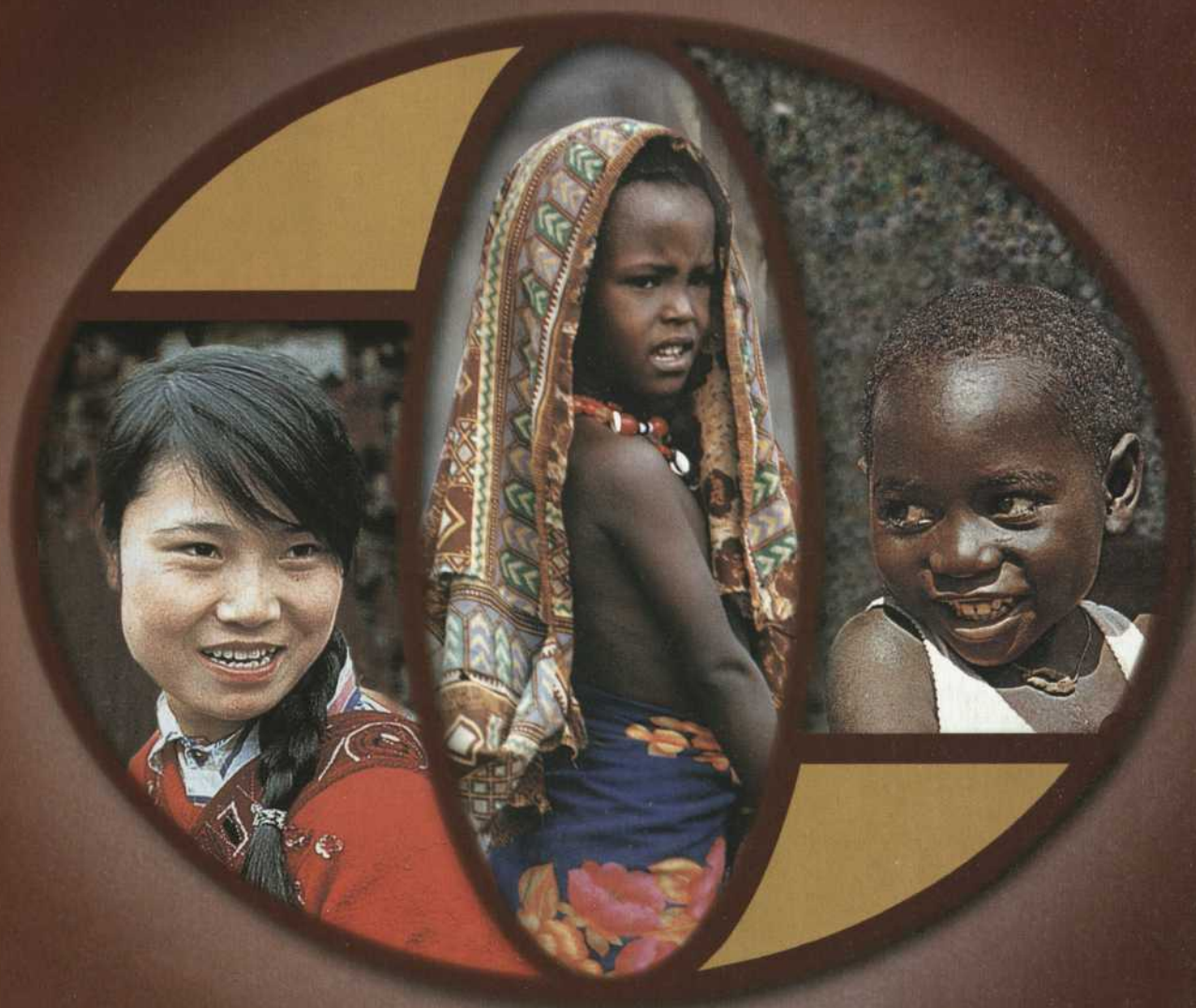


# MIC MISSION NEWS

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER - DECEMBER 2003



## Faces of Solidarity

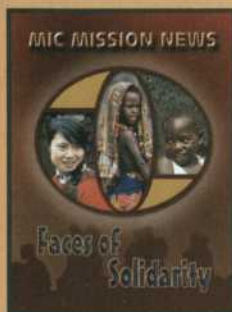


Photo: Yves Demers Paris

#### MIC MISSION NEWS

Mission Magazine published since 1923 by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

- Directress: Louise Denis, M.I.C.
  - Editing Team: Edita Telan, M.I.C., Céline Gauvin, M.I.C.
  - Translator: Edita Telan, M.I.C.
  - Secretary: Milagros Gomez, M.I.C.
  - Promotion: Antoinette Castonguay, M.I.C., A team of M.I.C. Sisters and Lay Collaborators
  - Circulation: Alma Couture, M.I.C., Thi Hien Duong and a team of M.I.C. Sisters
  - Accounting: Thérèse Déziel, M.I.C.
  - Layout & Design: Yves Demers Paris
  - Film Stripping: Film-O-Progrès
  - Printing: Transcontinental Inc.
  - Tax Receipt: Registration Number: NE 89346 9585 RR0001 - PRESSE MISSIONNAIRE M.I.C.
  - Legal Deposits: Bibliothèque Nationale du Québec, National Library of Canada; ISSN 0315-9655
  - Associate Member: Association of Roman Catholic Communicators of Canada (ARCCC)
  - Subscriptions: see p.23
  - PUBLICATIONS-MAIL-REGISTRATION Number: 9645
  - Convention Number: 1378287
- For any change of address, please send your old and new addresses. When renewing subscription, include your file number.

MIC MISSION NEWS  
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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Growing in Solidarity



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## MISSIONARY INTENTIONS 2003

### October

That God may mercifully provide his Church with pastors rich in wisdom and holiness, ready to carry the light of the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

### November

That at the Second American Missionary Congress in Guatemala the Church in the Americas, may be inspired to evangelize even beyond its own borders.

### December

That the Church in countries where totalitarian regimes reign may be given full freedom to carry out her spiritual mission.

## Editorial

# The Bread of Solidarity

**N**ever like today have there been so many calls to solidarity. And there is a reason for this! In our booming, affluent world, countless people and even populations cannot obtain what is basic to human life. That is to say, not only the impossibility to have access to material resources but even to live and be recognized in their dignity. When facing such needs that are so evident, a good number of men and women involve themselves to assist them; numerous organizations work to bring them the necessary assistance and to change their situation.

Engaging oneself in solidarity supposes above all a great openness of heart and mind, a real desire to listen to others and a very strong determination to take one's place in the building of a fraternal world. *To be in solidarity is to love.* It is to consent to this weakness of the heart which makes us yield a part of our life to the service of others. This movement allows us to enter, without knowing it, into

the mystery of God. Such solidarity is translated through services and a presence that transforms reality. Today, in our society



of rapid communication where all is linked, our actions of solidarity make up a jigsaw puzzle of exchanges that are extremely complex. This situation invites us to be in our place, to awaken consciences for a more just, more fraternal world.

A sense of solidarity is not

inborn; it is developed. The contributing writers for this issue bare out this experience. To forge strong, durable links with refugees, disabled youth, with students in precarious financial situation, with marginal peasants... demands hard work, special attention to reassert the place they can and must take in society. This implies as well an attitude that fosters life and opens up to the absolute value of the whole human being. Their testimony is also a living example of what God accomplishes with us when we decide to come to the aid of others. Does it not teach us that the miracle of *five loaves and two fish* can be repeated at will when we count on divine collaboration? Inasmuch as we keep in mind that we are not alone, that God collaborates with us, we have everything necessary to live the adventure of solidarity.

