussions and even illusions.

A CHANGE IN DIRECTION

In the course of the 60's, many African countries achieved political independence. The first heads of states worked at building up the identity of their countries made up of several tribes. As the years went by, some leaders became authoritarian, intolerant, and turned into dictators. In several countries, the people were subjected to a one-party rule. For the last ten years, we have been witnessing the decline of several African states.

Malawi was not spared this political and social crisis which sweeps across the continent. In 1992, a whole series of events began to happen, culminating in the demise of the totalitarian regime led by Dr. Hastings Banda, the country's president since 1964 and president-for-life since 1971. In March 1992, a pastoral letter of the Bishops identified the citizens' rights and duties as well as the types of action to be undertaken to solve the crucial problems related to health, education and participation in public life. In the following months, European ambassadors had to intervene to protect the lives of the eight Bishops who had signed the document. In May, due to the flagrant violations of human rights - disappearances, poisonings, assassinations - the European community applied pressure



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

For Sr. Doris, weekends are spent in meetings with YCS groups.

by cutting financial aid. In June 1993, a referendum was then held to choose between having several political parties or only one, after which various groups were, in fact, formed. Within two years, the population frantically experienced the shift to democracy. At last, the people were allowed to express themselves, to assert their rights and put an end to prohibitive regulations. Everything was allowed.

THE YCS IN A COUNTRY IN CRISIS

How could the young people be reached in the midst of such social transformation? Since a Catholic Action movement existed in most of the high schools of the country, we decided to use the *See-Judge-Act* method specific to Young Christian Students (YCS). This pedagogy with the spirituality of the movement would help the youth to question the manner of building a democratic society and to find inspiration and direction in their faith and in the Bible.

In 1994, the youth leaders chose as the theme of their national meeting: *Democracy and Christian Youth*. Along with Yohanne, Agatha, Clara and Donald, I returned to Mzuzu full of enthusiasm to take up this Christian civic education. Posters and social surveys were prepared. With this material, YCS groups were visited during weekends. We also organized our own rally for the Diocese of Mzuzu, which represents one third of the country. Approximately twelve schools participated, i.e., roughly 300 students. Resource people were invited. Judge Charles Mkandawire spoke to us about the Charter of Rights and Freedom and Fr. Mark Mkandawire explained the pillars of a true democracy. All these activities were great opportunities for the youth to discuss and share their understanding of democracy. They returned to their schools or colleges with the necessary material needed to continue this reflection in their own YCS section.

TO AVOID TAKING THE WRONG ROAD

Time is short and the social and political upheavals are happening swiftly. And in the midst of it all, young Malawians want to be free and happy. But where will

are all about and how to promote them. Here are a few examples of ways in which they manifest their openness and maturity:

Freedom of speech: The freedom of speech had a magical effect and enthusiasm spread to everyone. Young people talked, wrote and sang to claim their rights. Several of them, however, ended up being imprisoned or thrown out of their schools either for protesting against the school management or for manifesting their revolt by destroying property. They are now aware that learning how to become free is a long process that stems from the heart.

Freedom and the possibility to go to school: This is one of the greatest aspirations of young people in Malawi. When one lives in a country impoverished by a situation of dependency created by forces both within and outside the country, one has to learn to get the best out of what is possible. For young people, this situation is difficult and demands a great deal of patience and creativity. It is an experience of maturity and faith.

Freedom to marry and make key choices concerning the direction to take in life: In the rural and patriarchal society of Malawi, marriage is regarded as a contract between two families. Today, young women want to choose the one they marry and we often see young men breaking away from the yoke imposed upon them by their

Photo: M. P. Charbonneau, M.I.C.



The African family blends tradition with modernity.



Photo: Fr. P. L'Heureux, M. Afr.

The YCS team from Marymount School in Mzuzu plans a new agenda with Sr. Doris.

they find freedom and happiness? The mirage of human rights risks leading them on the wrong road. Young people must realize that while they have rights, others also have rights that must be respected. Growth into a pluralistic society demands a common effort. This is no longer a time for tribal uniformity or totalitarian rule.

With the young people of the Diocese of Mzuzu, we studied the meaning of love, including tolerance, respect and mutual support. We learned how to work together without exploiting one another and to rejoice when others succeed. The respect of human rights is the starting point of a world where hope and joy prevail. As Jesus said: *Do unto others what you would have them do unto you*. With determination and confidence, the YCS have embarked on a long journey. The See-Judge-Act method is bearing fruit. The youth are discovering what their rights

family. This behaviour bears consequences on their identity and on their sense of belonging to the village and to the family. Actually, many of them pass from the rural to the urban areas and live by opposite values: solidarity-individualism, liberty-responsibility. It is a time of learning in which they are called to discern what is best and to live by it.

This outcome, though minimal, is a source of great hope for me. It challenges me to carry on with renewed courage the formation of *missionaries at home* - the Young Christian Students. They play an important role in the building of a country where the dignity and rights of the individual are recognized, where traditional and modern values are respected. □

HEALTH FOR ALL

By JACQUELINE VACHET, M.I.C.

For the past thirteen years, Jacqueline Vachet, M.I.C., has directed Kanyanga Health Center, located in Zambia, Central Africa. A registered nurse and midwife, she is well aware of the challenges one can expect in such an environment. With the help of a competent medical team and the support of world organizations, Sr. Jacqueline pursues with unfailing ardour her ministry of healing and improving the quality of life of the people in the rural areas.

Located in a poverty-stricken region in Eastern Zambia, away from the main highways but close to many small villages, the Kanyanga Health Center buzzes with activity. It cares for nearly a hundred inpatients who are always accompanied by parents and friends. The outpatient department receives each day close to 150 patients. At the maternity unit, one finds about 30 young women, most of them with a newborn baby. Under-five clinic days bring a long line of waiting mothers and their babies. At the hub of all these activities, daily tasks are attended to by the medical team: 2 medical assistants, 14 nurses two of whom are midwives, and a maintenance team of about 30 people. Founded by the M.I.C.s in 1957, the Center has since expanded considerably and has become a reference point for other dispensaries in the surrounding area.

A PLAN OF ACTION

We live today in a period when individual health problems preoccupy the international community. Fifty years ago, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the right of all individuals to a standard of living which guarantees their well-being, especially as far as nutrition and medical services are concerned. In 1978, the World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF translated these principles into measures and practices under the name of *Primary Health Care*. Its goal: *Health for all in the year 2000*, by bringing health care as close as possible to where the people live and work. Right from the onset of the project, Kanyanga Health Center, a network facility of the country's health system, adopted the various preventive and educative programs proposed.



Photo: M. P. Charbonneau, M.I.C.

Outpatient clinic days allow Sr. Jacqueline to give special attention to mothers and their babies.

After two decades, the Center benefits from a long and effective experience in the area of primary health care. The impact of these efforts is increasingly evident. The present generation is more convinced of the benefits of preventive medicine. More people know how to prevent malaria and how to use simple remedies such as oral rehydration to alleviate the side effects of diarrhea. More women attend prenatal clinics and have their children immunized against childhood diseases. The preventive and educative programs that have been set up aim particularly at safeguarding both mother and child, the two most vulnerable groups exposed to this situation. More villages offer a cleaner

environnement and better sanitation facilities. Health education means educating people in understanding the cause of ill health and promoting their own health needs. These programs in villages are a priority. At present, 26 persons have been initiated to the approach and ongoing formation sessions are being carried out on a regular basis.

