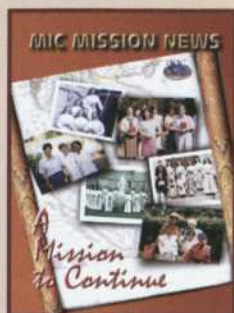


MIC MISSION NEWS

APRIL - MAY - JUNE 2002



*A
Mission
to Continue*



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MIC MISSION NEWS

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- Directress: Louise Denis, M.I.C.
 - Editor: Ma. Anthea Raso, M.I.C.
 - Editing Team: Céline Gauvin, M.I.C., Helene Labelle, M.I.C.
 - Translator: Antoinette Kinlough
 - Promotion: Antoinette Castonguay, M.I.C., A team of M.I.C. Sisters and Lay Collaborators
 - Circulation: Alma Couture, M.I.C., A team of M.I.C. Sisters
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120 Place Juge Desnoyers,
Laval (Quebec) CANADA H7G 1A4
Telephone: (450) 663-6460
fax: (450) 972-1512
E-mail: micnews@colba.net
Web Site: <http://www.soeurs-mic.qc.ca>

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2. Japan. Our Sisters of Aizu Wakamatsu, 1934
3. Madagascar. Antsirabe. Suzette Jean, M.I.C.

4. Cuba. Our Sisters of Colón, 1955
5. Cuba. Havana. M.I.C. Provincial Council
6. Madagascar. First departure, 1952



Madagascar



Cuba



Japan



MISSIONARY INTENTIONS 2002

April

That thanks to the witness of the martyrs of our era,
every Christian may find new courage to proclaim Jesus Christ,
the Redeemer of mankind.

May

That through the intercession of Most Holy Mary, the Virgin Mother,
in every country and culture the vocation of women,
in the family and in society, may be safeguarded and promoted.

June

That lay Christians, with the power received at Baptism,
may commit themselves to being salt of the earth
and light of the world in their daily lives.



Moving Onward...

By Ma. Anthea Raso, M.I.C.

June 3, 2002, marks the 100th anniversary of Délia Tétreault's missionary dream!

The history of our Institute offers an inspiring portrait of a Community in constant transition and shows how, since its foundation in 1902, it has continually placed itself at the core of the Church's missionary effort. With Vatican II, although evangelization remains its focal point, the concept and understanding of the mission steadily evolved. Such has been the case for our Community. Since the 60s, our focus expanded from mainly fields of education and healthcare to more diverse ministries based on the changing needs and actual situations of the people with whom our Sisters live and work.

The articles featured in this issue speak concretely of our Community's presence and service in Madagascar, in Cuba and in Japan. Our Sisters' missionary experience in these lands brought them into contact with peoples of faith, trust and perseverance through daily struggles. All facets of human life have become proper areas for mission work. Along with opportunities providing selfless service to the poor, there evolved a variety of commitments on witnessing to the Reign of God, accompanying people from all walks of life on their journey of faith and working at the grassroots to make the Gospel more visible in the world.

From the very outset of her missionary project, Delia Tétreault had welcomed friends and acquaintances who actively participated in the works of her budding Community. Thus was launched the impetus for lay collaboration which, for a century now, keeps on promoting a precious and admirable participation of lay people in our works and spirituality. In particular, the ASMIC (*Associates of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception*), are in several countries where we are present today. This indeed, is a welcomed flourishing of the Spirit!

The centennial of our Institute is a time for joyful thanksgiving and unwavering hope. It ushers in exceptional moments to look back and to look ahead. Moving onward as we recall the past, we invite our readers to join us in thanking the Lord and to go beyond in sustaining our efforts to bring the light of the Gospel to new challenges. Guided by Délia Tétreault's vision, may we ever draw from her legacy, the strength and wisdom that give meaning to the present and hope for the future.

Our hearts proclaim a feast! What an opportune moment to proclaim Our Lady's joy-filled hymn...

Magnificat!



A Vigorous

Coordination Committee, ASMIC of Quebec
In front: Marie-Claire Bombardier, Jocelyne Dallaire, Suzanne Beaupré-Génois;
at back: Roger Caron, Antoinette Jean, M.I.C., Vivianne Perreault
and Céline Bourbeau, M.I.C.

By Céline Bourbeau, M.I.C

Lay people have always had a special place in the heart of our Foundress. As early as November 20, 1905, Délia Tétreault founded an Association of ladies auxiliaries who helped our missions of China and Africa through prayer, alms and various sewing projects. From this seed sown in the early days, a tree has grown and spread its branches far and wide. Today, this collaboration takes on several forms. Some lay people live the mission in foreign lands along with us; some are involved in our work of missionary animation at home by promoting our magazines; others are associated to our Community by sharing in its spirituality and mission. These are the ASMIC, and Céline Bourbeau, M.I.C. presents them to us in this article.

The Associates of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception are known as ASMIC. These women and men wish to live out their Christian commitment according to the spirituality of Marian and missionary thanksgiving, in their own milieu. Of all nationalities and cultures, they are united with one another by regularly scheduled meetings of formation, celebration and sharing. Through their involvement in social action or pastoral activity, they serve the mission of the universal Church. Actually, where did this trend, observed in several religious communities since the beginning of the 80s, originate?

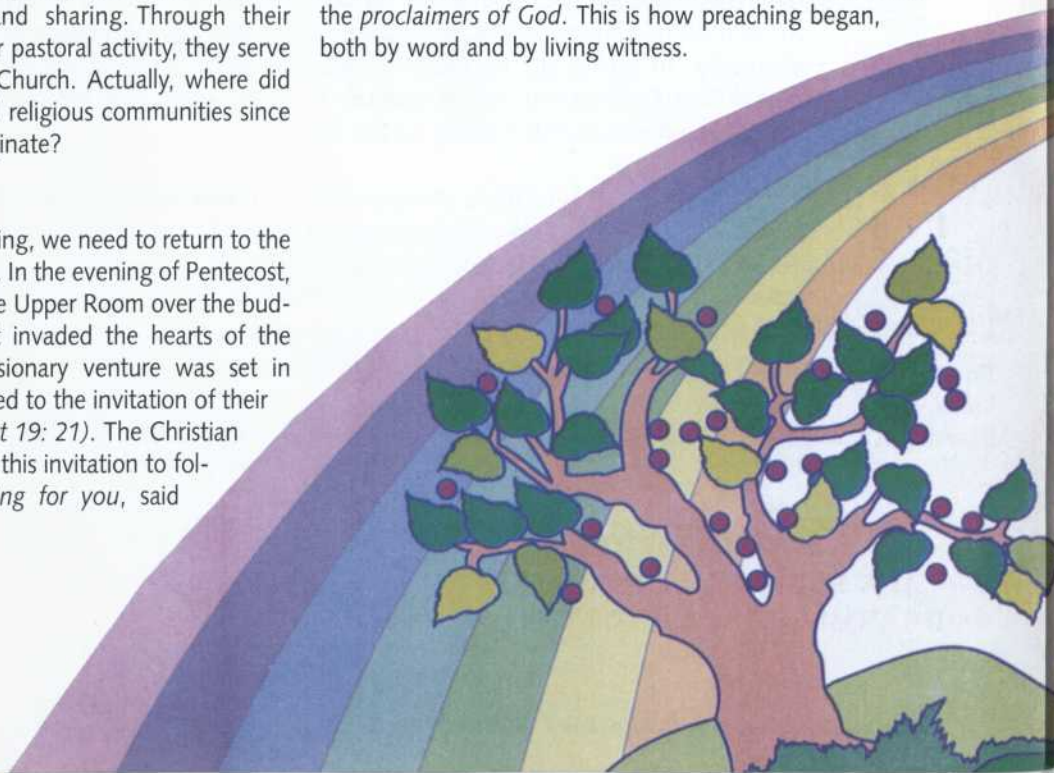
On Pentecost Day

To comprehend its deep meaning, we need to return to the very beginnings of the Church. In the evening of Pentecost, a new gust of wind blew in the Upper Room over the budding Church. The Holy Spirit invaded the hearts of the Apostles, and the great missionary venture was set in motion. The Apostles responded to the invitation of their Master: *Come, follow me!* (Mt 19: 21). The Christian venture is but the response to this invitation to follow Jesus. *Everyone is looking for you*, said Peter to Jesus (Mk 1: 37).

From the time of the Apostles, this fidelity to Christ has taken on many different forms throughout human history. Thus, in the times just following Pentecost, the early Christians accepted and suffered martyrdom because of their attachment to the Risen Lord. A few centuries later, the call to follow Christ echoed in the hearts of *God-seekers*, who withdrew to desert places to devote their entire lives as monks or hermits in the search of God, the absolute Being. Today still, we find in the cloisters such *seekers of God*, a God who is their sole treasure.

In the 13th Century

Those *seekers of God* were joined by *proclaimers of God*. Men such as Saint Dominic wanted to proclaim that some people tried to find God in solitude and prayer. Monasteries arose, in which missionaries of the Word wanted to proclaim the God of Jesus Christ. In that same period, while people went to monasteries or cathedrals to hear the Word proclaimed by the sons of Dominic, Saint Francis of Assisi and his companions went out to people to share the Good News with them. The *seekers of God* were thus joined by the *proclaimers of God*. This is how preaching began, both by word and by living witness.