*Celine Gausman, m.i.c.*

# Growing in solidarity

By Céline Gauvin, M.I.C.

**What is it that urges us to solidarity? Is it because others need us and that we also need them? Is it the preoccupation to help persons whose condition of life undermines their dignity, their happiness? Or is it because we recognize in the other, a sister, a brother to love as God loves them? These are important reasons. They do lend a face to our solidarity.**

**T**he word *solidarity* calls forth a heart and largely open hands. It entails the capacity to create bonds beyond one's personal interests in order to render assistance to the others in difficulty.

## **We Become Solidarity**

Solidarity is learned first in the family where there are very strong bonds. It goes out of self. It is natural to share services, goods and affection with members of one's family. This experience of solidarity then extends itself to the people in one's neighbourhood, in one's workplace. Mutual aid also finds there its sphere of activity. Progress is made, therefore, by discovering what connects us to these people, with the conviction that we can convey well-being and happiness to them. The more we are in solidarity...the happier we are!

This basic experience prepares us for a much wider field of solidarity: to help people who apparently have no bonds with us at all, with those to whom we owe nothing. This feeling of oneness is based on the awareness that these women and men, whoever they are in their social milieu, their cultural level, their race, are sharing with us the same aspirations for personal development and happiness. In this case we recognize at once their dignity as a person and the unity of the large human family. Then a bond of friendship and international solidarity is born from pole to pole.

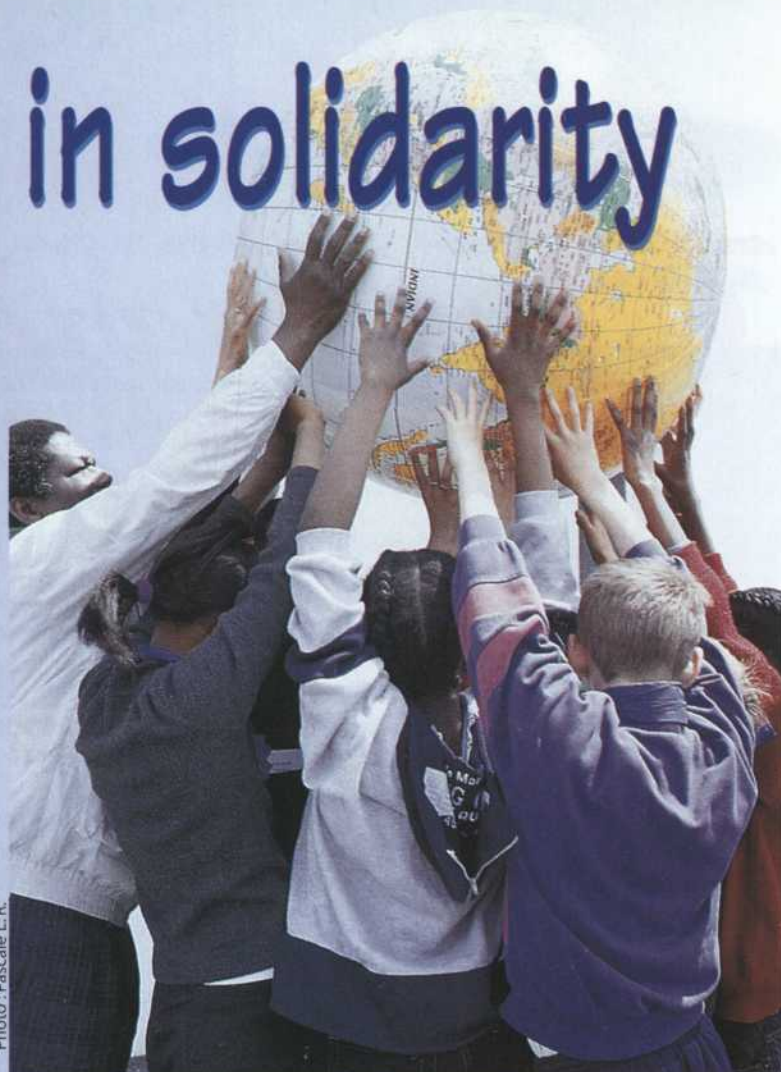


Photo: Pascale L. R.

**Solidarity gives one the drive to work with others in the building of a more just and fraternal world.**

This experience is available not only for those who are more generous than others. Every human being is called to solidarity if one's humanity is taken seriously.

## **Solidarity as a Project**

To the extent that various crisis are shaking our world in all domains, the solidarity that is close to home as well as abroad becomes more fragile. Solidarity among generations tends to weaken. In the workplace, the situation becomes more and more complex; sometimes indifference and even mistrust turn up in matters of making appeal for solidarity with people of other cultures, of other countries. In spite of everything, solidarity expresses itself very strongly more than ever, and gestures of mutual aid multiply in all places and on all levels: domestic, local, national, international. New realizations are coming to light.

In face of inequalities between rich nations and poor nations, and in face of the increasing number of people confronted with poverty within each



country, we cannot advocate a style of development that multiplies the number of those excluded. We feel invited to show concrete gestures aimed at changing models of production and of consumerism, structures and institutions, lifestyles creating impoverishment. In this sense several organizations are making an appeal to our solidarity.

We understand better today the importance of associating development to that which helps individuals or people. The mutual aid programmes promote more the reciprocity and sharing of management with labor and emphasize their capacity to take charge of assuring a better future.

The growing interdependence of countries and continents is stirring up solidarity. Individuals as well as societies confronted with dangers that are



Search ways of a better understanding of situations of underdevelopment that fosters solidarity. Asuncion Camajalan, M.I.C. (3<sup>rd</sup> r.) is involved with tribal members in Baguio, Philippines.

threatening their existence could no longer withdraw into themselves. They have to create new ways of solidarity to ensure a healthy environment, a lasting peace, equitable sharing of wealth in the context of globalization.

### Solidarity and Christian Faith

A good number of Christians commit themselves with determination and generosity along the routes of solidarity, one that is inspired by Christ Himself: *Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind... Love your neighbour as you love yourself* (Mt.22, 37-40). Jesus is not satisfied to just say: *Love one another*. He adds: *as I have loved you* (Jn.13, 34). And how did He love? In becoming one of us and living a life totally given for the well-being and happiness of everyone.

Jesus likewise declared that all humans are *all sisters and brothers* with the same *Father, God* (Mt. 23,8,9). These words bring into light the dignity and equality of every person and profound unity of the human family. This is why every Christian feels very particularly invited to solidarity. Enlightened by the Christian faith, solidarity tends to transcend itself and becomes a total gift, pardon, reconciliation. The Christian who is involved in a network of solidarity, is led to live out a love animated by the Spirit of the *One who has loved them to the very end* (Jn.13,1). A love in God's measure. ‡



Before leaving for Africa, Rosalie Raivomanana, M.I.C. (1<sup>st</sup> r.) invites her students of Tsaramasay to foster links with the Malawian youth.