A NEW CHALLENGE

For the past 15 years, AIDS has been added to the long list of specific tropical diseases which undernutrition renders more threatening and devastating. Of the eight million inhabitants in Zambia, close to 700,000 are infected and 13,000 children have become orphans.



Denise Duhamel, M.I.C. and villagers welcome the boon of safe drinking water!

In Kanyanga, 10 new cases are diagnosed each month. The tracking down and follow-up of AIDS victims demand immediate attention so as to control the further spread of the disease. Solidarity is placed into action. Formation seminars are organized in the villages and in the schools. By means of education, we aim at ensuring the prevention of the disease. Treatment as well as psychological, social and pastoral support are provided to all those concerned. Volunteers are mobilized to attend to the sick and to distribute medication. Yet the situation is far from being simple and the means on hand are very often inadequate.

INTER-CHURCH SOLIDARITY

Commitment to a mission in a remote health center entails a certain amount of stress to acquire financial support for the good functioning of established programs. Even more so, since the contribution of the already impoverished rural population is very minimal. Due to this difficult social and

economic situation in the country, the government is unable to respond alone to all the needs. Under such circumstances, the collaboration and support of various world and Church organizations are indispensable.

In 1995, we derived great benefit from the generosity of *Misereor*, a mutual aid organization of the German Church. The outpatient clinic was enlarged and the number of beds increased from 58 to 104. We also made headway in the renovation of the maternity ward, of two isolation rooms and in the construction of houses for the personnel and for relatives and friends who accompany the patients. The installation of solar panels and a system of water reservoir was the key-innovation in the expansion history of the Health Center. These commodities alleviate our tasks and allow us to offer maximum conditions of cleanliness and hygiene necessary for a higher quality of medical service on the premises.



Photos: J. Vochet, M.I.C.

Health workers actively participate in promoting primary health care.

Every improvement is seen as a step forward towards the health goals set for the new millennium. The Center carries out pilot projects which, we hope, will be shared with others in the future, for the people's benefit. Church and government representatives show great interest in the development and expansion of the Center. They participated in the official opening of its recent major renovation and expansion. We thank God and we pray for all the people who have made such a project possible. Pride and gratitude are evident on the faces of the people of Kanyanga.

PERSONS FIRST

Each day brings a constant struggle against disease. Our efforts on behalf of the patients and their families are reinforced by the visits and pastoral activities organized in the Center as well as in the surrounding villages by the Parish team and other groups.

My days are filled with multiple tasks to ensure the smooth functioning of the Center and to respond to emergency situations, especially at the maternity unit. In the midst of all this, the sick always have priority. I encourage our patients to follow the medical treatment and to have recourse through prayer to the God of Life. Through my presence, compassion and attention, I try to manifest the loving presence of Christ at their side. I feel privileged to minister to the people of Kanyanga. I am greatly enriched by their confidence, their solidarity, their courage and vibrant zest for life. □

TOGETHER, WE SHAPE THE FUTURE

By AGNES MAO, M.I.C.

Autumn '97, Rome, First International Congress of young men and women religious. 804 delegates coming from 80 countries of the five continents gathered to share their lived experience and to reflect together on the proposed topics: vocation, spirituality, mission, the community, the Church. Agnes Mao, M.I.C. (Taipei, Taiwan) and Carmen Tito Silva, M.I.C. (Lima, Peru) participated in this encounter.

After the publication of the Apostolic Exhortation of John Paul II on the Religious Life, the International Union of the Superiors General decided to hold in Rome an international congress of young men and women religious. Its objective: to build up a network of collaboration where young religious can focus their attention on the signs of the times and renew their hope in the future of religious life.

WHAT WE HAVE SEEN AND HEARD, WE PROCLAIM TO YOU. (1 Jn 1:30)

The Congress was held from September 29 to October 4, 1997. From the very start, we delegates experienced a warm and welcoming atmosphere: a lot of singing, dancing, of sharing and caring, of simplicity.

Above all, we were impressed by the enthusiasm, the joy and the diversity of talents of young religious coming from all over the world. Such an experience opened our hearts to the universality of our faith. Though we were numerous and different, the love of the Lord united us and made us one people. Our God was very much alive in our midst. We were happy to repeat to ourselves that we share in the same mission, that of Mary Magdalene: to announce the Risen Christ to all people. This was the theme of the congress: *We have seen the Lord.*

A flexible and original program of activities was prepared to provide numerous occasions for us to meet and share with other delegates. The morning assembly included the presentation of topics followed by testimonies of some young religious - a Priest, a Brother, a Sister. The workshops adjourned with a joyful and solemn celebration of the Eucharist in varied and rich cultural forms, using different languages. Abundant sharing took place in the afternoon, the participants being grouped according to languages: English, Italian, French, German and Spanish.

On the second day, we assembled at St. Peter's Basilica for the Eucharistic Celebration officiated by Cardinal Eduardo Martinez Somalo, Prefect of the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Later, gathered in the Paul-VI room at the Vatican, we received the message of Pope John Paul II: *Be capable not only of inheriting the glorious history of the past of consecrated life, but also of building the future with traditional and original forms. And the Holy Father insisted: I love you very much ... I have confidence in you!*

More than ever, we now feel responsible to continue in the future the very rich traditions bequeathed to us by the foundresses and founders of our Communities. We are called upon to take risks, to be filled with courage and to discover untravelled paths. Filled with hope, we venture onward, counting on the Spirit to grant us the precious gift of wisdom. □

One from Peru, the other from Asia, these two M.I.C. Sisters meet for the first time in Rome.



Taking a Stand for Life

*I commit myself to the struggle for Life,
life simmering among those who are shut out,
among the children abandoned in the streets,
among the battered women,
the homeless, the sick,
among those who hunger for bread and for love;
life reflected in the resistance, the faith
and the hope of those who have nothing;
life thriving in communities that share their bread.*