Tree

In the 16th Century

The Spirit was still present and active in the Church, a Church torn apart by the Protestant Reform. The Church then went through a painful period of change, a period of instability somewhat like the Church of our times, at the beginning of the 3rd millennium. The Spirit now chose Saint Ignatius of Loyola, a *teacher of God*. Not a teacher in words, but one who professed his faith in his life. *I was living like this, but now I will live differently because of my encounter with the Lord*, said Ignatius after his conversion. There are people who, along with him, have a mission to recognize God in their lives and in the events of the world. There are many of them today, *teachers of God*, who live to profess the loving presence of God in the world.

Today

The *seekers of God*, the *proclaimers of God* and the *teachers of God* are joined by all those men and women who have found their own special way to live out their faith and who have developed a spirituality. A spirituality is the special form in which one seeks and follows Jesus; it is a gift of the Spirit to the Church. Every religious community has

its own spirituality, which it must share. Our desire is to share our spirituality of Marian and missionary thanksgiving with men and women of all nationalities and cultures, and in this way the ASMIC came about at the end of the 20th century. We now find the ASMIC in Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Haiti, Madagascar, Peru, Bolivia, Chile and Quebec.

The Vatican II Council stressed the importance of lay people in the Church. Their role is unique and essential for the evangelization of the world. The ASMIC are partners in mission with us. We are filled with gratitude for the bonds of solidarity and belonging that they have developed with us and for their generous and dynamic commitment throughout the world.

N.B.

This article by Céline Bourbeau, M.I.C., actualizes for our Institute a conference given by Pierre Francoeur, C.S.V, during a Colloquium of Associates to Religious Communities.

Pont-Viau. Léonie Therrien, M.I.C. (last row, 2nd r.) and a group of ASMIC



Philippines. Aludia Rufin, M.I.C. (2nd row, 3rd r.), with some of our Sisters and ASMIC of Davao



Haiti. Gisèle Vachon, M.I.C. (1st l.), Éva Daguilh, M.I.C. (2nd row, 1st l.) and some ASMIC of Port-au-Prince



Chile. Gisèle Lachapelle, M.I.C. (1st r.) and several ASMIC of Ancud



MADAGASCAR...

The Great Island

By Louise Denis, M.I.C.

The Island of Madagascar, located in the Indian Ocean, east of the coast of Africa, ranks the fourth largest in the world with a population of nearly 17 million. It displays an extraordinary natural patrimony in sites of outstanding beauty and in the exceptional variety of its vegetation and wildlife. The damp and luxuriant forests of the northeast are in sharp contrast with the almost barren landscape of the south where the baobab trees and the dry undergrowth are very similar to what is found in the South African bush. In the centre of the island is a stretch of highlands, the kingdom of mountains and terrace cultivation, where every valley is used as a rice paddy. *Everything grows on our island*, proudly claims a peasant of Antsirabe. But the rates of productivity and profit are very low. There has been intensive logging, and now, erosion is causing laterite to surface, hence the name of *Red Island* that is sometimes used.

Over the centuries, the Oriental seas were plied by Persian, Hindu, Malaysian, Indonesian and Arab navigators and the Indian Ocean was a channel of communication between the different civilizations that surrounded it. In the midst of all the comings and goings that took place on this vast stretch of water ruled by seasonal winds and monsoons, Madagascar became a crossroads of peoples, a mixture of Asia and Africa. This twofold lineage is visible on the faces of the 18 main groups of people who make up its population. These tribes share several cultural traits, such as devotion to ancestors, the belief in spirits and the language - of Malaysian-Indonesian origin, an irreplaceable factor of unity and understanding. In terms of culture, Indonesia has left more traces than Africa, and the mixture has evolved into a unique civilization that has grown in time, protected by its insular condition.

The Malagasy people are proud of their culture and their discreet and hospitable smile wins the day despite the simplicity of their country's infrastructures. The Island exerts an uncommon fascination on those who visit it for the first time. Possessing a wealth of traditions and customs, the people express their wisdom through an abundant collection of proverbs. *Whoever has had a sip of the water of Manangareza will return for a drink*, in other words, *the traveller who had a taste of the charms of Madagascar always returns for more*.

1. The ravenala or traveller's tree, owes its name to the water contained at the base of its branches from where a traveller can quench his thirst. It is the symbol of Madagascar.



The Ravenala



A player of the valyha

Houses and rice paddies of the High Plateaux



Baobabs in the South



Canoe on the Mozambique canal





Fifty Years of Missionary Presence

In 1952, Morondava, a small town on the east coast, welcomed our first five missionaries who came to replace a French religious community. On their arrival, they took charge of the mission and of the existing works: two schools - a Malagasy school and the other, European, a boarding school, an orphanage and a sewing room. The initiation period included occasions to learn the Malagasy language. Over the years, some Sisters came to join the group, other houses were opened and new ministries were undertaken according to the needs of the local Church.

**Sylvia Lavoie, M.I.C., Provincial Secretary,
Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C., Provincial Superior,
Claire Guérard, M.I.C., Provincial Treasurer**



1952. 1st departure for Madagascar.
(1st row): Carmelle Caron, M.I.C.,
Adelaide Tremblay, M.I.C.,
Marie-Odila Plante, M.I.C. ;
(at back): Cécile Desjardins, M.I.C.,
Marie-Annette Bonin, M.I.C.

This year, we celebrate the 50th anniversary of our presence in the *Great Isle*. Our Sisters renew their commitment to continue their mission: *to make Jesus Christ, the One Sent by the Father, known and to actualize His message of liberating love among a people athirst for truth, justice, freedom and democracy in an authentic fihavanana, i.e., a spirit of solidarity and communion, a family spirit.*



A Difficult Journey towards Democracy

The political history of the country has been quite a unique journey. Seventy-five years of French colonialism sealed the destiny of the great Malagasy dynasties before some twenty years of Marxist-inspired government isolated the country on the international scene. Recent history was hardly more productive with a succession of nationalistic, liberalistic, humanitarian and ecological regimes.

in Tananarive, directed by Estelle Fontaine, M.I.C., is one of several means to strive for this goal. It offers formation programmes and sessions that facilitate personal, social and spiritual growth. This formation programme aims to train and accompany individuals and groups in the development of a culture based on individual autonomy and freedom. All this, in view of the participants' commitment to the tremendous task of transforming their environment and promoting growth and harmony among their people.

**Entrance of the Royal Palace
in Antananarivo**



Alive and dynamic, the mainstream Christian Churches honestly denounce erroneous tendencies, social inequalities and corruption. They appeal to all Christians to contribute to national redress and invite the leaders to promote ethical and religious values in the governance of their own country.

Such a reversal of prevailing trends requires a change of mentality and several approaches are being put in place. The *Centre d'Éducation Permanente des Adultes (C.E.P.A.)* Adult Ongoing Education Centre

Estelle Fontaine, M.I.C., at C.E.P.A.





Education: a Priority

In 1972, at a time when great emphasis was placed on promoting the Malagasy language, the government substituted in schools the teaching of Malagasy to that of French so as to make education more accessible to the masses. This socialistic ideal and its many programmes were not always beneficial to the nation. The social and economic level fell to its lowest and the country no longer provided but basic services: security, transportation, education and health. The budget assigned to education has suffered considerable cutbacks and disengagement on the part of the State has caused regression of the level of teaching. Today, 87% of school age children attend elementary school but it seems that only one out of three completes the course of study.

Nearly one third of the schooling takes place in schools run by Christian Churches and religious communities. We are in charge of three schools. Each offers the primary and secondary levels, attended by 700 to 1,000 students. Their presence in the field of education allows our Sisters to promote human and Christian values in the formation of a people that yearns for justice, self-determination, freedom, and partnership democracy. The goal of this commitment is to permeate the Malagasy cultural assets with the Gospel in order to make them even richer and more alive. With the collaboration of the parents and the living witness of the teaching staff, our Catholic schools become centres of holistic education. In particular, they develop among the students openness, mutual help and apprenticeship in dialogue with their peers coming from different religions and other social environments.

Parents also have a better understanding of the importance of education for their children's future and for the development of the country. This awareness first occurred in the major cities, but it is now visible in the rural areas where



Ambohibary. Pierrette Rasoamampianina, M.I.C. (standing, 1st l.), school directress, and teachers



Irene Rivet, M.I.C., school librarian



Morondava. Jeanne Marthe Razanadrasoa, M.I.C. (standing, 3rd l.), school directress, Adeline Bonny, M.I.C., Haitian (standing, 3rd r.), Prefect at the École Française, Bertine Razanadrasoa, M.I.C. (seated, 1st row, 1st l.), in charge of Catechesis at the school

nearly 80% of the people live. The size of arable land and the rice harvest barely suffice to meet the needs of families. It is by the sale of the surplus of their garden produce that they manage enough savings to pay the school fees for their children. There was a time when only boys had access to education. Today, we see an increasing number of girls in the school system.



Tsaramasay. Erika Hanitrarinina, M.I.C., school directress

Market day in Antananarivo



Half of the population of Madagascar is less than 20 years old. Any investment in the formation of young people is thus a determining factor for the future of the country and of the Church. We have many commitments among the young people, at both parish and diocesan levels. Three of our houses have accommodations for students of rural areas wishing to pursue their studies. They find in our midst a family environment where they continue to deepen their Christian life. Whenever a student feels called by the Lord to the religious life and expresses the wish to join our Community, we accompany her in her discernment of God's plan for her.



Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C., facilitates recollection days for young people.



Social Action: a Means of Promoting Human Development

The Church's commitment to social action is a fundamental aspect of evangelization in Madagascar. Numerous charitable organizations in the country all aim to promote the dignity of the people by helping them to become the agents of their own development. The exodus from the farmlands gives rise to many problems of poverty in major cities: lack of housing and unsanitary conditions of available housing, unemployment, and delinquency. Aware of this situation, a number of Christian communities have set up solidarity projects and programmes.



Sewing class



Mat weaving

Since 1993, we became involved in the *Centre Mahereza*, a Malagasy name which means *courage in spite of everything*. The centre is located in the parish near our school of Tsaramasay, a poor neighbourhood of Antananarivo, the country's capital city. Thanks to donations and to the contribution of parishioners, the Centre offers medical, social and cultural assistance to the people of the area. We also cooperate in the work of *Appel Détresse* (Distress Call), an organization run by volunteers from all parts of the world to



Clinic for children at the Mahereza Centre

respond to the pressing needs of the poorest of the poor. Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C. serves as the contact-person for these groups. The Malagasy people are not the begging type and the programmes of many organizations aim at facilitating the social reintegration of people by emphasizing the development of skills that will enable them to start small businesses in various areas, such as arts and crafts, knitting, embroidery and the manufacture of the *antemoro* paper, a technique typical to Madagascar.



Antemoro paper



Pathways to Mission

The Sense of the Sacred: an Asset to Build Upon

Missionaries also travelled on the ships of European navigators and explorers. This is how Madagascar first met Christ. The first one to land, it seems, was a Portuguese Dominican priest around the year 1540. This was in the northeast, the heretofore undisputed kingdom of the Arabs. Today, around 50% of the population claims to be Christian and 7% are Muslims. The rest are faithful

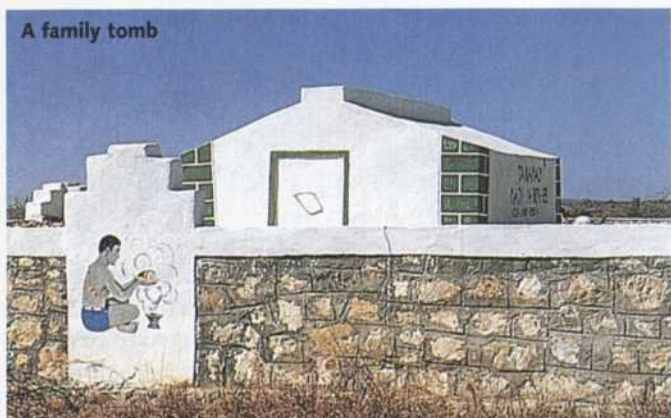


Claire Odette Rahantamalala, M.I.C., Monique Razafindrafia, M.I.C., Erika Hanitrarinina, M.I.C., visit a royal tomb.



Aloalo tombs with meaningful statuettes depicting the honoured place conferred by Malagasies to their ancestors.

A family tomb



to the traditional religion according to which *Zanahary* is the God Creator of all things and the ancestors are his delegates to the families. As attested by their proverbs, the Malagasy people believe in one God, Creator and Master of the universe and supreme judge of the actions of human beings. They also believe that the soul lives on after death. *God and the ancestors are never separated*, they say. Hence the importance given to the dead, because now, being close to God, they are the guardians of tradition. *They are like salt that dissolves in water, but does not disappear*. The all-powerful ancestors are invoked, presented offerings and constantly referred to. Visible beings are inseparable from invisible beings.

The whole life of the people is permeated by the sacred; from birth to death, they are accompanied by ritual practices which mark the stages of their lives and remind them of their connections with the beyond. The grave is a powerful factor of family unity. Even in the exile of a large city, everyone identifies with his own ethnic group and hopes to go and meet his ancestors at the end of his life, in the family grave. *We shall be united in death as we are in life.*

The Family: a Precious Gift

Among the cultural values that captured the attention of the National Synod of the Church of Madagascar in 1998 is that of the *fiavana*, the bond of social relationship based on the parental connection so important among the members of a family. Ancestral wisdom claims that *it is better to lose a little wealth than to lose a little fihavanana*. This sense of family is what generates mutual thoughtfulness, respect of one another, solidarity, the demands of the common good and all those spiritual qualities by which a person's worth is recognized. The traditional values of interpersonal relations need to be promoted once again and evangelized, for nowadays it is a struggle to bring them to bear on individual and social behaviour. The Bishops chose to prioritize the rebirth of this cultural asset and to promote it as one of the essential elements of the country's unity and of the life of Christian communities. *The Church, family of God* has become the leitmotiv of pastoral activity.



Véronique Rasoanirina, M.I.C., receives the blessing of her parents and grandfather on the occasion of her perpetual vows.





Morondava. A mosque situated in front of our school

The Ministries: a Service of the Church

Christianity is flourishing in Madagascar, but there is still much to do. In some areas, the Word of God has not yet been proclaimed; in other areas, the people have little knowledge of the Christian faith. All regions are not served equally in terms of the number of clergy. The highest concentration of Christians is in the Highlands. That is where our missions of Tananarivo, Ambohibary and Antsirabe are located.

Our Sisters give priority to works of education, ministries related to initial evangelization and to the pastoral life of the Church, participation in the formation of leaders, activities aimed at eliciting the missionary commitment of Christians, encounters with the youth and vocation promotion as well as actions that favour the revitalization of the cultural assets of the Malagasy people. Such a variety of commitments enables them to take part in the

Postulants set out to teach catechism in a nearby village.



Marguerite Razanabelo, M.I.C. (1st row, 1st r.) and members of the Youth Eucharistic Movement



Marie-Charline Zafisoa, M.I.C. (3rd l.), with Malagasy delegates to the World Mission Day of the Jubilee Year 2000 held in Rome



Morondava. Nathalie Genet, lay missionary, looks after handicapped young people.

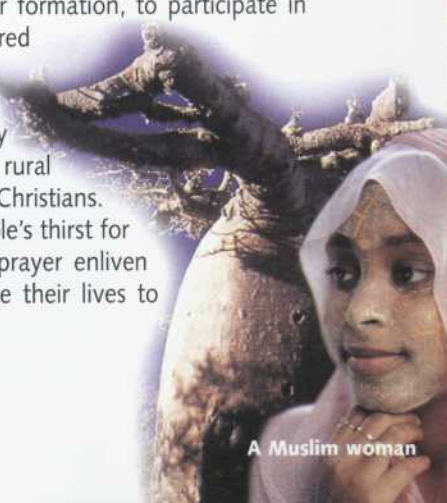


Josephine Rasoanjanahary, M.I.C. (at centre), with parishioners of Morondava

formation of individuals capable of taking on ecclesial and social responsibilities.

In Morondava, on the east coast, Christians are only 15% of the population. With towering minarets, the place looks more like an Arab city. Several religious groups coexist here: Catholic and Protestant Christians, Hindus, Muslims and the people who practice the traditional religion of the ancestors. We have

our Postulate in this area, thus allowing the postulants, from the very outset of their formation, to participate in apostolic commitments geared to initial evangelization. Every month, along with their Sister Formator, they spend a few days in the rural regions populated by non-Christians. They discover how the people's thirst for the Word of God and for prayer enliven their own desire to dedicate their lives to evangelization.



A Muslim woman

Christian Faith and Commitment

The Church of Madagascar is young and committed. Basic Christian communities are a source of renewal, making possible a type of evangelization that fits in with the daily life of the people. Special care is given to the formation of catechists, for they play an important role in the growth and support of the Church. It is also essential to encourage and support lay people so that they take their responsibilities in the social and political activities of their country. The life and commitment of Blessed Victoire Rasoamanarivo remain a source of inspiration and a model for lay people and the young members of l'Union Catholique which she established. During the war between the French and the Malagasy in 1883, when all foreign missionaries were exiled, this exceptional woman brought together and provided leadership to the Christians.

We find ASMIC groups (*Associates of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception*) in several of our missions. These lay people wish to live out the commitments of their Baptism according to the charism and spirituality of our Community. They get involved in pastoral activities: parish catechetical teaching, the parish council, visits and communion to the sick and to prisoners. They are a life-giving presence, bearers of life and hope in their own milieus.

Madagascar is blessed with many priestly and religious vocations. The vocational discernment process is important and every effort is exerted to provide a basic formation rooted in a holistic development of the individual. The *Lavaso* Centre is a national institute of religious and professional formation which welcomes candidates of several religious communities. Isabelle Rahelarisoa, M.I.C., assumes the direction of this centre.

Centre Lovasoa.
Isabelle Rahelarisoa, M.I.C.,
(standing, 1st l.),
directress of L'Institut
Catholique de Pedagogie (ICP)



Florentine Razanamahasoa, M.I.C.
(standing, at centre) and catechists



Claire Caron, M.I.C.
with two postulants



Françoise De Varennes, M.I.C. and
an ASMIC group of Ambohibary



Young people involved
in pastoral work. At the back,
photo of Blessed Victoire
Rasoamanarivo



Julienne Rasoarivelo, M.I.C.,
gives integral formation
courses to seminarians
of Antsirabe.