## Promotion Integration in the New Society

In collaboration with Danièle Miny

The situation of refugees is rapidly evolving throughout the world. In fact, more rapidly than one can expect. Their number is increasing. In these movements of exodus, we find refugees, economic migrants and displaced people. Europe and North America have become poles of attraction for the disadvantaged people from the East, Southeast, and the South. This new situation has become a headache for the legislators, economists and politicians of the host countries. Organizations in these countries come to the aid of the new arrivals. **PROMIS**, an organism directed by Andrée Ménard, M.I.C., is a venue of resources and mutual aid in Montreal, Québec.

**A**rami's memories of a happy little girl have turned into a nightmare. Now 24 years old, she has surely forgotten the beautiful



Photo : Office of PROMIS

Every year a multiethnic office of **PROMIS**, installed at Cote-des-Neiges, Montreal, assists more than 10,000 refugees and immigrants from a hundred countries.

house where she used to live with her family and the garden where she used to play with her friends in Somalia. But what will haunt her, no doubt, throughout her life is the death of her father killed in a massacre during the civil war and the exile that followed. *Having no time to bring anything along, we had to flee in pajamas.*



Photo : HCR/G. Lombard

Millions of refugees are taken in the torment of exile

As to Layla, she felt very happy when she went to this small mosque where she could *speak with God, alone and in peace*. There were beautiful gilded windows through which she saw mountains and brooks. Layla is thirteen years old. Born in exile in Iran, her family having fled Afghanistan when this country was thrown in chaos. Layla and her family will not take the road to return. Fearing that Iran, their host country would force them back to Afghanistan, the family headed towards Europe to seek asylum.

Photo: HCR/C. Sattlberger



The entire population has to flee the country ravaged by war.

Many are the stories of this kind reported by the media for there are more than 50 million people who are uprooted from their homelands. Nearly half of them, around 20 million, are children and youngsters who, at this critical period of their growth should be preparing for their adult life. But they find themselves in a state of uncertainty and turmoil of exile, abandoned, exploited, condemned to a life where hope does not have its place.

### What is a Refugee?

The Geneva Convention of 1951 defined a refugee *as a person who fled his country and not willing to return from a well-founded fear of being persecuted for such reasons as race, religion, nationality, political opinions, or membership in a particular social group*. However, the *United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)* now cares for 23 million people over the whole world, not just the refugees and those seeking asylum; there are also certain categories of displaced persons within the confines of their countries, of people affected by war, victims of mass expulsion, repatriates, of stateless persons and those denied asylum. One fourth of them are found in Europe, one third in Africa, and one third in Asia.

### PROMIS

In Quebec, *PROMIS (Promotion-Integration in the New Society)* appears on the list of organizations where refugees and immigrants can find services and assistance to which they have the right. Located at Côte-des-Neiges, a multiethnic district of Montreal, this intercultural and multi-confessional organization was founded by Andrée Ménard, M.I.C. in October 1988. *At the time of my*

*return, I clearly saw that things had changed in Quebec; Montreal also had another, if not multiple faces. As well I saw the misery and problems linked to the displacement of the people moving to Canada. This led me to set up PROMIS.* Andrée continues to devote herself entirely to the building of a better world through this organism.

*PROMIS* pursues a mission of integration and adaptation among the new arrivals to Quebec society. Several institutions and organisms in the area operate in solidarity with *PROMIS*. Education, animation, meetings, workshops, conferences, food services, nurseries, language courses, human rights, etc., are offered to the refugees and immigrants. Employees and a hundred or so of volunteers contribute to the establishing of a new society in a multicultural ambience where all persons feel accepted, loved, and whose rights are respected. Among them we find persons like Juan José Fernandez who was obliged to leave Chile, his homeland, for opposing the regime of Pinochet, and seek refuge in Canada. Today, he is in charge



The people of Quebec stand in solidarity with *PROMIS* through diverse bodies of mutual aid.



Some of our Sisters are involved in the diverse projects of PROMIS.

of the new arrivals and acts as a counsellor. There we also meet Victor Leguizamon Delgado, a human rights lawyer from Colombia where he had defended peasants and workers. A threat to his life obliged him to become a political refugee in Canada in 2002.

### Canadian Solidarity

We can recall here the rich tradition of solidarity of the Canadians on behalf of refugees. From the end of World War II until the 70's, the immigrants from Eastern Europe and refugees fleeing the popular democracies were welcomed; in the 70's - 80's, refugees from the dictators of Latin America and boat people were favoured with a warm welcome

through twinning families. Since 1990, Canada victims of civil conflicts that replaced the wars among nations were allowed to reside in Canada.

### Canadian Programme

The Canadian programme concerning refugees offers protection each year to thousands of persons, with respect to its humanitarian tradition and to its international obligations. Two facets are considered: to assist the refugees found outside of Canada and to protect refugees entering Canada and seeking asylum. While the request is under study, the refugee enjoys certain rights and can have access to Canadian services. In certain cases, the petitioners for asylum can ask for an authorization to work.

The right to education is granted them while awaiting a decision in regard to their request. By the same token a temporary health programme is guaranteed to the asylum seekers who are financially deprived and to protégées, along with access to medical services and to emergency services to those who are not yet covered by the provincial government health care.

### Towards a Greater Solidarity

The world is transforming itself. Wars continue to make victims and more and more cause displacements of people. Often, we hear that the planet is a global village where people begin to speak and know one another, but nothing prevents some individuals from perpetrating their oppression of people. However, if we put into practice the same values of solidarity and mutual aid that PROMIS fosters, we, too, can create bonds of friendship. \*



Photos : PROMIS

Sister Andrée Ménard is a recipient of several prizes, citations and medals. In 2002, the Hon. Martin Cauchon, Justice Minister and General Procurator of Canada presented her a Jubilee Medal of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Mr. Pierre Dufour, president of the organization (r.)



by André Beauchamp

# Taking our Humanity Seriously

**T**he celebrated passage of the Gospel of St. Matthew (25:31-46) that gives the account of the Last Judgment is, without doubt, known to you. The Son of Man will gather all the nations and will separate people, one from another, placing some at His right for salvation and another at His left for their damnation. "For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink." This text with its several titles is fascinating. Without going into long analysis, I would like to call your attention to four points.

1) The account evokes very *simple services*: to give food, drink, to welcome, clothe and visit. Today, life appears quite complicated to us, because for each service rendered, authorization is to be obtained, forms to be filled out, a number of rules to consider, and advice to be sought from competent consultants. Whew! I know we risk ourselves of being lost in bureaucracy, or of taking refuge behind unavoidable exigencies, of preconceived actions. Jesus seems to come back to what we would call the basics. A course in Humanities 101 is to love and serve in the most ordinary situations.

2) Jesus calls to mind *fragile social categories*: prisoner, stranger, the hungry, the thirsty, the sick. He speaks, as well, of vulnerable people. He does not say: *I was a minister, and you shook my hand; I was an actor, (celebrity) and you asked for my photo; a banker, and you entrusted your money to me; a parent, and you greeted me.* These things come from the self. Here, Jesus implies that we do not become human when we break the range of gestures and suitable persons when we look for humanizing places, of the presence

and service beyond frontiers of our milieu and our culture.

3) The story allows us to hear that *God knows what is human in his state of fragility*, whatever may be his belief, the clan to which he belongs, or his spiritual state. God is present in every person. The story of creation says that God made man/woman in His image and likeness. The other is a sacrament of God.