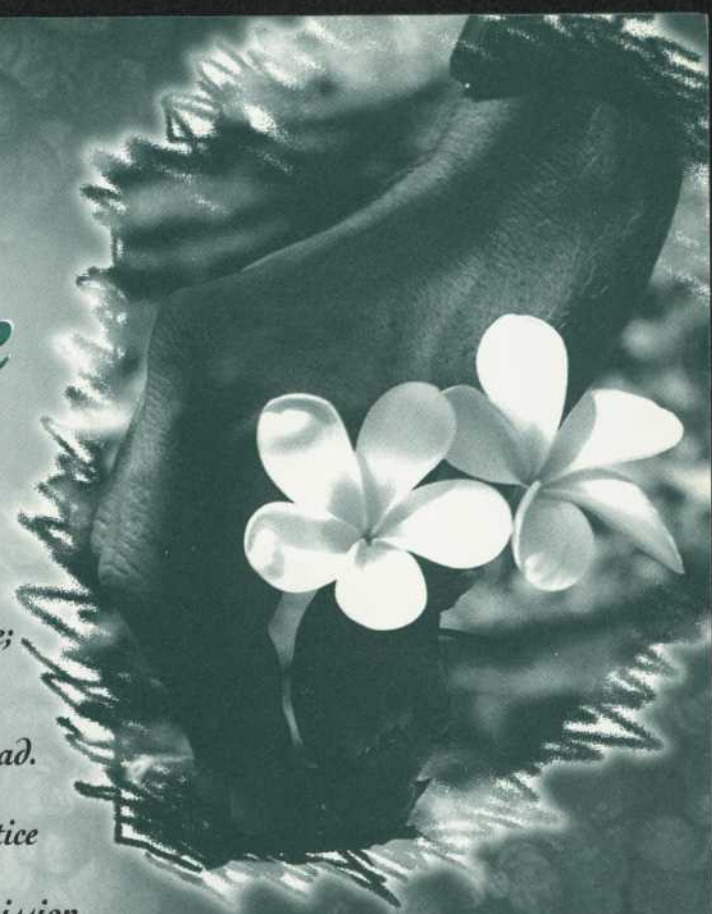
*I commit myself never to play the game of injustice
and never to oppress anyone.
I shall work that politics may be carried out as a mission,
an exercise of power used in service.*

*I want my eyes to be pure and my heart to be open
to discern the newness that is just born,
especially among the excluded.
I want the look in my eyes to be again one of awe
at the possibilities of the world and of my environment.*

*I want to live in friendship, to lavish deeds of mercy,
thoughtfulness, sharing and free-flowing generosity,
to always seek out the hidden beauty in people and things.
I want to act with courage and a clear mind,
with initiative and hope,
against discrimination and every type of violence
and always ask myself what I can do wherever I am.*

*I thank the women and men of my generation
who nourish our lives with their utopian dreams.
I proclaim my faith in the God of Life,
the God of infinite tenderness who manifests Himself
like a soft, whispering breeze drawing one to listen quietly.
I have come that all may have LIFE,
an abundance of Life.*

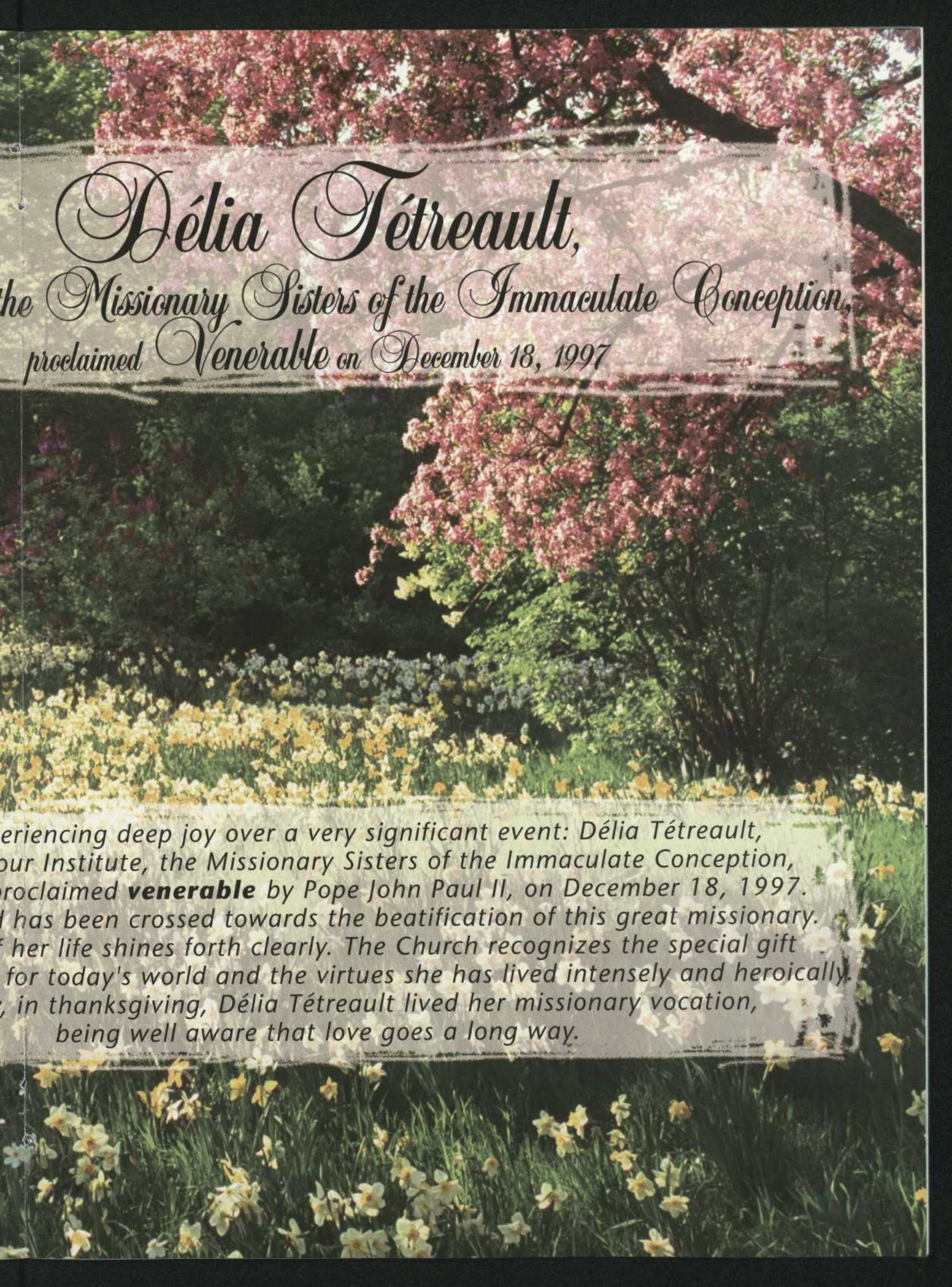
Adaptation of a text read at various public manifestations
of the Church of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, for the struggle against exclusion.





Foundress of the

*We are experie
Foundress of our
was officially procl
A first threshold has
The beauty of her
Délia has received for
With Mary, in*

A photograph of a garden scene. In the foreground, there is a field of yellow daffodils. Behind them, there are green bushes and trees with pink blossoms, likely cherry or plum trees. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day.

Délia Tétreault,

the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception,
proclaimed Venerable on December 18, 1997

Experiencing deep joy over a very significant event: Délia Tétreault, of our Institute, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, was proclaimed **venerable** by Pope John Paul II, on December 18, 1997. She has been crossed towards the beatification of this great missionary. Her life shines forth clearly. The Church recognizes the special gift for today's world and the virtues she has lived intensely and heroically. In thanksgiving, Délia Tétreault lived her missionary vocation, being well aware that love goes a long way.

I Have No One



By CHRISTIAN BEAULIEU

*It happens one day: we
are saved by something,
pulled out of trouble by a
hand stronger than our own.*

*And we come alive again,
filled with hope. How many
have gone through this kind of
passage, this Easter experience!*

*But as in the case of the
paralyzed man of Bethzatha,
an admission of powerlessness
has to gusk forth from the
depth of one's being:*

I have no one, I can't do it on my own.