A Missionary Church

The Church of Madagascar is increasingly opening itself to the needs of the universal Church and it hears the call to share the gift of faith it has received. This coming to awareness is a sign of maturity. Since 1966, date of the foundation of our Novitiate in Madagascar, more than 30 young women have committed themselves to live their religious life according to the spirituality of thanksgiving, missionary and Marian, left by our Foundress, Délia Tétreault. Her charism continues to be a source of fraternal communion, missionary dynamism and vocation promotion. At present, some of our Malagasy Sisters are missionaries in Malawi, Cuba, Peru and Canada.

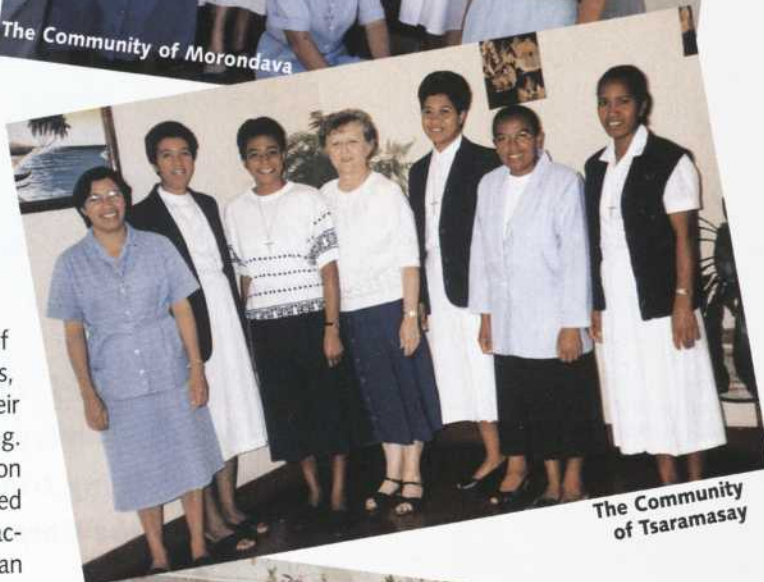
Hope for a Better Future

The current political, social and economic situation of Madagascar is fragile. Frustrated by unfulfilled promises, the people are in search of values that respond to their thirst for freedom, for fraternal relationships and sharing. This is a propitious environment for the new evangelization that takes root in the Word of God. Received and shared as a source of light and life, the Good News become a factor of cohesion and dynamism in the bosom of Christian families, schools and communities.

More than ever, the Church of Madagascar is called to be a witness of *hope* in this world which longs for justice and peace. It must continue to proclaim the Gospel and to pray for the strength of the Spirit to pursue its mission: to make the Kingdom visible after the example of the Apostles and prophets. It is a difficult undertaking, but not an impossible one. *Have confidence, for your heavenly Father knows what you need and He loves you (Mt. 6: 32).* May these words of Christ be a source of comfort and hope for the Church of Madagascar!



The Community of Morondava



The Community of Tsaramasay

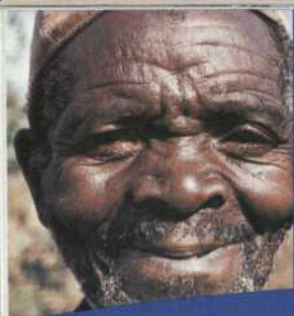


The Community of Ambohibary

The Community of Ivandry



Antsirabe. Novices and members of the formation team.
Julienne Rarasoarivelo, M.I.C. (standing, 2nd r.), directress of Novices,
Suzette Jean, M.I.C. (1st row, 1st r.), directress of Scholastics,
Thérèse Leblanc-Cormier, M.I.C. (standing, 3rd l.)



A Hundred Years of Sunshine

***I am not old,
Only a hundred years...
A hundred years of sunshine
In a single spring!***

***The world is my house.
Every country, my friend.
Love is my true language
And the Gospel, my life!***

***I am not old,
Only a hundred years...
Scarcely one sunrise
On a spring morning!***

***Here, today,
There is no such thing as the past.
Only the here and now
Filled with a hundred years of life.
One hundred years
Summed up in a single great cry:
Thank you, My God. Thank you!***

Éloy Roy, P.M.É

A poem to celebrate our Community's centennial year ...
a hundred years of sunshine!



CUBA

A stretch of pristine beach in Matanzas

Expanses of sugarcane and tobacco fields bordered by royal palm trees

By Ma. Anthea Raso, M.I.C.

May Cuba, with all its magnificent possibilities, open itself to the world and may the world be open to Cuba! This was the very first wish expressed by Pope John Paul in his address at Havana airport when he started his historic visit to Cuba on January 21, 1998.

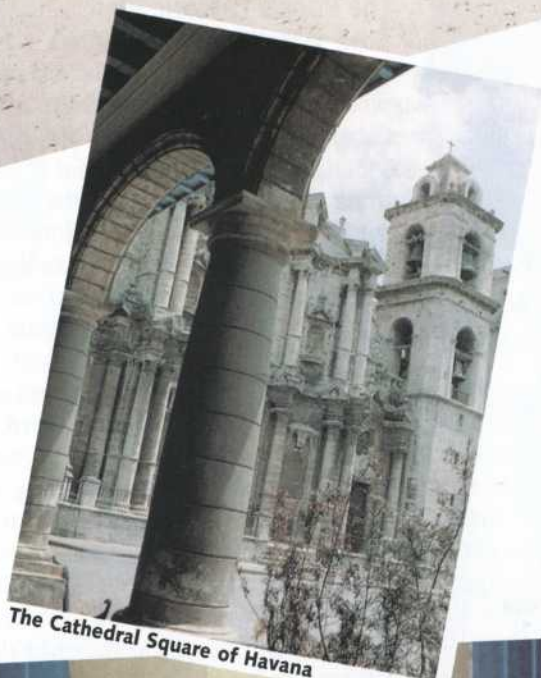


The White Mariposa or Butterfly Jasmine is the national flower of Cuba.

Here is a nation that has a rich culture and abundant natural landscape all set within the gentle warmth of the Caribbean Sea. The island of Cuba is the largest of the Caribbean islands and one of the world's last bastions of communism. About 70 percent of its population of 11 million lives in towns and cities. Along with the faded elegance of Havana and other major cities, unfold the island's seemingly endless beaches of fine coral-coloured sand and the often overlooked natural grandeur of its interior.

In the past centuries, thousands and thousands of Spaniards, Africans and other people from neighbouring islands entered Cuba. The cultural environment on the island is rich and diverse. Though the great majority of the population is of Spanish descent, African folk art, music and dancing in particular, have profoundly influenced the people. Such a mixture of races and cultures helped produce a uniquely Cuban culture. Because of its history, language and culture, Cuba is considered one of the Latin American and Caribbean nations.

The Constitution of the Republic, in effect since 1976, establishes that Cuba is a socialist state of workers and peasants. At its heart, one of the basic tenets of socialism, especially of the Cuban variety, is the notion that everyone struggles and works together and shares equally in the hardships and rewards the system offers.



The Cathedral Square of Havana



Cuban children, hope of the future!



Los Palacios. Zenaide Correia, M.I.C. and parish youth leaders meet regularly to be nourished by the Word of God.



Paso Quemado. Mass celebrated by Rev. Joaquin Gaiga gathers together the small Christian community.

A Catholic Culture

Cuba is traditionally a Catholic country. Many of its churches are of great architectural and artistic beauty and holding all the corresponding religious services. For four decades, the Church has faced problems with the State but has faithfully maintained its established position of being *present with dignity*. Religion is not discussed in school but can be taught in any of Cuba's numerous churches and chapels.

Havana. Amelia Mejides, M.I.C., animates the Sunday Mass at Corpus Christi Parish.



A warm welcome to Cuba for John Paul II

The past ten years have seen a growth in most congregations and a strong revival of religious devotion. Revitalized by the mission activities organized since 1992 for the 5th Centennial of Evangelization in the Americas, many people, a large number of whom are young members, are returning to the Catholic Church. Parish priests say baptisms of adults are on the rise and that catechism classes are enrolling new young catechumens. The people acknowledge that the Church is close to them, becoming more and more their voice. In cramped living rooms and quiet backyards across the island, Catholic faithful and curious newcomers are gathering to discuss the Bible, debate Christian values, and talk a bit more openly about Cuba's future. This situation constitutes a call to a new evangelization.

The Pope's Historic Visit

Pope John Paul's visit to Cuba was of great importance. It made the rest of the world aware of the faithfulness of the Cuban people to the God of Life. *I come as a pilgrim of love, of truth and of hope, anxious to give new impulse to the work of evangelization which, amidst difficulties, this local Church continues with vitality and apostolic dynamism*, the Pope explained. Claiming space for the individual in political and economic systems was a constant of his visit. But above all, he claimed space for Catholic culture in Cuban history: *The Catholic faith, source of the rich values of the Cuban identity, is a constitutive reality of the nation*. Addressing the clergy and religious communities, he declared, *the faith of the Cuban people whom you serve has been the source and lifeblood of the culture of this nation*.