4) God does not allow Himself to be seen except through others. "When did we come to You?" "It is to me that you have done it." Some do not find God except

within themselves, in the experience of prayer. Prayer is a fascinating reality which I do not want to speak ill of. But the only way of validating our prayer, of assuring it is really God whom we encounter, and not just ourselves, is that of meeting Him in the service of others: to give food, to clothe, to visit. Encourage, defend, protest, support – all these small gestures that come out from ourselves and launch us in adventure. It is not to flee away from the other, but to encounter him in God.

The other would not

know how to be a pretext for good works. But there is in the other a presence of the Lord who asks only to emerge so that the other will finally attain his proper stature.

Each generation must reinvent the Gospel, rediscover the old texts and breathe life into them while putting them into practice. The episode of the Last Judgment is that of the present. It unveils the look we put on the other, our capacity to search while learning to become human. It does not matter where we are. What counts is the present.



Every person is a brother, a sister to love.  
Every traveller, a friend to welcome.  
Every orphan, a child to bring up.

Photo: HCR/P. Labreux

# A Friend for Patricia, Sara and Others



Malagasy fishermen at the large Canal of Mozambique .

by Danièle Miny

An Interview with Nathalie Genest.  
**Her vocation: God. Her passion: L'Arche. This young woman aged 30, admits candidly of her time: We, of our generation want to see everything, try everything, know everything. The sole stumbling block is a long term commitment. But what is it for Nathalie?**

**The MIC Mission News: Tell us about yourself, Nathalie.**

I am from Saint-Eustache, a suburb of Montreal. I studied orthopedagogy, but presently I do not practice this profession. Today, I work and live at L'Arche founded by Jean Vanier in Montreal.

**Why did you change your career?**

I needed to find a meaning to my life. For several years, I had turned away from the Church. I have returned to the Church, thanks to someone I saw living an authentic life. That greatly inspired me. Then I decided to live also in an authentic way.

**How do you apply this philosophy to your life?**

When you search for life, you will find it. Initially, this led me to the *Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception*. One of them related her missionary experience at the parish where I used to attend. I was impressed. It was the epoch when the youth left for adventure with their backpack. As for me, I wanted to know more about the mission experience. It was suggested that I meet a Sister in charge of a project for lay missionaries. She proposed that I attend a three-year formation program to prepare for an

eventual departure. I underwent this process while pursuing my university studies. This missionary formation was in line with what I had really wished: to leave for distant places, deepen my relationship with God. I began putting words in my faith and I moved on. Once I completed my studies, I filled out a teaching contract at a school in a remote area in the north of Quebec. I was not enthused over this work. The school director helped me recall the moments when I had been happy. I then remembered a lived experience as an animator in a camp for the autistic in Montreal. Upon reading a book on the history of the L'Arche of Jean Vanier, I was carried away by this community. I did not hesitate. Immediately I telephoned L'Arche, and then joined the community. I needed a group to live my spiritual quest because the weekly mass did not suffice for me.

**What did you discover at L'Arche?**

As you know L'Arche is a place where you share life with disabled persons. They taught me to take off my masks. They strongly resent these things. They are candid and



Morondava: a city along the west coast of the island



true. You cannot but be simple and authentic while rubbing elbows with them day after day.

#### **Was your choice definite?**

No! Before committing myself totally to L'Arche, I wanted to validate this choice of life while going to the end of my missionary project. So, I left for Madagascar where I spent three years. A few religious communities have contributed to the realization of my project; it became a project of the Church, too. During my stint down in Madagascar, the *Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception* welcomed me at Morondava. What was important for me was to choose a service

among the people according to my aspiration. The approach of L'Arche was in my mind and in my heart. Therefore, I began to work at a center for the mentally and physically disabled. This residence was directed by the nuns of the *Community of Jeanne de Lanoue*. I taught the children the basics of writing and counting. I also went to the villages to accompany those disabled who could not come to the center.

#### **What was your approach with them?**

There was Patricia. After gaining the confidence of her family, I was able to take her out from the village to the marketplace. It is rather unusual to bring out the disabled persons to public places. At the beginning the people looked at us with curiosity, but later on friendly exchanges started. Patricia developed more self-confidence; she bloomed. Then it was the turn of Laurentia, of Sara... L'Arche is not established in Madagascar, but I felt I was the bearer of its spirit. After these first contacts, an organization was put in place to assist disabled persons as well as their parents to deal with the social integration of their children. One of my goals was to create a different mentality among the people who label persons with an impairment. And yet these are the very ones who have



A stroll with Nathalie was a feast for Patricia and Nico.

much to offer, mainly of what they are.

#### **What do you keep for yourself out of this experience and what are your projects?**

The experience enabled me to push to the maximum my enculturation with the people of Madagascar. Knowledge of their language has been an important factor to easily communicate with them. I am likewise open to the other religions. I have Muslim friends. Equally this experience was a propitious time to grow through this immersion and to discover myself. After three years spent in mission, I returned to Montreal where I have had a culture shock. The pace of life goes fast. All is advanced technology. It took me time to react strongly against this modern rhythm. I have returned to L'Arche and I am now in the process of discerning in regard to a choice of my life-long vocation. Is it L'Arche or is it a religious vocation? I need a long-term commitment, and I feel ready to live it. ✱



Improve the life of children with disability, assist persons to consider themselves part of the whole – this was my mission in Madagascar.



# Same Roots... Same Sap

by Céline Gauvin, M.I.C.

**Nearly 350 women and men from different countries associated with our Institute share the spirituality of thanksgiving that is at the heart of our missionary life. Year after year, they weave strands of solidarity and belonging. It is an experience rich in savoury fruits as this article discloses.**

**I**n 1980, a new project was started by a few Sisters and two lay persons. It was a matter of gathering people attracted by the spirit of thanksgiving of our Institute, and who wished to live out this spirit. A formation programme was proposed to accompany them in this experience. Thus began an association that has today become international.

*At the beginning of this enterprise, as Jocelyn Dallaire recounts, we did not really know where our dreams would lead us. We needed to set up this project, improve it in the course of the years, and choose a name for it: the ASMIC (Associates of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception). We had to*

*question ourselves, make adjustments, strengthen our roots, patiently drawing the sap... The journey we covered allowed us to deepen the spiritual experience and spirituality of Délia Tétreault. It strengthened our commitment in places we live and in the projects more specifically related to the missionary reality of the M.I.C. Institute. Our bonds with this large family were affirmed. New fruitful branches have grown on the centennial tree. Today, after 23 years the ASMIC groups have spread out in 11 countries around the world and are already bearing exemplary fruits.*

## **The Tree Grows.**

We have very encouraging echoes of the life and activities of ASMIC groups the world over. In October 2002 an initiative particularly marked the ASMIC in Québec. A few of their members went to discover the missionary life of our Sisters in Haiti. Huguette Poirier speaks enthusiastically of the unique experience of seeing with her own eyes the Sisters' involvement in the schools, dispensaries, missionary animation. *They are dynamic, brave and happy.* Viviane Perreault relates how the ASMICS of Haiti are in solidarity with their people, with the poor. *Their spirit of sharing and ability to organize various fund raising projects to assist them are evident. They have also a deep sense of mission, and give support to the missionary activities of their church in different ways.*



**Haiti. ASMICS of Quebec during their immersion in Haiti among the ASMICS of Port-au-Prince and a few of MICs. Viviane Perreault, president of the Coordinating Committee of ASMIC Canada (2<sup>nd</sup> row, 1<sup>st</sup> l.)**

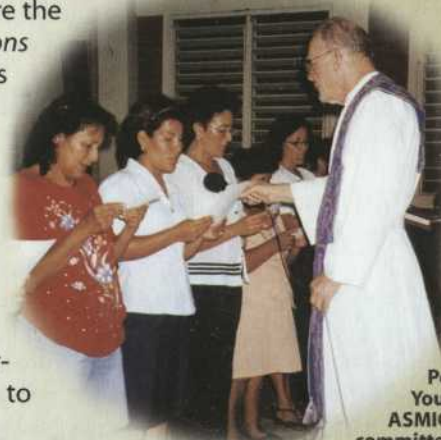
In November 2003 the American continent will hold its Second Missionary Congress in Guatemala. The ASMIC groups of Canada, South America and Haiti feel quite challenged by this event and have studied with enthusiasm the themes that are to be presented at the Congress. Four ASMICs from Québec will participate in this gathering, the bearer of hope and the future.