Do you remember this man who had been paralyzed for 38 years and whom the Gospel shows us lying among a crowd of crippled people on the edge of the pool of Bethzatha? (Jn 5:1-18). In order to be cured, he would have had to throw himself into the water at the very moment it began to stir. But there he was, paralyzed, unable to move, always waiting for something that should happen but never did. He felt he was missing all the action and was unable to become an important actor on the great scene of life. He had to be content with being but a powerless spectator. What a terrible feeling of chronic uselessness and total incapacity. Thirty-eight years! A whole life long!

I HAVE NO ONE ...

What happened in the life of this man that he should have reached this point ... of being always close to doing something without ever taking action? Why was he never able to get any further? Why had he done nothing with his life, and why was he doomed to failure?

He must have often wondered: Who will set me free? Who will heal me? But every time the water began to stir and his heart began to pound, the moment never lasted. Life and good luck escaped him like fresh, pure and precious water running through his fingers.

Upon seeing him, Jesus knew full well that this man ardently desired his share of life and his fill of happiness. He asked him: Do you want to be cured? From the depth of his soul the paralytic answered: I have no one. I can't do it on my own. An admission of powerlessness that set him on his way cured him and saved him!

IMMEDIATELY, THE RIVER GUSHED FORTH!

Jesus said to him: Get up, take your cot and walk. That very moment, the man was cured. A river of grace gushed forth and flowed through his whole being. Life, which had too long been held back by fear, suddenly threw down the protective dams and invaded him completely. Vigour, generosity and love began to flow through him.

And the cured man took his cot and walked ... Such is the power of the Love of God poured into our hearts. Such is the strength of this Love which

awakens and makes one accountable. Such is this Love that has the power to move mountains, to change the course of a life, to strike evil at its root and to give a new start toward the future.

To carry our cot means to take control of our negative experiences, intelligently and courageously. It means to start from our past, to use our history for leverage and the hard blows we have endured to help ourselves to go forward. To carry our cot does not mean to start from scratch, to begin again with nothing; it means to be able to rely on an incredible amount of experience acquired through hardship at the school of life and now available for the benefit of hundreds of others.

NOT CURED ONCE AND FOR ALL

The cured man walked freely in the Temple with his cot. But this was the Sabbath day, and this was reason enough to raise the suspicion of those who would not acknowledge God's work in the miracle of Jesus. Who told you to do this? the Jews asked. The one who cured me, said the man who had been paralyzed. But he did not know the name of the One who had cured him. Later, he met Him in the Temple and Jesus said to him: Now that you are cured, do not sin any more; something even worse could happen to you.

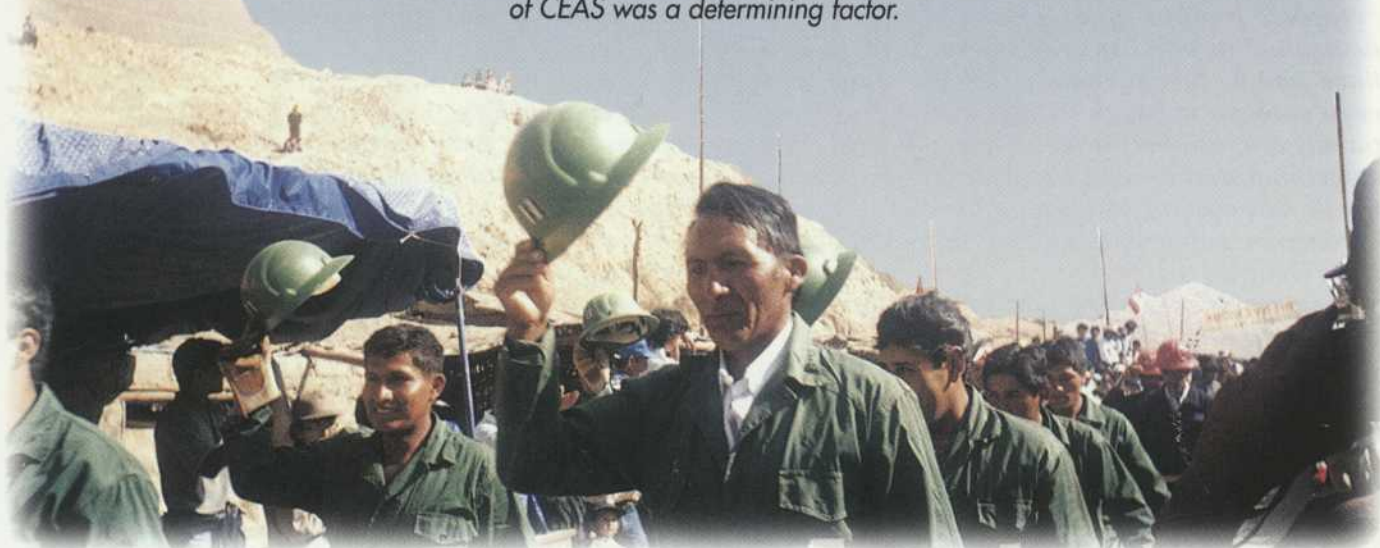
It is quite fitting that one should live in a way that is consistent with the gift received. This gift is a gem, a treasure not to be jealously kept for oneself, but to be shared. Whoever wants to hide it is in for trouble: something even worse could happen to him. What is even worse is not the inevitable failures of life, nor the repeated errors, nor the eventual mishaps of the journey. What is even worse is when, after a repeated error, we drop everything, refuse to take one more step and lie down on our cot instead of resuming the struggle. What is even worse is to stop relying on grace and to settle for powerlessness.

May we, after the example of Jesus, be in the life of those paralyzed by fear and exclusion like the desert people ... people who know how to find hidden wells under the sand dunes and even smell the fragrance of wellsprings kilometers away to guide their caravans to them. May our eyes ever be full of hope that we may discern the vibrant forces of life. □

The Gold Miners of Mollehuaca

By AGNÈS BOUCHARD, M.I.C.

Twenty-seven years in Peru! A long pastoral experience among the impoverished mining population of Yauri, in the Peruvian Andes. A commitment to the Episcopal Social Action Commission (CEAS) and ministry to the informal gold miners in the valleys of Chala, Department of Arequipa. Agnès Bouchard played an important role in training and guiding Peruvian miners. She tells us here about the pilot project of Chala-Mollehuaca in which the contribution of CEAS was a determining factor.



Proudly happy of their success, gold miners celebrate the inauguration of the mining plant.

There stands a man in the almost empty store. Between his rough fingers he clutches a gram of gold. During three weeks of hard labour, he has carried down a ton of rock on his back, and grounded them to dust with a huge semi-circular stone. To extract the gold he then mixed the product with mercury, a highly toxic element, using his bare hands. But he succeeded. There, in his hand, is his gram of gold; it will bring in enough money to feed his family. The mining contractor walks in. He weighs the gold, makes his assessment and offers \$7.00! It's a deal! The speculator has just made the profit he had hoped for!