Havana. Our Sisters welcome members of the Conference of Religious of Cuba (CONCUR), a group that aims at helping religious communities in the country find ways of strengthening their life and ministries.



Colón. Representation revered in Cuba (Our Lady of Charity).



presentation of the small statue of the Virgin Mary venerated in Cuba as Nuestra Señora de la Caridad of Charity), a symbol of faith and national identity.



Havana. Marta Romero, M.I.C. (2nd l.) and a parish group prepare the Palm Sunday liturgy at Loreto Parish.



Paso Real. Bernardeta Collazo M.I.C., encourages parishioners to strengthen their faith and sustain their hope.

Steadfast Presence and Witness



For some decades, members of different religious institutes in Cuba have had to live their vocation in unusual circumstances and this, without renouncing what is specific to their charism and spirituality. They have had to adapt to the prevailing situation and respond to the pastoral needs of the people particularly through their much-valued service of Christ in the poor, the sick and the elderly.

Our Community in Cuba, with now more than half a century of history, has formed deep bonds of friendship with the people and the Church. It was in July 1948, when twelve of our Sisters were first assigned to Cuba. In less than six years, 46 of them had landed on the Island. They worked closely with the priests of the Society of the Foreign Missions of Quebec (P.M.É.) in seven parishes of the province of Matanzas. These pioneer days were permeated with the faith adventure of the very beginnings; so too, the following years, during which our Sisters encouraged and sustained the people through the different stages of the revolution.

The revolutionary process that already made headway towards practical atheism gave rise to new situations and required new training. After the exodus in 1961, the remaining group consisted of only ten members. With the absence of schools, our Community faced the challenge of finding other ways to live its mission in Cuba. Determined as they were to maintain their apostolic commitment, the Sisters kept up their catechetical work in parishes and their visits to the families. They continued animating the Christian communities. But these faith groups were decreasing in numbers due to the massive exodus of Cubans to the United States.

Our Sisters learned how to live and share the people's faith discreetly, and at times, in difficult situations and with scanty means. Persevering with the people has enabled them to diversify their pastoral work and to reach out to places where they would not have gone had they stayed in the schools. It also allowed them to ensure a new generation of Cuban Sisters.

Havana. Miriam Rodríguez, M.I.C. (at centre) and the Misioneras de la Semana Santa plan activities for the Holy Week at San Agustín Parish.



Colón. Elvira Valdés, M.I.C. (standing, 4th l.) and the parish group committed to pastoral work among prisoners





Entronque de Los Palacios. Catherine Raveronomenjahanary, M.I.C., with volunteers involved in pastoral work for the sick



Havana. Gloria Sulet, M.I.C., accompanies adults and young people on their spiritual journey.



Sara Olga Pérez, M.I.C.,
Assistant General

Communion with Sister-Churches

Sister Sara Olga Pérez, Cuban, and presently a member of the General Administration Team of our Institute, highlights the precious assistance received from other countries. *Our Church has received and continues to receive much help from sister-Churches. The foreign missionaries have given us considerable pastoral and spiritual assistance. Their life of faith simply shared, their audacity in searching for new ways, their hope against all odds, have spurred on our faith, strengthened us in difficult times and challenged our Christian commitment.* She further affirmed how the witness of lives consecrated to God and to His people has inspired vocations to the priesthood and to the religious and missionary life.

Responding to New Challenges

The socio-political context in Cuba is not as openly propitious as in other countries to the vocation to religious life. However, our Sisters make use of every contact they have with the youth to convey the Good News. And in Cuba as elsewhere, the Lord Jesus invites young people to follow Him. Facing the many challenges of that particular period, the Novitiate in Cuba opened in 1965. To the group of Sisters who have distinguished themselves from the beginning by their closeness to the people and by their exceptional capacity of enculturation, young Cuban women have been added.

The arrival of new members made possible the opening of foundations in places where the need of religious presence was enormous. Because of the legal impossibility to acquire

houses, our Sisters transformed small church sacristies into places of residence. Again, feminine ingenuity went to work along with creativity and the spirit of initiative. Gradually, they found new ways to respond to the necessity of evangelizing the people in a climate where fear and the rejection of manifestations of faith prevailed. With fervour and audacity, they went from door to door to meet the people. Lay volunteers involved in the Christian communities joined them in this patient labour, the fruits of which were barely visible.



La Vigia. Claire Carrier, M.I.C., meets with catechists and young members of the Christian community.



Jeanne Ostiguy, M.I.C.,
missionary in Cuba
for more than 50 years



Cuban Scholastics with Zenaide Correia, M.I.C. (standing, at centre), directress of Scholastics and Provincial Councillor



Dynamic Commitment to Mission

Our Community in Cuba is becoming more and more international. Altogether, 12 Cuban Sisters and five Sisters of other nationalities are present in the dioceses of Havana, Piñar del Rio and Matanzas. They respond with generosity and dedication to the appeals of their pastors, not only in their diocese of belonging, but also in other dioceses periodically. Their availability and generous service are deeply marked by their strong resolve to recognize, welcome and proclaim the grace of God already present so that the Cuban people recognize their dignity as children of God, commit themselves to the mission of the Church and to the transformation of society and that together, they celebrate the feast of universal fraternity.

A well-defined Pastoral Plan favours a variety of apostolic commitments that centre on the accompaniment of individuals and groups. All possible forms of presence to the people are means inspired by the Spirit so that the Good News may be proclaimed: personal contacts, visits to the homebound and to the sick, homilies, evangelical reflection and revision of life groups, different ways of collaboration

with parish councils and diocesan organizations. Despite prevailing restraints, the missionary charism of our Institute is earnestly taken to heart, allowing some of our Cuban Sisters to take part in the mission *ad extra*.

The Call for a New Evangelization

All our Sisters work in the direct evangelization of small Christian communities. Pastoral animation in the parishes constitutes a priority and a great importance is given to catechesis. The Sisters' gratuitous presence inspires parishioners to assume more responsibilities, for example, that of catechism classes for children.

Everywhere, there is a preoccupation to be present among young people. Our Sisters animate days of recollection and retreats for the Youth Pastoral Workers and catechists working with Basic Christian communities. Missionary formation and animation activities, carried out among Christian communities, catechists and the youth, help people to become missionaries in their own milieu. Thus, the *Jovenes sin Fronteras*, teenage boys and girls, students and workers, are challenged to deepen their faith and to share with others.



Missionary in Quebec, Ileana Grau, M.I.C., meets with school children of Alma.

Havana. Yolanda Prieto, M.I.C., welcomes a friend.



Encarnacion Martinez, M.I.C., with youth pastoral animators of different parishes in the Diocese of Havana



Paso Quemado. Josephine Leal, M.I.C., Assistant Provincial, counts on the generous collaboration of community leaders.

A New Vitality in Church Life



Perhaps the greatest sign of the revitalization of the Church is the growing number of people, including the young, who are coming back in recent years. *The new attention given the Church is most notable among the youth, affirms Cardinal Jaime Ortega, Archbishop of Havana. But there are also many middle-aged citizens who are returning to the Church after 20 or 30 years of absence. Catholics are no longer afraid. They experience a desire for God and search for solid, eternal values that transcend economic and political factors. Many people are finding a new authenticity in the Church, as well as a message that corresponds to the deeper truths they seek. The traditional popular image of the Sacred Heart or the engravings of the Virgin of Charity are once again occupying the place of honour in the living rooms of Cuban families.*

The most important element of the new Catholic presence is the growth in evangelization, adds Rev. José Félix Perez, assistant secretary of the COCC (Conference of Catholic Bishops of Cuba). The fruits are simply outstanding and we have found a people starving for God, for the Gospel and for the experience of consistent community that only the Church can provide. Lay people are becoming increasingly involved in the evangelization project, showing that they have rediscovered their baptismal vocation. They look to the Church as a credible voice and are encouraged in seeing it take a stand on issues touching their daily life. For the

Cuban people, sharing generously what they have received has always been an important cultural trait. Children, youth, and adults who receive the Gospel message share with their own family, neighbours, and work or study companions. Their witness, which has long been a silent one, remains a meaningful proclamation of the God of Life in the midst of their daily reality.

Another sign of new life in the Cuban Church is its deepening social commitment. This involvement provides for dialogue between the Church and the government, especially as humanitarian concern and human development have been ideals of Cuba's revolution. The Catholic relief service *Caritas* certainly strengthens the social Catholic presence in the country and provides opportunities for religious Communities to make their presence and service more far-reaching.

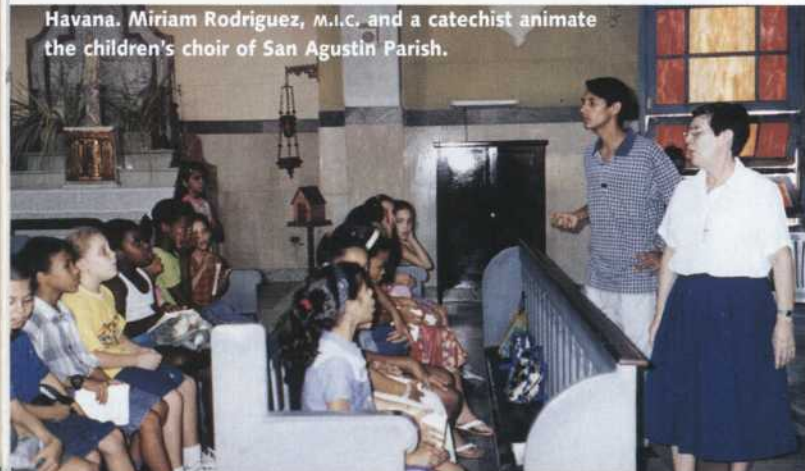
Havana. Encarnacion Martinez, M.I.C. (1st row, 1st l.), Marta Acosta, M.I.C. (1st row, 2nd r.) and a youth group involved in pastoral work



Colón. María Mercedes Carral, M.I.C., and the choir assure lively liturgical celebrations at San Jose Parish.