Taiwan.  
In Taipei, encounters help ASMICs go further in their family, professional and social solidarity.

### Diverse Situations

The socio-cultural and ecclesial context of each country is reflected in the ASMIC that has spread in many countries. Thus to be an ASMIC in Japan where the Catholics are only .04% of the population, is a real challenge. *The persons who make up the ASMIC undertake a long preparation in faith, relates Monique Cloutier, M.I.C. and the group they are forming continues to sustain their spiritual journey. Their witnessing invites also the parents of our students to take interest in Bible courses and catechetics proposed by our schools.* Moreover, thanks to their influence, certain schools and hospital establishments occasionally invite Sister Monique to share the Gospel values linked to the education of the youth and to the care of the sick.



Peru.  
Young ASMICs committed to live the mission in the spirit of thanksgiving, in a Marian way

In Taipei, Taiwan, the faith and joy of the ASMICs radiate in their surroundings. One group member residing in Taipei regularly goes to Mainland China where she has bought a house. Her presence there facilitates the meeting and dialogue with the people. As well she receives in this house some of our Sisters from Taipei who animate retreats and sessions each year in China.

A missionary spirit leads the ASMICs of Bolivia, of Peru and Chile along the roads of solidarity: social service in prisons, involvement with marginalized children, evangelization in the villages of the Andes, collaboration in catechetical work and in parish activities. In Ancud, Chile, a new project is taking shape: a travelling mission team composed of ASMICs and M.I.C.s collaborate in the integral development of remote rural communities.



Bolivia.  
On the way to celebrate Christmas with Chaparé countryfolks. Rosario Lujan, physiotherapist (2<sup>nd</sup> row, 1<sup>st</sup> r.), ASMICs and MICs

In the Philippines, the ASMIC is progressively developing among our past students along with our close collaborators in our ministries. At present there are around 100 ASMIC members. Some are engaged in various social services: health care of the poor, scholarship programmes for underprivileged youth, fund raising for the benefit of the tribal minorities, etc. Since 2002, the ASMICs are involved in programmes assisting a village called Kasiglahan – a relocation area for thousands of people who used to live in slum areas around Manila. In this area, a group of ASMICs work with and for the people in order to improve their socio-economic conditions.



Japan. Bible sharing for Tokyo ASMICs



In Madagascar, more that 70 ASMICs are also actively engaged in ministries. Each week a few of them visit the prisoners who live in hard conditions. A visit where they could render small services and give treatments is greatly appreciated by the people. Several ASMICs catechize the children on Sundays since teaching religion is not offered in the public schools. The others travel to distant villages to assist in the evangelization of Christian communities in diverse ways.

### Missionary Training

The dynamism of the spirituality of thanksgiving propels the ASMICs. After a mission formation, some of them have responded to the needs here and elsewhere. Madeleine Poulin left for Vancouver where for three years she will join a team engaged in assisting women who are in difficulty. Madeleine has experienced a missionary exposure for a few months in Haiti. Suzanne Beaupré has likewise worked with us for three years in a social assistance project in Haiti. Ana Saldana Gaviria from Pucallpa, Peru is actually a lay missionary in Brazil.

This short report does not really give us an exhaustive picture of all the involvements of the



Madagascar. Recollection day for the young ASMICs of Ambohibary involved in their milieu and Christian community

ASMIC. They are doing much more than what is recorded here. It shows us, however, that the missionary projects are part and parcel of their lives. The ASMICs while being immersed in their milieu and in the Christian communities are living various forms of solidarity. It is the spirituality of thanksgiving that animates them and colours their commitment. In concrete, that is to say: to share the gifts received particularly the gift of faith, in



Philippines. Cora Mahilum (seated, l.), one of the Manila ASMIC doctors involved in the medical mission at Kasiglahan



Madeleine Poulin

Suzanne Beaupré-Génois



Ana Saldana

all God's gratuitousness. Again, this signifies in the family life, professional and social, to witness the spiritual values linked to thanksgiving: gratitude, missionary spirit, compassion, trust in God.... All that is being done becomes for our Institute a source of joy and thanksgiving. ✱

# Bonds of Love and Solidarity

*To stand in solidarity is to love...*

*To love  
is to be like God  
for God is love (Jn.4, 16).*

*To stand in solidarity is to love...*

*To love is to allow our inner being feel  
the hunger of oppressed people for  
freedom;*

*To love is to allow our inner being feel  
the cruelty of many modern forms of  
slavery.*

*To love is to allow our inner being feel  
the thirst for justice and equal sharing.*

*To love is to allow our inner being feel  
the humiliation when rights  
are trampled.*

*To love is to allow our inner being feel  
the thirst for education, for care,  
for decent housing, for respect  
of the most destitute of our societies.*

*To love is to be unable to pray  
the Our Father  
without including the entire humanity,  
without being concerned  
about the fate  
of our brothers and sisters  
throughout the five continents.*

*To love is to allow ourselves  
to be seized by the hunger of God.  
It is to allow Him to accomplish  
through us,*

*His works of justice.  
This is to offer Him our five loaves  
of bread and two fish  
and hear Him tell us each morning:  
Give them something to eat  
(Mt.14, 13-21).*

*Adapted from the French text  
of Huguette Le Blanc*

Haiti. Emmanuela Vincent, M.I.C. committed to the literacy programme of the young adults of Dubuissou



Peru



Lebanon. Françoise Royer, M.I.C., nurse, during a humanitarian mission

# A Gift that Enriches

After rising from the ruins of war and gaining international stature, Japan had committed itself to assist developing countries. In the Philippines, *Salamat Po* (Thank You) Kai (Japanese word for Association) is one of the non-governmental organizations (NGO) which provides financial support to needy but deserving students. Martha Atsuko Sagara, M.I.C., has coordinated the scholarship programme in Davao City for ten years. In this capacity she promoted the friendly exchange of gifts between her own people and the Filipino scholars.

While on a visit to Manila, Philippines, Shuri Matsunaga, a student of Tokyo's Sophia University, met a few girls of her age who were not studying. Instead they were peddling candy, flowers and other goods on the streets to earn money for their families. Blessed with a good education and knowing its importance, she felt the need to help others pursue their studies. Initially, it was not easy to get the support of her parents who found such an undertaking too grand for a student to initiate, much more sustain it. However, after her persistence, the parents agreed to grant her a loan to be paid upon obtaining a job after her graduation. The project took shape when her parents met Fr. Toru Nishimoto, C.Ss.R., chaplain of the Japanese tourists and migrants in the Philippines. He, too, nurtured the same vision! With the help of other concerned Japanese, the *Salamat Po Kai Philippine-Japan Scholarship Association* came into existence in Manila in 1982.