This is one case among thousands of others. The miners are a very vulnerable group of people. Being poor, uneducated and isolated, their only role is to produce, when they barely have the strength to stay alive. They always cash in more hard labour than wages.

MINISTERING TO THE MINERS

When I first arrived in Yauri in 1972, I worked among the miners from the very start. This region of the Andes, located at an altitude of 4,000 metres (13,000 ft.), is rich in silver and copper mines. The peasants of three small villages - Tintaya, Attalaya and Suykuytambo - lived in great poverty. The soil being unproductive, cattle raising is possible but only with technical guidance, and the marketing of wool is difficult. For many, working at the mine was a matter of survival, but in subhuman conditions. Becoming increasingly conscious of the problems such exploitation brought upon them, these people decided to take action.

Aware that knowledge is power, I invested a great deal in the formation of miners. In order to sit at the negotiation table, a miner must know how the world of mining works, how the enterprise is organized economically, legally and in

terms of labour relations. He must also understand what his rights and responsibilities are and how to make realistic claims, always in solidarity with the whole group of workers. I often travelled to Lima with delegates (a 30-hour trip by bus), to take part in national meetings which afforded us some very good contacts with other mining workers, with the Mining Federation of Peru, the Mining Women's Center (women were very involved along with their husband) and with the International Mining Federation.

THE CEAS

In 1992, after my experience in the formal mining sector, I joined the Episcopal Social Action Commission (CEAS), a branch of the Bishops' Conference of Peru. In 1968, faced with the fact of increasing poverty, the resulting dehumanization and the seething violence, the Bishops decided to get involved with the people. Through CEAS and by means of



A mining plant, one of its kind in Peru!

various programs, they tried to counter poverty and to respond to the needs of a vulnerable population: peasants, slum people, displaced persons for political reasons, miners. This Commission comprised 70 professional people: lawyers, engineers, sociologists, social workers and others.

At CEAS, there were now more than 100,000 informal miners, GOLD MINERS. In order to survive, these peasants of the Andes ploughed the river beds in the south, dug tunnels of shafts on the mountain tops and searched all over the plains and valleys for gold deposits. They knew nothing about mining; they worked

like the pre-Inca-age people and received derisory pay from the mining contractors or their subordinates. In Mollehuaca, however, a group of miners organized themselves and following the request of the Bishop of Caraveli, the Commission guided them. I therefore set out to meet these gold miners and their families. In the course of those tours, I was able to become more aware of their situation, to listen to their aspirations, to witness the maturation of their project and finally, to support their decision. CEAS guided them toward legal and technical assistance, after which it approached the *General Fund of Contravalor Peru-Canada* for possibilities of financial help. This organization which assists vulnerable groups in Peru was interested in the project. The director encouraged us to carry on.

Hector Figueros, director of the mining sector of CEAS and an involved Christian, Dr. Zoila Martinez, resource person concerning the miners of Peru, and myself went to work. Mrs. Martinez, who is also ex-minister of Energy and Mines, had the knowledge and the contacts needed to realize the legal and technical parts of the project. She was familiar with the region of Mollehuaca and knew that the *chinito* zone had no owner. The CEAS committed itself to ensure the feasibility of the project and, hence, to pay the geologist and other experts needed for the study. What remained to be done was to build the road, promote the local development of the zone and find the

machinery. In 1994, with all this work to be done, I was called back to Canada on urgent business. But the project was guaranteed by CEAS and Bishop Bernardo Kuhnel Langer, prelate of Caraveli, assumed its responsibility. I was thus able to leave. In 1995, I left Canada to work in Cuba. The very same year, *Contravalor Peru-Canada* gave its approval for the financing of a project for the integral development of the zone, its primary objective being the existing cyanide plant in the area.

WORK - ETHIC - SOLIDARITY

Two years later, as I was in Colón, Cuba, Zoila Martinez managed to contact me: *Agnès, Saturday, July 19, will be the inauguration of the mining plant of Mollehuaca ... You must be there without fail. We are expecting you! I am sending you your plane ticket.* Thus, on Saturday, around 11 a.m., I was on the site of the mine. How moving it was for me to be, once again, among the 268 members of the mining community and their families!

The inauguration program began with the singing of the national anthem and the raising of the flag of the mine, on which one could read: WORK - ETHIC - SOLIDARITY. What we are experiencing now is not customary in Peru, where we are continually plunged in a culture of problems, conflicts and complaints, said the Vice-Minister of Energy and Mines. *What we are experiencing today properly reflects the fact that achievements are possible when there is unity and solidarity in a common undertaking. Improvement of life and organization is essential. The miners of the enterprise now own more than 1,700 hectares of land to be exploited for the production of five to six kilos of gold per month. Their plant is registered in the Public Record of Mines.*

The life of these gold miners has changed completely. It is evident that their hearts overflow with thanksgiving as they remember the blessings of God and praise Him for the successful undertaking. God who thus makes *all things new* cannot be absent from their hearts. □

Photos: M.I.C. Peru



Center: Sr. Agnès Bouchard and Dr. Zoila Martinez, Directress-manager



RITA PAGEAU, M.I.C.
From Montreal,
Archdiocese of Montreal.
Returned to Haiti
in October 1997.



ROSARIO SALAZAR, M.I.C.
From Gagalangin, Manila
Archdiocese of Manila,
Philippines.
Left for Haiti in
November 1997
after working in Peru.



ADRIENNE GUAY, M.I.C.
From Albanel,
Diocese of Chicoutimi.
Returned to Madagascar
in November 1997.



NICOLE JOLY, M.I.C.
From Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes,
Diocese of Joliette.
Returned to Madagascar
in November 1997.



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

WITNESSES OF THE GOSPEL, IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE WORLD!



LISE BRUNET, M.I.C.
From Montreal,
Diocese of Montreal.
Returned to Malawi
in November 1997.



GABRIELLE DROUIN, M.I.C.
From Inverness,
Diocese of Quebec.
Returned to Taiwan
in January 1998.



SUZANNE TREMBLAY-PERRON, M.I.C.
From Les Éboulements,
Diocese of Quebec.
Returned to the Philippines
in January 1998.



Photo: M.J.C. Madagascar

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*We believe that God will take back with Jesus
those who have died believing in Him
1 Th 4:14*

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in one of our houses around the world.*

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To you all, our sincere sympathy and our prayers.

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Bread of Friendship and Fidelity

By MARY OLGA LAM, M.I.C.

Memories of certain people remain ever alive in our hearts. Meeting them again after years of separation is a deeply moving experience. Sr. Mary Olga Lam, Chinese, tells about a brief encounter with members of a religious Community formed by the M.I.C. Sisters in Shanghai, before the war.

We've never forgotten you, the Sisters told Sr. Mary Olga and her companions. It was Holy Thursday. The experience had the savour of bread shared among faithful friends.

We are leaving for China! Évangéline Plamondon, M.I.C., Superior General, Maria Vie Chua, M.I.C., Assistant General for Asia, Celia Chua, M.I.C., Provincial Superior of Taiwan and myself. The purpose of our trip: to visit certain places where the M.I.C. Sisters have worked and still work and to obtain information in view of a new M.I.C. apostolic insertion in China.