Havana. Miriam Rodriguez, M.I.C., and a catechist animate the children's choir of San Agustín Parish.



Havana. Marta Romero, M.I.C., shares essential drawing tips with budding artists.





Colón. Gloria Pérez Pupo, M.I.C., Provincial Superior, brings joy and blessings to a friend and her newborn child.



Colón. Maria Cristina Pulido, M.I.C., welcomes her brother and family to Colón.

Beacons of Hope

The Church in Cuba presents the reality of a Church open to enter into a dialogue with the Marxist world. While pressing officials to guarantee religious freedom and civic participation for Christians, Pope John Paul himself had observed that things were moving in the country. He encouraged the Catholics to continue pastoral work to help build a society in which human rights and social justice are combined to the detriment of no one.

Cardinal Jaime Ortega has likewise noted that official relations between the Catholic Church and Cuba have begun to be formally better since January 1998 and that the Pope's visit has injected a new spirit into the Church. The Cardinal has broadcasted messages by radio, a thing unheard of in previous decades. The government has also allowed a number of priests and religious to travel to Cuba and join the work of the Church. What impressed most people is that the Castro government has allowed Christmas Day to be celebrated as a holiday in Cuba for the first time since 1959.

The opening to Christians implies challenges for the Church, for the State, for the people. Indeed, there remains a full agenda of commitments to be concretized by all concerned. Our Sisters, on their part, are constant in their efforts to serve the people in all ways already open to them and to gain access to those still closed. Concern for justice and peace, ever an integral part of their commitment, is exerted with tact and discretion. They help people live with greater inner freedom certain situations in which their individual rights are at times infringed upon. Attempting to offer them opportunities to experience the joys of fraternal sharing, they often make their residences available as places of hospitality and renewal.

In the present-day Church in Cuba, religious Communities remain a challenging and gratuitous presence. A rebirth of the faith is evidently taking place and the circumstances in which the Church carries out her activity have been gradually changing. For our Sisters and for the Cuban people with whom they live the mission today, all this is a source of increased hope for the future! *



San Diego. Young catechumens are eager to take on small chores for the parish.

Havana. Annet de Roux, postulant, and youth leaders of Corpus Christi Parish finalize preparations for a Eucharistic celebration.



JAPAN

By Louise Denis, M.I.C.

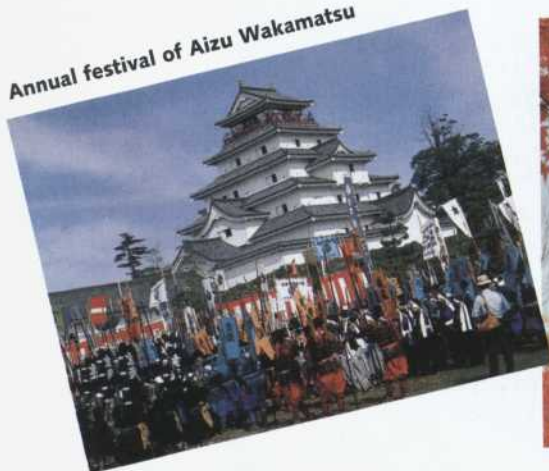
Japan is a fascinating country, a land of colour and contrasts, a blend of East and West. We find graceful and well-preserved temples coexisting side by side with modern buildings. Though the country has embraced the most modern technology and ideas, it has not lost its mystic soul. Its people remain governed by traditional social values and its system of etiquette and manners stemming from feudal days is still alive. The prominence given at all times and everywhere to the aesthetic is part of its uniqueness. For visitors, Japan exhibits the beauties of its land and the spirit of its people.

Japan's history has a cyclic character of opening and closure of its frontiers. In the 9th century, it broke off all relations with its neighbours and embarked on an era of isolation lasting for three centuries. During the 17th and 18th centuries, it again showed hostility to all foreign religions and secular influences, thus carrying out a determined policy of national seclusion. This period lasted 250 years until Emperor Meiji (1868-1912) led Japan from being an isolated, agriculturally based, feudal society to a modern state. However, World War II left Japan in ruins. A new start was

required and a re-examination of national values was undertaken at every level. The country has few natural resources; people are its greatest asset. New orientations, together with inherent qualities of Japanese society such as a sense of mutual responsibility, competitiveness, dedication, loyalty and perseverance provided the structure for its future success. In less than half a century, Japan became a world financial power. In its policies concerning foreign affairs, it has adopted an attitude of international cooperation and the promotion of peace.

In this modern democracy, the emperor retains his throne as a symbol of national unity but in reality, power rests in networks of powerful politicians, bureaucrats and business executives. The archipelago of 127 million people remains pre-eminently an island nation with a great majority of its population consisting of ethnic Japanese. Japan's language and aspects of its culture set it apart from its neighbours on the East Asian mainland. It is the land of *bonsai*, Zen gardens and the delicate art of flower arrangement called *ikebana*.

Annual festival of Aizu Wakamatsu



Shinnyo-do Temple in Kyoto



Shinjuku Imperial Garden in Tokyo





New Challenges in Asia

After having responded to the call of the Church of China in 1909 and of the Church of the Philippines in 1920, our Foundress welcomed the invitation of the Church of Japan as another occasion of bringing the Good News to a non-Christian land. The first departure took place in November 1926. Our pioneers worked for a few years in the southern part of the country, then moved north to Koriyama in 1930 and to Aizu Wakamatsu in 1934.

All seemed to augur a bright future for their ministries, when in 1941, the U.S.-Japanese War broke out. For two years, the Sisters lived in their convent of Aizu Wakamatsu under military supervision. In 1943, with the exchange of war prisoners, our Sisters returned to Canada. After the war, they came back to find Japan devastated and in ruins.



Our Sisters of Aizu Wakamatsu in 1934

those who do not know Jesus Christ and by promoting missionary awareness among the Christians. They look for ways of assisting people to encounter Christ through their life witness and various apostolic works: Christian education, pastoral ministries, work among the emigrants, as well as involvement in social justice and environmental concerns. Although they are limited in number, they participate in the sending of missionaries to other countries. They accompany groups of ASMIC who wish to live the spirituality of thanksgiving bequeathed to our Institute by



Our school of Aizu Wakamatsu



Our school of Koriyama



Chieko Uchimura, M.I.C. and pupils of our Kindergarten of Tokyo

The official state religion, Shinto, was abolished. It was the start of a new era. That period saw the reconstruction of churches and a good increase in the number of schools, hospitals and charitable institutions run by different Christian groups. In 1949, the St. Francis Xavier School in Aizu Wakamatsu welcomed its first pupils. The following year, we opened a Kindergarten in Tokyo, then another school in Koriyama in 1958.

Seventy-five Years of Presence

After 75 years of presence in the Church of Japan, it is with joy and gratitude that the Sisters commit themselves to pursue their mission to work as Church, for the evangelization of the Japanese society in a multicultural globalized age, by proclaiming the Good News of Salvation to

Délia Tétrault and are also involved in the Inter-Asia programme and activities existing between our missions of Hong Kong, Taiwan, Philippines and Japan.



Gathering of our Sisters of Japan during the visit of Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C., Superior General (2nd row, 4th l.), and of Cecilia Hong, M.I.C., Assistant General (2nd row, 3rd l.). Chieko Uchimura, M.I.C., Provincial Superior (2nd row, 2nd l.)



Saint Francis Xavier, patron of our schools of Koriyama and of Aizu Wakamatsu

An Integral Formation

Japanese children start to attend kindergarten at the age of three or four. The choice of a good school is crucial because, even from this early age, university entrance is the focus of a child's education and fierce competition and intense pressures to do well prevail. Catholic private schools generally have a good reputation and the values the school proposes play an important role in

the development of the human person and in faith formation. But why educate young people to Christianity when most of the teachers and the majority of the pupils are not Catholic?

The mission of our schools is not geared towards increasing the number of Christians nor at forming only Christian students. The schools create a Christian environment whereby every student is considered as a unique being created and loved by God. We thus offer a curriculum favouring an integral human formation based on values upheld by our Christian tradition: respect for life, dignity of the person, justice, and solidarity with the needy. It also includes classes on religion, Bible, morals and ethics, and various religious activities such as the morning assembly prayer.

The religious background of the students coming to us from public schools is usually a mixture of several religions and of different codes of moral teaching. At the stage of adolescence, the role of religion in one's life is important and many young people are in search of values to guide their lives. The religious doctrine we teach is geared at answering the main questions of life's meaning: the existence of God, suffering, life after death . . .



Kyoko Takahashi, M.I.C.