## Journeying with the Scholars

On its 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the association extended its services to Davao City. Sister Atsuko, as its local coordinator, took part in selecting the students eligible for the program. They were high school and college students who did well in their studies but did not have the means to complete their education. Either their parish priest or the head of the school had to recommend them attesting to their character and active community involvement. To gain a better understanding of their family situation, Sister Atsuko visited their homes. The students were ecstatic when chosen; it was the answer to their prayers!

Our Japanese missionary journeyed with the scholars and animated them to witness the Gospel values in their life. Their parents joined in the monthly meetings during which they shared the Word of God and prayed

Every year, our school in Koriyama grants scholarships to young Filipinos.



Mr. Sal...  
Phi...  
are...  
and...



Mr. Sadato Yabuki, president of Salamat Po Kai, on a visit to the Philippines. Posing with him are Veronica Maderista, M.I.C. and Atsuko Sagara, M.I.C.



← Father Toru Nishimoto, founder of Salamat Po Kai



for the sponsors. During these moments of shared reflections and prayer they developed bonds of friendship while drawing closer to the Lord. Sister Atsuko was inspired by the simplicity of their faith in Divine Providence. Through the regular communications both the Japanese sponsors and the Filipino beneficiaries came to a deeper understanding of each other's culture. Moreover, the scholars evangelized their benefactors through letters which expressed their faith in and love of Christ.

### Generous Hearts

The Japanese sponsors are a diverse lot: school children, professionals, ordinary couples, people of different ages and backgrounds. They want to make a difference in the lives of others. They have received a good education from their parents and out of gratitude they want others to have the same benefit. They see the young as the future of the world and education is the best gift they can offer them. They were mostly non-Christians yet they conveyed God's kindness through their generosity. Amazed at how the students faced trials and difficulties with hope, they were convinced that there is a Source from which they drew inner strength. From the students' letters of gratitude, they discovered a God of love who meets His peoples' needs in surprising ways. Touched by their joy and strong faith, some of the sponsors asked to be baptized! Enthused, they exclaimed: *We have given so little compared to what we have received!*

### Continuing the Legacy

Since the programme was introduced in Davao City, forty-six scholars from both high school and college levels have graduated. Most of them have taken up varied jobs and are successful in their chosen professions. The scholars articulated their gratitude to the Association, their sponsors and the MIC Sisters for encouraging them during hard times: *We*

*attribute our success to your kind support and we promise to prove ourselves worthy of what you have done for us. You have started the noble task of giving and inspired by your example, we vow to contribute from our own resources to continue this legacy of helping others. This is our best way of saying Thank You to each one of you.*

### Bridge of Hope

Mission, for Sister Atsuko, is being in solidarity with those who are in need. It is sowing happiness to show God's love and care. Through this project, *Salamat Po Kai*, she became a bridge between her own people and the Filipinos in their search for a more meaningful life. *Accompanying the youth was a happy experience for me. It was inspiring to see these promising and highly motivated students make personal efforts to spread the Good News of Jesus. They were imbued with a sense of mission. The sponsors' interest to share out of gratitude enriched my own spirituality of thanksgiving. There were problems, too, that we encountered but prayers sustained us through those difficult times. Believing in the power of prayer, she is confident that one day, many Japanese will also come to know and love Jesus. ✽*



Beneficiaries of Salamat Po Kai Scholarship programme in Davao

# In the Heartland of the Andean Peasants



Jeanne-Odette  
Rasoarimanana, M.I.C. (1<sup>st</sup> l.)



Leticia Dotollo, M.I.C. (l.)



Cipriana Ccahuana, M.I.C. (r.)



A section of  
Cajabamba village



Gisèle Guinois, M.I.C.

## As told to Danièle Miny

**After staying a few months in Quebec, Gisèle Guinois, M.I.C., a missionary in Peru for the past 43 years, will leave for Cajabamba in January 2004. It is located at about 856 kilometers away from Lima, the capital of Peru. Her eyes gleam with excitement when she describes the mission confided to our Sisters. Sister Gisèle is sharing with us her enthusiasm over this new project.**

**S**ituated in the north of Peru, at the heart of the Andes, Cajabamba is a small town with 14,000 inhabitants. It has a mild climate, rich in cultural and religious traditions. The locality is connected to 30 villages lost in the surrounding mountains. These distant areas can be reached through difficult and even dangerous routes. There, we meet indigenes and mixed breed natives who are either ignored or forgotten. But thanks to their courage, energy and intelligence, they succeed in surviving, be it from the material, intellectual or social aspect. They have a thirst for learning, for progressing. They desire to live in better conditions and to enjoy the benefits of better social justice policies.

The Peruvian Church, in its pastoral action is attentive to the difficult situation of these peasants of the

Andean North: economic problems, conditions of antiquated work, difficulty in gaining access to education, health care, and devastating effects of politics that marginalize them. The Church accompanies them while weaving a network of solidarity capable of sustaining their desire to live and hope. It is a work of consultation and organization where the Gospel values hold a privileged place and become a liberating programme that fosters brotherhood and solidarity.

Our great joy today, is to be able to respond to the request of the Andean Church. That is, to reach out to these impoverished, abandoned people, and to sustain them in life's movement and transformation. The team of young M.I.C. Sisters: two Peruvians, one Filipina and one Malagasy is stationed at Cajabamba. From there they go to 32 small rural communities scat-

tered around the mountains. Simplicity and warmth characterize the hospitality of the inhabitants. The Sisters take time to promote relationships based on trust and reciprocity of the families especially the youth, the village chief, and teachers of small schools. In this way our missionaries are able to respond to the needs of the milieu on the level of health, education and integral formation of women in the light of the Gospel values. The basic ecclesial communities are at the core of their project. Time for prayer and sharing the Word of God allows the Sisters to discover the faith of the people and to go further along with them in their experience of God.

As of January 2004, I will be in Cajabamba. We do not know yet what this newly started mission will bring. What is certain is that we have received it from God as a gift, a moment of grace and challenge.

# Along Mission Routes ...



**Rossetti Wai Lan Lau, M.I.C.**  
from Hong Kong,  
Diocese of Hong Kong, SARS, China

Having arrived in Africa for her missionary engagement, Sister Rossetti now teaches religion and biology at Marymount Secondary School of Mzuzu, Malawi, with an enrollment of 350 young girls. While in Hong Kong she taught at Tak Oi Secondary School and was actively involved in pastoral activities of this institution catering to around 1,120 students.



**Rosalie Raivomanana, M.I.C.**  
from Ambohimadana,  
Diocese d'Antananarivo, Madagascar

In Africa since 1995, Sister Rosalie has actively served in the pastoral ministry among the youth at Nkhata Bay, Malawi in the educational programme for prevention of AIDS. At present she is in charge of the formation of young African postulants. When she was in Madagascar Sister Rosalie was the directress of our schools and in charge of the Novitiate.



**Nancy Vy-So, M.I.C.**  
from Manila,  
Archdiocese of Manila, Philippines

Sister Nancy, born of Chinese parentage in Manila, returned to Taiwan where she has been missioned since 10 years. She has resumed her pastoral activities at the Holy Rosary Parish Church in Taipei: catechism, Bible course, animation of retreats. Ever committed to the youth, she accompanies them in their spiritual and vocational pursuits. As a missionary in Canada, she was involved in parish work in Toronto for a few years.