We wanted particularly to meet the Theresian Sisters, a Chinese religious Community founded in 1931 by Bishop Simon Tsu and formed by our Sisters. When the M.I.C.s left Tsung Ming in 1948, the Theresians, now fully autonomous, remained very grateful to the Canadian Sisters who had accompanied them throughout their foundation years.

These historical bonds between our religious families have been kept alive through faith, prayer and gratitude. The first Theresians have learned to keep the flame burning and to pass it on to a new generation. Sr. Celia is the only one among us who previously met Sr. Mary Loh, Superior General of this Community. Aged 82, she is one of the first group of Theresian Sisters.

On our arrival in Shanghai, Sr. Mary Loh, accompanied by a young Sister, came especially to greet us. She invited us to go to Tsung Ming to meet her Sisters. Yes, we will go! ... We deeply felt the urgency and necessity of realizing this trip. After 50 years, our two Communities have found one another. Sr. Mary Loh left the same day to prepare a welcome for us.

ON THE WAY TO TSUNG MING

To our surprise, we learned that the round trip by boat to Tsung Ming is four hours long. Add a few hours in the city traffic to get to the port. Almost the entire day traveling! But we decided to go anyhow. It is Holy Thursday and it is a journey of love because we bring all the affection and greetings of the M.I.C.s from all over the world.

Up at 5:00 sharp in the morning, we have to reach the port and from there, be transported to a ferry bringing us to our destination. None of us had made the trip before. We arrived at the port at 7:30 a.m. where a large crowd had been waiting patiently. At 8:00 a.m. we were all ushered into 'tumble-down' coaches. Zigzagging through the crowded backstreets of Shanghai, we finally reached the Yangtse River where a passenger boat was waiting to take us to Tsung Ming. The waters of the Yangtse

Sr. Mary Olga takes photos of the historic reunion.



Photo: M.-V. Chua, M.I.C.



Sr. Évangéline Plamondon and Sr. Mary Loh, Superiors General

were murky and yet calm. A sense of wonder and expectation enveloped us. The very thought of meeting the Theresians kept us on tiptoe. The boat ride went by quickly and we found ourselves preparing to disembark. As we walked to the bow of the boat, we then saw standing at the dock, Sr. Mary Loh surrounded by a group of young smiling women.

We disembarked at 2:00 p.m. and were told that the boat was leaving at 2:30 p.m. We had but 30 minutes to meet one another! The Sisters took us to the waiting room where the Superior General reiterated her gratitude and appreciation for the M.I.C. Sisters. Even after all these years, she can mention some of them by name. The younger ones were radiant with joy: they knew the history of their Congregation and have heard so much about our Community. And here we were, represented by the Superior General and three M.I.C.s of Chinese origin. These 30 minutes were historic moments filled to the brim with affection, attention and presence.

MYSTERIOUS BUNDLES

As we walked up the gangway to the boat, the Sisters handed us some parcels while bidding us goodbye. There was neither time to ask what they contained nor to thank the Sisters for them. The Sisters remained on the dock until the boat

left. We will never forget their last smile and the last look in the eyes of Sr. Mary Loh.

When seated, we opened one parcel to discover four buns and four cartons of fruit juice. In another parcel were four neatly wrapped packages. Knowing how poor the Theresians were, their gifts touched us deeply. The sight of the buns also reminded us that we had not taken our lunch. We relished with gratitude the delicious bread they had so thoughtfully prepared for us. It was Holy Thursday! And we recalled the Last Supper, the intense moments and words of intimacy Christ shared with His apostles. The bread He shared ... bread that became His Body - The Eucharist! And on Holy Thursday 1996, aboard this Chinese boat sailing along the Yangtse River, we were being fed by bread bought with the little savings the Theresian Sisters had. We did not know them,

but it was enough for them to know that we were M.I.C.s and that

we had come to visit them. What openness, trust and hospitality permeated our brief encounter!

I then recalled a movie my parents had brought me to see as a child: *Pane e Vino*. It was about a boy who had wandered into a church and was awed by the sight of a huge crucifix hanging above the altar. The corpus was so lifelike that the boy started to talk to it. The boy found the corpus a very good listener and so, day after day, he returned to the church to talk to Jesus, hanging on the cross. One scene had a strong impact on my young mind and remains very clear. After a few encounters, the boy asked Jesus why he was hanging on the cross ... would he come down? Well, Jesus did descend from the cross and even gave the boy some bread to eat and wine to drink. I had never quite grasped the full significance of this gesture ... Today, 40 years later, slowly savouring the bun offered by the Sisters of Tsung Ming, I relive this experience. *Wherever two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in your midst* (Mt 18:20)! Yes, whenever there is sharing, whether it be when love gathers us together or in the sharing of bread, we accomplish anew Christ's mission. He is present in our midst.

After the frugal meal, each of us took a package, opened it and remained speechless. We realized that the Sisters were using their send-off presents to express to us their blessing and good wishes. Chinese people often express their feelings through symbols; these symbols come alive and become eloquent instruments of communication as they are given and received as gifts. Here are the pictures of the GIFTS. Look at them closely and, if you wish, share your reflections with me. In turn, in a coming text, I will tell you what these gifts mean to me! □



Communicate with Sr. Mary Olga Lam, c/o MIC MISSION NEWS, P.O. Box 157, Stn Laval-des-Rapides, Laval, QC Canada H7N 4Z4

Photos : M.-O. Lam, M.I.C.

In the Garden of God

*Parting here on earth
foreshadows a
rendezvous in eternity*

Délia Tétreault, M.I.C.

Sister Berthe Pothier (Marthe-de-Béthanie)

Born in Trois-Rivières on the 3rd of May 1907, Berthe grew up in a happy family environment. At the age of 19, she decided to become a religious in the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. A year after she joined our Community, she had the joy of welcoming her sister Marie-Ange, to the postulancy.



in the middle of the revolution.

For several years, Sr. Berthe worked in the circulation department of our missionary magazines and then as receptionist at our retreat house of Joliette. Later, she assumed a service of authority at the Apostolic School of Rimouski.

Named to Cuba in 1948, she founded, along with other M.I.C. companions, the mission of Marti. There, she witnessed the rise of the Communist movement in Cuba. In 1960, she had to leave the country, then

The following year, she set out for Cochabamba, Bolivia, and later for Irupana where she worked as receptionist and also as bookkeeper at the local hospital. Being exquisitely courteous and thoughtful, she welcomed every person with discreet kindness, and was thus appreciated by all. She was a devoted missionary, very humble, approachable and understanding.

Sr. Berthe lighted up her daily tasks with her joy, her kindness and her gentleness, thus radiating the charity of Christ. During her years of retirement at our house of Pont-Viau, she kept her radiant smile, a reflection of the light dwelling deep within her. She died at the Cité de la Santé Hospital in Laval on the 17th of September 1997, at the age of 90 years, having lived 71 years in religious life.

Sister Éva Buteau (Marie-Bénigna)



Éva was born on the 6th of September 1907, in St-Honoré-de-Shenley, county of Beauce. She lived a happy life in a family whose rich values of faith, generosity and solidarity have deeply marked her whole life. On March 2, 1931, she entered the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception where her eldest sister, Alice, had preceded her.