Kimiko Fujimatsu, M.I.C. Koriyama



Our school of Aizu Wakamatsu. Jeannine Blanchard, M.I.C.

Parents involved in the school bazaar project



Teachers and students of our school of Aizu Wakamatsu. Reiko Ohashi, M.I.C.

Monique Cloutier, M.I.C. and her catechism students



Christian education sometimes provides the opportunity whereby the students may personally encounter God and enter into a relationship with the *divine* living in them.

Supported by a deeply committed team composed of the directresses, the teachers and the students and sustained by the collaboration of the parents, our schools have a long tradition of taking part in various development and relief projects. For example, after the earthquake of Kobe in 1995, the children of all sections of our schools collected old newspapers, cardboard boxes and empty bottles which





they sold for recycling. All proceeds of this project were forwarded to the victims of Kobe. Annually, the Charity Bazaar organized by the girls in High School provides a few bursaries for young Filipino students, while the pupils in Primary School hold the Little Ones' Bazaar to support children in a poor country.

The Parents' Association, for its part, usually shares the funds it annually raises for various projects presented to them by the school administration. These projects are undertaken to teach students to open themselves to others and to take part in common efforts geared towards building a better world.

Opening up to a Christian Experience

The services offered in our schools are not limited to the students. They extend to the teachers and to the parents who desire to hear about the Christian teaching given to their children. Parents can thus enrol in catechism classes and Bible courses offered by the school. Some among them later undertake a journey of faith that brings them to Baptism.

A few years ago, one of our non-Christian teachers from Aizu Wakamatsu resumed his teaching experience in our school: *I have been working here for the past 22 years. I have radically changed over these years because I have found a real meaning to life in the Christian values that I have witnessed in the school. The Sisters' way of living is another reason for this transformation. Seeing these women living so simply, joyfully devoted to their work was for me a profound enigma, until the time I discovered that they had dedicated their lives to Someone.*

It is difficult to judge the true extent of the influence of Catholic schools in Japan, but many non-Christian students tell us when they leave school, that they are different from others because they have been initiated to the Bible and have received a spiritual formation based on values of the Christian tradition.



Kyoko Takahashi, M.I.C., Supervisor of our schools, and Kimiko Kawada, C.N.D., directress of our primary school of Koriyama. A much-appreciated collaboration between the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame and those of our Community



Judy Saludes, M.I.C. (1st row, 1st r.)



Gisèle Lambert, M.I.C. and little friends at Aizu Wakamatsu



Estrella Solibio, M.I.C., Provincial Councillor, teaches English at our school of Aizu Wakamatsu.



Suzanne Morneau, M.I.C., during a session for parents of our students



Lucille Grenier, M.I.C. (2nd l.), Kazuko Sumitani, M.I.C. (5th r.), with a group of ASMIC of Koriyama



The writing of Japanese characters demand art and precision. Yoko Igarashi, M.I.C.



A Different Context

A Multicultural Christian Community

In April 2000, the Sisters opened a new mission in Gyoda, a suburb of Tokyo. This city of approximately 85,000 people is located in an industrial area and is part of the Diocese of Urawa. The parish of Gyoda counts about 50 Catholics, most of whom are migrant workers coming from Latin America and other neighbouring Asian countries. This gives the Christian community a multicultural and pluralistic dimension. Miyoko Kofuji, M.I.C., is involved in preparing candidates for Baptism, in giving catechism classes to children and in welcoming all those who come for help. Pastoral animation is centred on making Christians aware of the importance of becoming authentic witnesses of Christ.



Being employed by international companies, some Japanese who have had work assignments abroad have married women from these countries. These cross-cultural marriages require special pastoral attention particularly during the adjustment period to new family customs and when it comes to choosing the religious orientation of their children. The parish also offers an atmosphere of fraternal life and of sharing to immigrants who live separated from members of their family left behind in their country of origin. The Christian community of Gyoda is typical of the new situation of the Church in Japan where an increasing number of Catholics are not Japanese but foreign workers. The milieu reflects the transformation that is slowly taking place in the country.

Msgr. Marcelino Daiji Tani (standing, 4th l.), Bishop of the Diocese of Urawa, visits the parishioners of Gyoda.



A fraternal encounter after Sunday Mass at the church of Gyoda

At the baptism of Mrs. Nakaniwa. With her: Pierre Laurendeau, M.E.P., parish priest, Miyoko Kofuji, M.I.C., catechist and Mr. Nakaniwa



Ghislaine Parent, M.I.C., Assistant Provincial, Taijo Ito, Buddhist priest, Miyoko Kofuji, M.I.C., at the Temple of Gyoda

Solidarity with Immigrants

While there are beneficial effects to globalization, there are also concerns about its implications on the protection of human rights. Lured by the promise of better economic conditions, workers from other countries have been attracted by the growing Japanese industry. This influx of migrants has led the Church to give them special attention, mainly in terms of protecting their rights and in monitoring prevailing conditions in their workplace. The Diocese of Urawa has thus opened a centre called *Open House* and has set up a multidisciplinary team from whom people can receive available help and support ranging from the spiritual to financial, medical and legal.



Team members of the Open House Centre.
Lorna Erickson, M.I.C. (seated, 2nd l.)

Lorna Erickson, M.I.C., from the Philippines, is a member of this team. She is in charge of the organization and the pastoral operations of nine multicultural Christian communities in the diocese. Keiko Hasegawa, M.I.C., a former missionary in the Philippines, works as Liaison Officer for the Philippines Embassy in Tokyo. A few years ago, she received a Certificate of Appreciation from the Philippine Government in recognition of her commitment and services on behalf of Filipino migrant workers in Japan.



Keiko Hasegawa, M.I.C.

Youth Ministry

Another pastoral priority for our Sisters in Gyoda is to give young people the Christian formation they need to face the challenges of a fast-changing society. Kesayo Sato, M.I.C., participates in formation programs for the youth: Bible sharing, retreats and recollections, etc. A minority group in the midst of numerous traditional religions, these young people are in need of accompaniment in the deepening of their faith. Confident and rooted in the Christian heritage, they will be able to live it in joy and in thanksgiving.



Kesayo Sato, M.I.C. (1st row, 1st r.) and a group of young people during the National Youth Day



Imelda Takahashi, M.I.C., visiting a Vietnamese family

The Quest for the Spiritual

Religions in Japan

Buddhism is the major religion of Japan. It was introduced in the country from India through China and Korea around the middle of the 6th century. It has not only flourished as a religion but has exerted a significant influence on Japanese history and has enriched the country's art and architecture. With regard to Shintoism, it began in early times when people worshipped the spirits of nature. It consists essentially of a set of customs and rituals based on the daily life of all generations of Japanese. It cannot be considered as a religion in the strict sense of the word. Nonetheless, Buddhist and Shinto traditions existing side by side in full harmony, greatly influence Japanese life and thought.

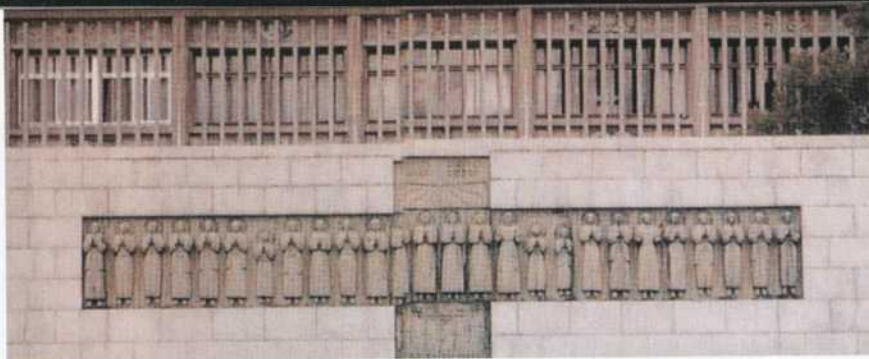
Christianity was introduced into Japan by the Jesuit missionary Francis Xavier in 1549. It spread rapidly, but because of its association with Western imperialism, it was considered a threat to Japanese political control. In 1597, a group of missionaries and Japanese converts were crucified and died for their Christian faith.

Today, Catholics represent .345 % of the population and Christianity is still often looked at as a foreign religion. It seems that it has not yet significantly succeeded to get incarnated in the minds and lives of the people or to penetrate its culture. However, numbers alone do not tell the full story.



The great torii of Matsushima

The Catholic Church is represented by institutions and organizations whose influence has gained widespread respect for their contribution to society, particularly for their social programmes on behalf of the poor, the elderly and the marginalized.