**Jeannette Fanfan, M.I.C.**  
from Chantal,  
Diocese of Les Cayes, Haïti

Returning to Malawi, Africa, where she has been a missionary for a few years, Sister Jeannette continues to work in partnership with the people in the rural regions in different development projects. This experience leads her to an active involvement in the literacy programme for women.



**Gisèle Lachapelle, M.I.C.**  
from Joliette,  
Diocese of Joliette, Québec

Sister Gisèle is a missionary in Chile since 1970. At Ancud, an island of Chiloe, she was at first engaged in family catechism, then in pastoral work. She continues to be the secretary of Msgr. Juan Luis Ysern, Bishop of the diocese, as in the past 29 years. Moreover, she accompanies the persons associated with our Institute (ASMIC), and ensures missionary promotion among the children and the youth.



**Maria Anthea Raso, M.I.C.**  
from La Paz, Iloilo City,  
Diocese of Jaro, Philippines

Sister Anthea has returned to Quebec where she has served as editor-in-charge of our magazine, *MIC Mission News* for the last 15 years. She is now a member of the formation team in charge of young professed sisters at our International Scholasticate of Longueuil. Rich in educational experience from the Philippines and in mission service spent in Malawi, Sister Anthea will share her knowledge and love of the mission.

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# News from Here and

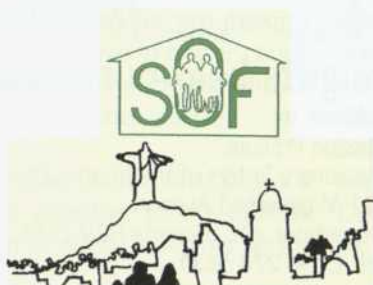


SOF psychologists and family animators with Fr. Pedro Romero (seated at centre), Solange Garneau, M.I.C. (standing, 1<sup>st</sup> l.)

## SOLIDARITY OF SOF (FAMILY ORIENTATION SERVICE)

With only four years of existence, SOF, a centre assisting families of Cochabamba, Bolivia, has already made its mark in this town of 800,000 inhabitants. The centre offers psychological assistance to persons with serious family problems and responds to the urgent needs of orientation experienced by the families in the difficult context of the actual world. Hundreds of people have found at SOF the proper guidance along paths of healing and peace: couples in difficulty and single-headed families, parents and children in contentious situations, youth addicted to drugs and alcohol. The project carries on.

SOF can render quality services, thanks to the remarkable commitment of a volunteer team composed of several family animators and family therapists: psychologists (about 15), a psychiatrist, a physician, a sexologist, a lawyer and a priest. They are happy to give gratuitously two hours per week and even more. Besides the interview and therapy sessions for couples and families, the center offers a variety of formative activities to the general public on the theme of marriage and family on TV and radio. For three years Solange Garneau, M.I.C. has coordinated the activities of this center set up by Fr. Pedro Romero, a Franciscan trained in psychology. Sister Solange testifies with enthusiasm to what she has witnessed: the couples are learning how to overcome their difficulties, to dialogue, to forgive. They have discovered the importance of the word that fosters communion and growth in love.



Taiwan. Pastoral worker at Tien Hospital, Rosa Yung, M.I.C. (1<sup>st</sup>, l.) experienced the hazards to combat SARS.

## INTENSE MOMENTS OF SOLIDARITY

Last March the outbreak of atypical pneumonia known as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in a few Asian countries as well as in Toronto, Canada, was a major concern of the government and the Church. The whole world was placed in a state of alert and a relentless campaign was organized against the virus responsible for the epidemic.

In Hong Kong and in Taiwan our Sisters were witnesses of the panic among the people. Within one month the virus considerably spread. Since the virus can be transmitted by close person-to-person contacts and can spread more broadly through the air, drastic measures were taken: closing of schools, massive quarantine, disinfections of public places... Our two big schools in Hong Kong closed their doors and all the nooks and crannies were disinfected. When classes resumed, hygienic measures were obligatory: wearing face masks, washing hands before classes, taking body temperature...

A strong solidarity in action was shown in these trying times. The believers had recourse to prayer to strengthen their faith and to be able to recognize the many signs of God's loving presence. Whenever possible, various religious celebrations were held which gathered Christians. In different ways, our Sisters involved themselves to be a comforting presence and be of help in their milieu.



Hong Kong. The Choir of Good Hope School participated in a concert, in memory of the health workers, victims of SARS.

# Elsewhere...



Words of confidence and hope echo with intensity in the prison walls. Rollande Ouellet, M.I.C.

## I WAS IN PRISON...

Since the past 30 years, Rollande Ouellet, M.I.C. has intensely engaged herself in the accompaniment of detainees as well as in their reintegration into society. By means of music and song as well as through diverse prayer encounters and spiritual sharing, she helps prisoners restore themselves and rediscover their faith. Strong and lasting bonds are woven. She becomes a witness filled with marvel at God's action in the hearts as shown in the story of Denis.

*That evening a newcomer attended Mass. He seemed quite lost. I went to meet him and in no time we became acquainted. He spoke about his past and present situation. When arrested, a bullet penetrated his head, and it was never extracted. This explains his lack of equilibrium and his fragility. Wanting to help him, I invited him to participate in the choir without having even to sing. The therapy through the choir began. Little by little Denis developed self-confidence and tried to emit a few sounds. He joined the others in singing at Mass. The beautiful lyrics of the liturgical songs touched him deeply. He later made his "cursillo" within the prison walls. This gave him a new vigour. As he was making more progress, I accompanied him in all he was experiencing. A few years later he was sent to a transitional residence. Each week he came to see me and he discovered the beauty of his being. Trusting in God's help, he was ready to fly with his own wings despite his cerebral disability. Today, after 12 years of freedom, Denis continues to visit me and share his journey in the midst of difficulties. Very committed to the Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) where he found his mission, Denis now transmits his new values and his faith in God to the residents of the transition house.*



The cross of pardon made by the detainees



Photo: HCR / M. Kobayashi



François Gloutnay (inset)

## RENEWING OUR SOLIDARITY

François Gloutnay is in charge of communications for Development and Peace, the official organization of the Catholic Church of Canada relating to matters on international development. The organization educates the Canadian public about international realities and provides financial support for projects promoting social justice and human dignity among the impoverished populations of Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbeans. Mr. Gloutnay calls our attention to works of solidarity carried out in the Canadian milieu: *the activists remind us that the most underprivileged of our society have difficulty finding suitable housing due to lack of low-rent facilities; that associations are offering services and care for women-headed families in search of a shelter after a marriage breakdown... Donations for the Christmas gift baskets are usually higher in our milieu. By analyzing the cause of poverty, we should further encourage actions for solidarity.*

Gloutnay proposes the following resources for reference on this subject:

ABBÉ PIERRE, *Fraternité*, Paris Ed. Fayard, 1999, 134 pages. A book on a celebrated lawyer of the excluded explains his journey and his values.

PETRELLA, RICARDO. *Le bien commun: éloge de la solidarité*, Bruxelles, Ed. Labor, 1996, 94 pages. This seasoned academician puts into question the actual values of competition and frenzied seeking for profit.

Websites:

[www.justicepaix.org](http://www.justicepaix.org) In Quebec, Christian groups have created this ecumenical Network where they challenge our society in the light of the evangelical demands.