For 24 years, Sr. Éva worked in Quebec and in St-Jean promoting our magazine LE PRÉCURSEUR, while contributing generously to various community tasks. During 22 years she fulfilled her ministry of sewing liturgical vestments at our Mother House. Gifted with a natural liking for needlework, she executed her work with great skill and concern for perfection. Her sound business sense, acquired when she worked at the family

store, was put to advantage in making the necessary purchases for the sewing room as well as in satisfying the customers who came to buy items from our workroom. Being in charge of the little store where religious articles and handicraft articles are sold for the benefit of our missions, she was noted for her practical common sense, her courtesy, her gentleness, modesty and thoughtfulness in dealing with people. She was also in charge of the museum of exotic souvenirs from our different missions.

In 1989, she went into retirement at our house of Pont-Viau. She passed away on October 6, 1997, at the age of 90 years, having lived 66 years in religious life. Sr. Éva was a woman of few words, inconspicuous, but a good listener, showing compassion to those around her. Her great devotion to Mary was a continuous source of comfort to her. Her generosity and welcoming attitude revealed the meaning she gave to her whole life.

Sister Cécile Blais (Cécile-de-la-Trinité)

Cécile was born in Sherbrooke on June 24, 1917. She lived a happy childhood in a close-knit family where everyone experienced love and shared tasks. After completing her studies, she opened a hairdressing salon in her home and spent her free time taking courses in music, hygiene and first aid. At the age of 25, she joined the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Her younger sister Thérèse joined our Community a few years later.



Sr. Cécile spent 36 years in Africa: 24 in

Malawi and 12 in Zambia. Her dynamism was heightened by her numerous talents and generous heart. For her, nothing was monotonous. Her creative mind, her love of the poor and her zeal for evangelization opened new horizons leading her to many types of undertakings. In our different missions, she was ever ready to help her sisters or the villagers. She looked after orphans during her stay in Katete and Mzambazi, and contributed to the promotion of the village women by giving sewing lessons. She never hesitated to cycle off through cornfield paths to visit the women

in their homes. Her M.I.C. companions, who needed transportation in their catechetical ministry, appreciated her readiness to drive them to remote villages. She also gave religious instruction to a group of children in the neighbourhood.

In 1988, Sr. Cécile returned to Canada and settled in Pont-Viau, where she was in charge of various services. She died at the Hôtel-Dieu Hospital in Montreal on October 21, 1997, at the age of 80 years, 55 of which were lived in religious life. She left the memory of a woman of prayer, eager to bring happiness to those around her.

Sister Lucille St-Onge (Luc-d'Antioche)

Lucille was born in St-Eusèbe, Diocese of Rimouski on January 26, 1942. She made her profession as a Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception on February 11, 1964.

Ardent, courageous by nature and endowed with many talents, Sr. Lucille gave the very best of herself all along her life. Her apostolic dynamism, the fruit of her union with God, opened for her vast fields of activity. In these various commitments, she worked wholeheartedly and with great generosity. She was happy to serve God in all the poor He placed along her path.

In 1973, she set out for her mission on Haitian soil. During 20 years, she exercised her nursing skills with competence in several of our dispensaries. Many of her patients have stayed very grateful to her for saving their lives. She promoted preventive medicine and sought to learn more about the use of the country's medicinal plants, more accessible to the poor who formed the bulk of her clientele.

Her giftedness for repairs of all kinds - in electricity, mechanics, sculpture and do-it-yourself jobs became legendary. She



was not afraid to undertake major projects: tapping a spring of water to provide the people with drinking water or repairing a stretch of road to facilitate the transport of the sick to the hospital. And she still found some time to involve herself in different parish activities.

She returned to Canada in 1992, her health failing. Despite her great desire to live, she surrendered to the will of God who called her to Himself on the 27th of October 1997, at the age of fifty-five, 33 of which she had lived in religious life.

Sister Jacqueline Breault (Françoise-Thérèse)

Jacqueline was born in Pintendre, county of Lévis, on the 18th of October 1920. Surrounded by affection and tenderness, her mother always made sure that she would not turn out over-spoiled with all the attention showered on her by her elder brother and four sisters. On February 1, 1942, at the age of 21, she joined our Institute, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Her sister Cécile, an M.I.C. since many years, welcomed her with joy.



in Cuba and 13 years in Peru. She was a teacher to the core, every lesson being prepared with great care. She listened and boosted morales, encouraged and allowed her students to discover their potentials and be at their best. Listening to the Word of God, being present to God and to others, such was the ideal that translated the personal life experience of Sr. Jacqueline.

For her, all events in life were relevant to the Word of God. Her filial devotion to Mary was profound, convinced that it is Mary who guides us to Jesus.

Service to the Church constituted the second stage of her missionary life and included parish ministry, sessions on the Bible plus guidance of adults and counselling. She also provided a service of authority in Ottawa, Granby, Montreal. In the last years of her life, she devoted herself to community services with total availability and joy and continued to animate meetings on the Word of God. On the 27th of November 1997, at Pont-Viau, Sr. Jacqueline was called to her eternal reward at the age of 77, after 55 years in religious life. □

A good part of her life was dedicated to education: some ten years in Canada, eight

Jeanne Guinois, M.I.C.

NEWSBRIEFS... FROM HERE AND ELSEWHERE

Photo: C. Chua, M.I.C.



A birthday celebration reminds us that life is a precious gift.

TAIWAN

PRESENCE AND WITNESS AT LESHENG

Sr. Celia Chua regularly visits the sick of the Lesheng Leprosarium in Taipei, Taiwan. She has listened closely to what is being lived and cried out in this place of human distress. The lepers have become her friends.

In her letter, we catch glimpses of the mission of compassion that she faithfully carries out in their midst.

Dear Anthea,

You know how life in Taiwan can set up quite an agenda for us! I always have busy days, especially with the administrative tasks of the Province. But on Sunday, a change of rhythm takes place. On this day, I take the bus to Lesheng Leprosarium, where I continue the tradition of our first missionaries when they worked with the lepers of Shek Lung in Canton. Their stories have always impressed me.

Today, though medical advances succeed to practically eradicate leprosy, this disease remains a cause of sorrow for too many people. I easily discover this at the leprosarium, where nearly 700 patients live, some of whom stay at the infirmary without any contact with the

outside. However, most of them have received medical care and present no risk of contagion. Yet they prefer to live at Lesheng because they are marked both physically and psychologically.

It is now ten years since I have been visiting Lesheng. Sunday begins with the celebration of the Eucharist where some thirty people attend. Then everyone enjoys the refreshments while talking about everything and laying aside for a moment the burdens of isolation and indifference. Some stay on for a longer time visiting the wards or the residences. Coming to say hello, giving a smile, a handshake, or a friendly pat on the back are simple gestures that make one feel close and show compassion and love.



For the last 20 years, three religious groups - Buddhists, Presbyterians and Catholics - have been bringing comfort and compassion to the patients at Lesheng. Approximately 150 volunteers offer their services to improve the quality of life of the patients. In the midst of all this misery, there are treasures of generosity and of goodness.