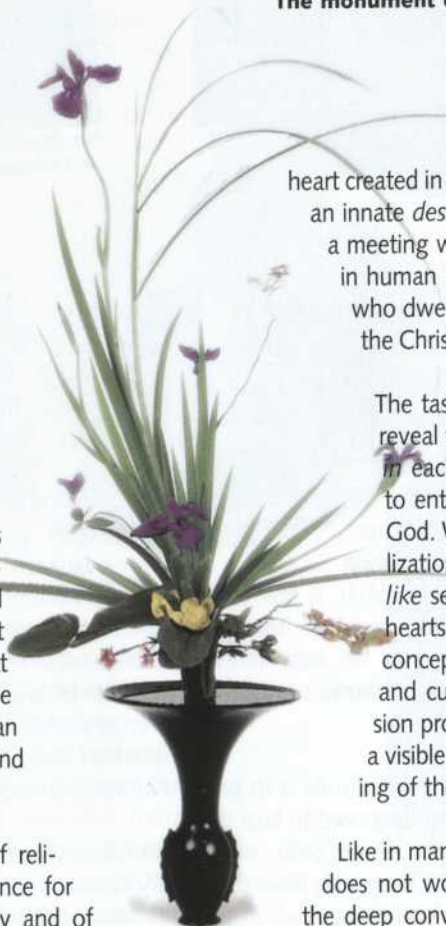
The monument dedicated to the 26 Martyrs of Nagasaki



A Godlike Seed

The current economic crisis in Japan brings individuals to reflect and search for sustainable alternative values to consumerism and materialism that alienate life and neglect the person. Christianity proposes values that promote the spiritual over the material, the person over things, the fullness of life. Can Catholicism answer the people's quest and quench their spiritual thirst?

The Japanese people possess a wealth of religious sensibilities reflected in their reverence for the sacred and in their love for harmony and of beauty. The expression, a *godlike seed*, found in the documents of Vatican Council II means that in the human



heart created in the image of God, there lies hidden an innate *desire* that enables the person to seek a meeting with God. It affirms a predisposition in human nature for a meeting with the God who dwells within. This concept has brought the Christian faith closer to Japanese culture.

The task at hand for the evangelizer is to reveal the name of the *divine living within* each individual and to invite everyone to enter into a personal relationship with God. What is thus called for is an evangelization that takes as its premise the *godlike seed* of the Word hidden in peoples' hearts. However, the Japanese religious concept is so closely linked to the culture and customs of Japan that every conversion proves to be an exceptional grace and a visible and precious milestone in the building of the Kingdom.

Like in many countries, the missionary in Japan does not work for immediate results, but with the deep conviction that *neither the planter nor the waterer matters; only God, who makes things grow.* (1 Cor.3:7). *



The tea ceremony became a spiritual discipline during the 16th century. Still practiced today, it aspires to create an atmosphere of harmony and tranquility in one's heart and mind.





Centennial Celebrations

By Louisa Nicole, M.I.C.

Notre-Dame-du-Cap is Expecting You...

One major event of our Centennial will be the great missionary gathering to be held next June 29 at the sanctuary of Our Lady in *Cap-de-la-Madeleine*. Open to all, this day is an important moment to celebrate *our one hundred years at the service of the mission* with all those who have, in various ways, guaranteed the growth and continuity of our Community: our families, benefactors and friends... It is our hope that you will come in great numbers. We are eager to celebrate with you this unique event of our history.

The **Eucharist** will be celebrated at 10:30 a.m. It will draw us into a grand movement of thanksgiving for the marvellous love of God over the past century of mission. A picnic lunch will follow. You may each bring your own provisions, or take advantage of the cafeteria service. A few animation booths will be set up. The programme is prepared to interest both the young and the not-so-young. Before everyone departs, there will be a blessing of the sick. In the case of rain, large indoor facilities will be made available to us.

To enable us to adequately prepare for your coming and for the events of the day, we would appreciate knowing if you intend to be present. However, if you cannot let us know, do not hesitate to come anyway. To reach us or for further information concerning accommodations and the organization of groups in your area, you may contact:

Jocelyne Dallaire

(450) 670-0562 Longueuil (residence)
(514) 875-9911 poste 283 Montreal (office)
jocelyned@ceci.ca

Roger Caron

(450) 629-1333
les.carons@videotron.ca

Youth Vigil

On Friday evening, July 19, 2002, young people from all parts of the world will gather for a festival of universal brotherhood. This will take place in Outremont, in front of the Saint-Viateur Church. More than just a performance, this event will feature moments of reflection, sharing and prayer. The well-known artist Gregory Charles will facilitate the evening.

Beginning at 7:00 p.m., the event will unfold in three phases. The great missionary dream of Délia Tétreault will be revived, helping to discover the different faces of the mission; a Gospel music show of ecumenical scope will express the realities of today as lived by young people of the five continents; at around 11:30 p.m., a moment of interiority inside the church of Saint-Viateur will allow people to continue their personal reflection and prayer.

On that summer day, as 50,000 participants of the *World Youth Day (WYD)* experience an immersion period in Montreal, this project will help the young people become more aware of their mission to *be the salt of the earth and the light of the world*, theme of the 2002 *World Youth Day*.

In the Garden of God



Lucile Fontaine, M.I.C. 1921-2001
(Sr. Léon-Marie) Upton, Quebec.
A missionary in Zambia and in Malawi, Sr. Lucile was very skilled in different domains. She directed the construction of the dispensary, the Sisters' residence and the installation of an aqueduct for the Nkhata Bay zone. A woman of deep faith and gifted with a good sense of humour, she was remarkable for the quality of her fraternal relations.



Marie-Antoinette Deschênes, M.I.C. 1902-2002
(Sr. Marie-de-la-Compassion)
Saint-Joseph-de-Lepage, Quebec
Sr. Marie-Antoinette was one of our pioneers in missionary animation, a service which she discharged with zeal for nearly 60 years. Sociable, cheerful, devoted and loving, she was grateful for everything she received and knew how to give thanks to God.



Blanche Gérin, M.I.C. 1905-2001
(Sr. Marie-Auguste)
Coaticook, Quebec.
An excellent educator, Sr. Blanche devoted herself mostly to the education of children in our missions of China and of the Philippines. She worked at missionary animation in Honduras for a few years. Ardent and cheerful, she lived her religious mission any life with great intensity.



Nina Ennis, M.I.C. 1913-2002
(Sr. Sainte-Nina)
Salem, Massachusetts, U.S.A.
Very warm hearted and a capable administrator, Sr. Nina exerted her talents especially among the Chinese students of the Ottawa universities. She maintained until the end a vast network of friends and continued to radiate kindness, gratitude and a deep love of Mary.



Benoîte Labelle, M.I.C. 1913-2001
(Sr. Sainte-Léopoldine)
Montreal, Quebec
In Haiti for 25 years, Sr. Benoîte mainly taught young women various skills: sewing, cooking, handicraft work... No one can forget her zeal in promoting the Legion of Mary. Her acts of compassion and her words of faith helped people to welcome in their hearts the love of God and Mary.



Marie-Ange Provost, M.I.C. 1905-2002
(Sr. Marie-de-la-Réparation)
Sherrington, Quebec
A nurse in Haiti for 16 years, Sr. Marie-Ange met the numerous challenges of a dispensary in a rural area. Then, in the service of our sick Sisters in Canada, her devotion to them was unsparing. She combined a remarkable missionary dynamism with a fervent life of prayer.



Anne-Marie Breton, M.I.C. 1916-2002
(Sr. Elisabeth-du-Portugal)
Quebec, Quebec
A proficient and devoted nurse, in Canada and in Madagascar where she was a missionary for seven years, Sr. Anne-Marie expressed in a thousand ways the spirituality of thanksgiving that filled her heart: joy, a positive outlook on events and people, ardour in service, gratuitousness and tenderness.



Anita Julien, M.I.C. 1905-2002
(Sr. Eulalie-de-Jésus)
Montreal, Quebec
Sr. Anita loved beauty, the beauty seen with the eyes and the beauty of the heart. She realized numerous artistic works: parchments, paintings, montages... As she always cherished the dream of the foreign missions, there was a great missionary quality about her presence wherever she went.

**TO CONTACT
THE MISSIONARY SISTERS
OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION,
HERE ARE A FEW ADDRESSES:**

CANADA :
GENERALATE and
MISSION PROCURE
121, Maplewood Avenue
Outremont (Quebec) Canada
H2V 2M2 Tel.: (514) 274-5691

MISSION ANIMATION CENTRE
Mother House
314 St. Catherine Road
Outremont (Quebec) Canada
H2V 2B4 Tel.: (514) 495-1551

OFFICE OF THE DÉLIA TÊTREAU CAUSE
100, Place Juge-Desnoyers
Pont-Viau, Laval (Quebec) Canada
H7G 1A4 Tel.: (450) 663-6460

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

SOUTH AMERICA:
CASA PROVINCIAL
Francisco de Orellana 338
Lima 5, Peru, America del Sur

CUBA:
CASA PROVINCIAL
Ave. 33, no 3409 - entre 34 y 36
Playa, Ciudad de la Habana
Cuba 11300

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

HONG KONG:
PROVINCIAL HOUSE
Mount Good Hope
381 Jat's Incline
Kowloon, Hong Kong, S.A.R., China

JAPAN:
PROVINCIAL HOUSE
8-13-16 Fukazawa, Setagaya-Ku
Tokyo, 158, Japan

MADAGASCAR:
MAISON PROVINCIALE
Lot II, 178 ter G
Ambodivoanjo
Antananarivo V
Madagascar 101

PHILIPPINES:
PROVINCIAL HOUSE
P.O. Box 468, 1502 Greenhills
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Write to us:
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Telephone: (514) 274-5691
Fax: (514) 274-3298

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Wherever we are, we, Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, want to make more tangible the presence and action of Mary, by being, throughout our life, receptivity and proclamation of the gratuitousness of salvation in Jesus Christ.

M.I.C. Constitutions

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