[www.caritas.org](http://www.caritas.org) Caritas Internationalis This organization of the Catholic Church looks for links to tie up its work of charity during times of emergency (distribution of food, clothing...) with actions of solidarity that question the role of governments.

[www.undp.org/french](http://www.undp.org/french) PNUD Agence de l'ONU, le Programme des Nations Unie pour le Développement showing the problems of our world calling for our solidarity.

# In the Garden of God



**Philomène Paré, M.I.C. 1914 - 2002**  
(Sister Sainte-Virginie)  
St-Valérien, Quebec

A brilliant and studious student, Philomène was stricken by illness at the age of 14. During her convalescence, she prayed, reflected on her desire to become a religious missionary. Upon admission to our Institute in 1938, Sister Philomène devoted herself generously to the different tasks in our houses of Quebec. Everyone loved her. She was a woman of faith and prayer, an ardent missionary, and an utterly happy missionary even in suffering that marked most of her life.



**Yvette Demers, M.I.C. 1918 - 2003**  
(Sister Jeanne-de-la-Croix)  
Quebec City

At the age of 17, Yvette was admitted to our Institute, welcomed with joy by her sisters Marguerite and Rose-Aimée, who both entered before her. For nearly 20 years, she devoted herself without counting, to closed retreats which were then in full swing. As a missionary in Africa for 30 years, she especially worked at our centre in Chipata, Africa for the integral formation of African women. Her ardour to serve, her sincere friendship, her love of Mary made Sister Yvette a committed woman admired by all.



**Juliette Trudeau, M.I.C. 1916 - 2003**  
(Sister Sainte-Candide)

Ste-Julie-de-Verchères, Quebec  
Ever since she was 6 years of age, Juliette dreamed of becoming a religious. Her heart's desire was realized at the age of 17 when she entered our Institute where her sister Marie-Reine had preceded her. For almost 40 years she earnestly served in our closed retreats where her talent for cooking was greatly appreciated. Then she left for Madagascar to render valued services in our houses as well as in the parish. A woman of prayer, Sister Juliette radiated goodness, kindness and joy.



**Marthe Dubé, M.I.C. 1912 - 2003**  
(Sister Marie-Alfred)

Notre-Dame-Sacré-Coeur, Quebec  
Marthe fulfilled her vocation at the price of all kinds of obstacles she bravely overcame. She entered our Institute in 1937, and for 25 years she assisted in the formation of novices in Canada and later in Haiti. Patient, simple, understanding, she shared her knowledge in varying fields of service, especially sewing. Throughout her life, her special love for the Virgin Mary was evident, a legacy received from her mother.



**Marie Poirier, M.I.C. 1915 - 2003**  
(Sister Marie-Élise)  
St-Aimé, Quebec

Orphaned when ten years old, Marie was adopted by her grandparents who loved her tenderly. Ever since childhood, she had wished to be a religious, but her love for her grandmother forestalled her entrance. Only after her grandmother's death did she join our Institute, at 29. In Quebec she devoted herself to the different community services for 26 years. Then she was the right hand of her brother François, parish priest of Ferme-Neuve for a period of 22 years. Sister Marie generously shared her talents and missionary spirit with those she encountered.

## With our Heartfelt Sympathy...

*Sincere condolences to you, dear subscribers who have had the pain of losing someone dear during this year 2003. The grief you are living touches us deeply. May you be comforted in knowing that we are praying in a special way for this departed person. She/he benefits from an affiliation to the daily prayer of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and to the two Masses celebrated every week in one of our missions the world over. May God bless and keep these persons you love! May He grant them peace! May He also grant each of you serenity and confidence in God's love.*

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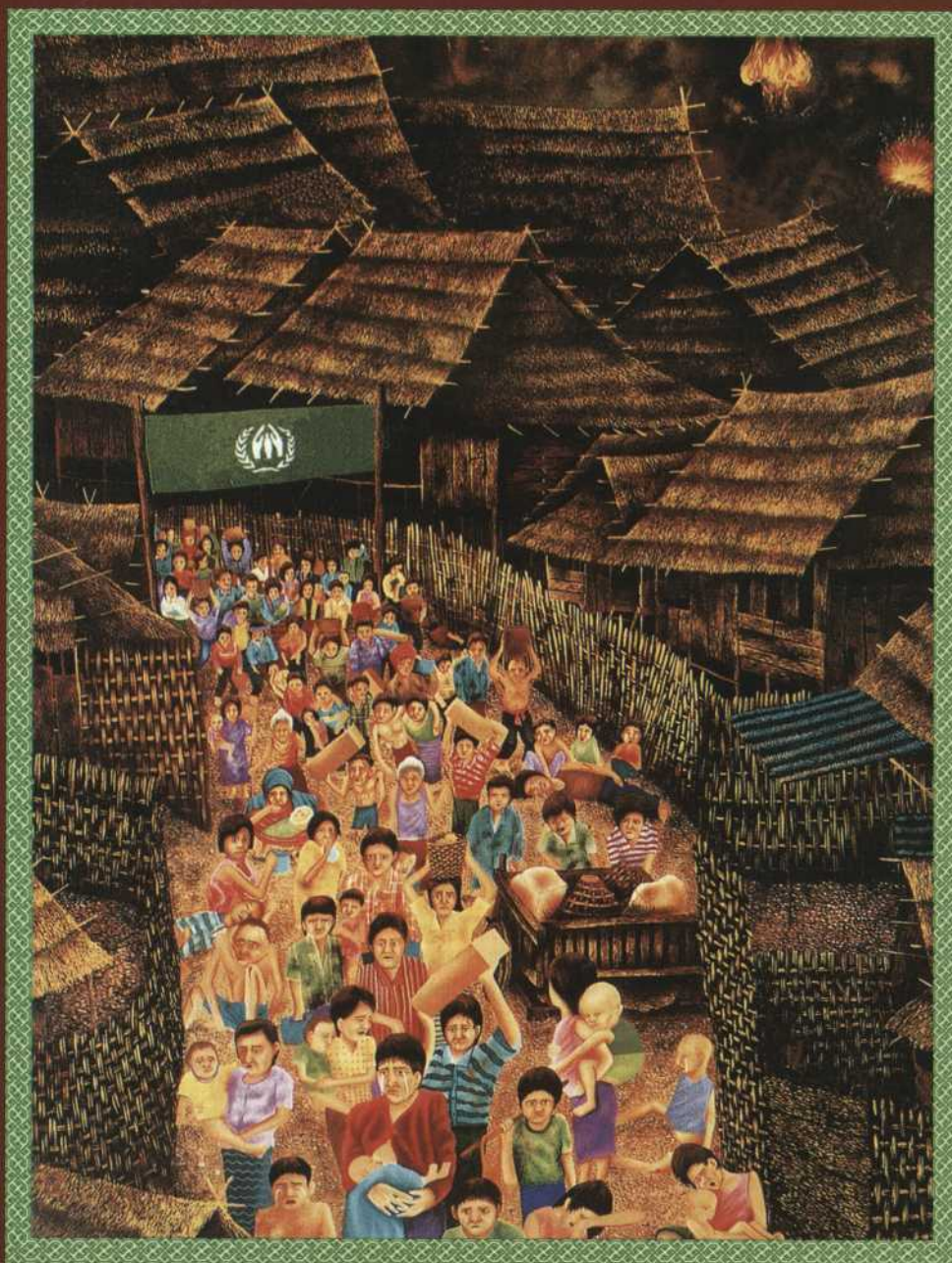
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