For my part, I go to the women's department to render various services. There are also times when I pray with them, prepare them to receive the Eucharist and even accompany them for their final departure. Every moment I spend with them is precious to me. My friends of Lesheng - Paul, John, Amie, A-la and others, evangelize me and help me to find the gestures that bring confidence and peace. Their faith and hope in God challenge me. I read the Gospel again ... the Passion, Death and Resurrection of Jesus take on a deeper meaning. I discover in a new way how Jesus linked His destiny with that of the sick, the poor and the outcast.

Anthea, by entering this world of the excluded, I have learned a lot. Each person has become unique to me, taking on a new face, a name, a history. I entrust them all to your prayers.

With affection,
Celia, M.I.C.

A SISTER WHO SCORED A HIT!

Here's an enthusiastic letter from a group of sixth graders of Ludger-Duvernay School in Verchères, Quebec. They tell us about a missionary sister who visited them in their school. This letter says a lot about the retired missionaries who have returned to their home country.

On Friday, April 4, we, Gilles Dufour's pupils, met a lady who loves life, is full of energy and, most of all, is young at heart in spite of her 89 years. She is quite well known for she often comes on the school grounds to chat with the young people. And she says she loves them very much. One may have also met her at the municipal library because she does volunteer work there. Of course, we are talking about SISTER ALICE! Our own meeting with her went marvelously well, thanks to her cheerful disposition and amazing sense of humour. Listen to her story ...

She was born in Quebec City in 1908, her name is Alice Magnan and she was the seventh daughter in the family. She said that the seventh one in a family usually has a gift. Jokingly, she said that her gift was to get on other people's nerves. This young girl, who was quite fidgety, liked sports a lot. One of her elder brothers taught her how to swim when she was five years old. She then went into skiing and roller skating, and even now, she still goes swimming. She loved sports so much that she would have liked to make a career of it. Unfortunately, in those days, this type of activity was not highly developed. Perhaps she would have become a Babe Ruth or a Wayne Gretzky, who knows?

At the age of 14, she joined a retreat organized by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and decided then to become a Sister. She entered the novitiate at Laval and studied to become a teacher. At 22, she became a missionary and took the name Sister

Jean-de-Brébeuf. She was first assigned to Rimouski where she taught for the next ten years. In 1943, with four M.I.C. companions, she left for Haiti. There, poverty was everywhere; the desolation wrenched the heart of Sr. Alice. To teach well, she had to learn a new language: Creole. Sadly, after five years of teaching, a mosquito ended her stay in Haiti ... this tiny insect gave her malaria! So Sr. Alice had to come back to Montreal to get medical care.

She taught in Montreal for some time before returning to Rimouski, where she taught for another 17 years. In those years, she also directed the *Café-Chrétien* of the Rimouski prison, sharing the Gospel with the inmates. In this place, they called her Aunt Alice. In 1993, she had to leave Rimouski and this caused her much sorrow for she had grown roots there. So, she came to Verchères, where she has been living ever since.

During her talk, she told us that one of the greatest moments of her life was when she celebrated her 50th anniversary of religious life. She also said that when she dies, she wants her last words to be *Thank You, Lord*.

We too want to thank her because, all her life, Sr. Alice has helped others and she continues to do so by coming to share her cheerfulness with us and to give us words of encouragement. There are few people we know who can approach others as easily as she does. When the Lord receives her, He can then say to her: *Mission accomplished, Sr. Alice!*

*The pupils of Gilles Dufour,
6th Grade*



*Sr. Alice and her young
friends with their teacher,
Gilles Dufour (3rd row, 1st r.)*



SOWING SEEDS OF LIFE

KNOWING THE RIGHTS OF A CHILD AND RESPECTING THEM IS A GOOD WAY FOR US TO BE HAPPY, HEALTHY AND WISE.

YOU'RE RIGHT! LET'S INVITE THE CHILDREN TO MATCH THE CORRECT UN SYMBOLS WITH THE SENTENCES THAT THEY HAVE TO COMPLETE.



These are the symbols of the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Place the number of the correct symbol in the box provided beside each sentence.

- ☐ All the children of the world need love and understanding; they have a _____
- ☐ All the children of the world want to learn things, they want to go to school; they have _____
- ☐ All the children of the world want to eat their fill and be cared for; they have a _____
- ☐ All the children of the world like to be recognized for who they are; they have _____
- ☐ All the children of the world who are handicapped need to have _____

- ☐ All the children of the world want to be helped, if a _____ happens.
- ☐ All the children of the world hate war; they want _____
- ☐ All the children of the world are afraid of cruelty and torture; they want to _____
- ☐ All the children of the world want to learn a trade; they have _____
- ☐ All the children of the world wish all people to live in _____

To complete the sentences:

1. appropriate care 2. body 3. disaster 4. be protected 5. nationality 6. peace
7. universal brotherhood 8. abilities 9. heart 10. intelligence

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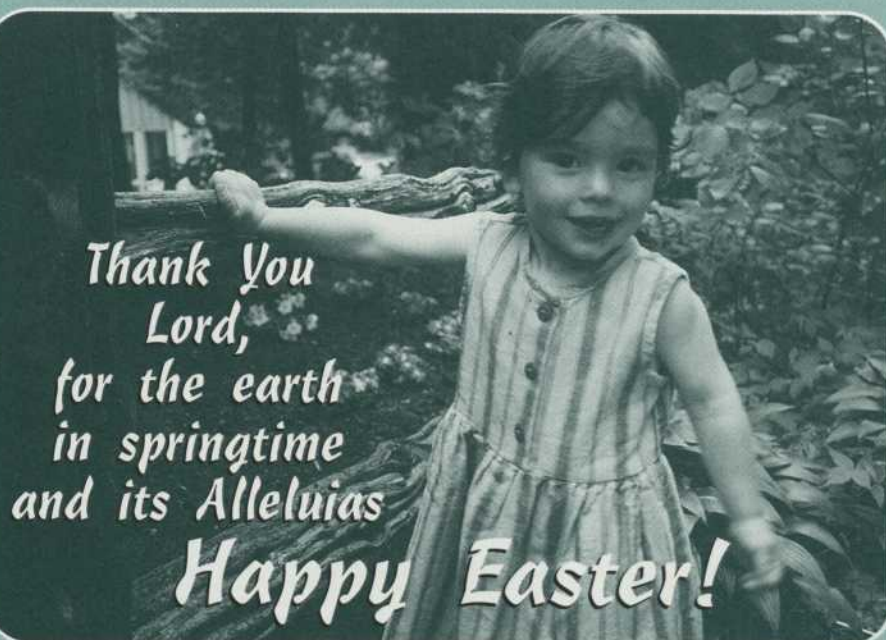
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*Thank You
Lord,
for the earth
in springtime
and its Alleluias
Happy Easter!*

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*We accomplish in our lifetime
only a tiny bit of the magnificent enterprise that is God's work.
Nothing we achieve is complete,
which is a way of saying that the Kingdom always lies beyond us.
We may never see the ultimate results,
but that is the difference between the master builder and the worker.
We are workers, not master builders;
ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own.*

Archbishop Oscar Romero

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