

MIC MISSION NEWS

APRIL - MAY - JUNE 2004



Pathways to Life...



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MIC MISSION NEWS

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Daughter of Father Sun and of Mother Earth



Light has Dawned...



The 2nd American Mission Congress

MISSIONARY INTENTIONS 2004

April

That the missionary spirit *Ad gentes* may be a theme of reflection and constant commitment in ordinary pastoral activity of Christian communities.

May

That through the maternal intercession of our Lady, Catholics may recognize the Eucharist as the heart and soul of missionary activity.

June

That religious freedom, a fundamental human right, may be given greater respect in Asian countries.

Saying Yes to our Mission

Life unfolds itself to us as a long road filled with promises and mysteries, but also beset with risks and challenges. Every crossroad calls for a choice to be made. We constantly have to decide which way to go without losing sight of the orientation we wish to give our existence. In other words, we are invited to say yes to our mission. A person's mission is the direction that person gives to his or her life in response to an inner call. The word *mission* evokes the profound aspiration, the inner drive that prompts us to take the best direction to accomplish the task for which we are born. Every human being receives a call to fulfill a personal mission that no one else can accomplish. And when one uses his or her talents and knowledge in the free fulfilment of that mission, one enriches the universe in a unique and irreplaceable way.

This personal mission takes on various concrete forms, which are, of course, at the service of love and life. Thus, to fulfill one's mission more adequately, some changes have to be made in one's work or attitudes. Sometimes, a person will go as far as choosing a new career or a completely new lifestyle: to get married or to join a group of people who live by the same values, share the same

projects. When we say yes to our mission, our yes becomes the guiding star that will enlighten our whole life... it enables us to make the right decisions and it gives full meaning to life.



The testimonies presented in these pages are examples of this dynamic process. Several women committed in their religious and missionary life share the inner calls, events, situations and encounters that helped them discover their mission. These are experiences in which God's active presence can be perceived and a real desire to encounter Jesus and walk with Him is discerned. In turn, some participants to the *Second American Mission Congress (CAM 2)* disclose how they opened their hearts to the communitarian aspect of the mission.

It is by discovering our mission and daring to believe it originates in the heart of God that we can find the true meaning of our life. God asks nothing of us other than to fulfill our dreams, our deep desires, our potential in the service of our brothers and sisters as suggested by the parable of the talents. (Mt 25:14ff). The gifts we have received are signs of God's love for us – we have to let them bloom and share them with joy in a spirit of thanksgiving!

Celine Gaurin, m.i.c.

Daughter of Father Sun and of Mother Earth

Interview with Cipriana Ccahuana, M.I.C.

Cuzco, Peru. Somewhere on the Incas route...

Sr. Cipriana grew up among a people belonging to an ancient civilization, the Incas, whose religious traditions contain an invaluable spiritual treasure. When she encountered the God of Christians, her life and that of her people appeared to her in a new light... the Bible became like a mirror reflecting their history. That experience prompted her to reach out to the poorest of the poor and to commit herself to their service.

Good morning, Cipriana! You are from Peru, and more specifically a Quechuan woman from the Andes. Tell us about the environment where you grew up.

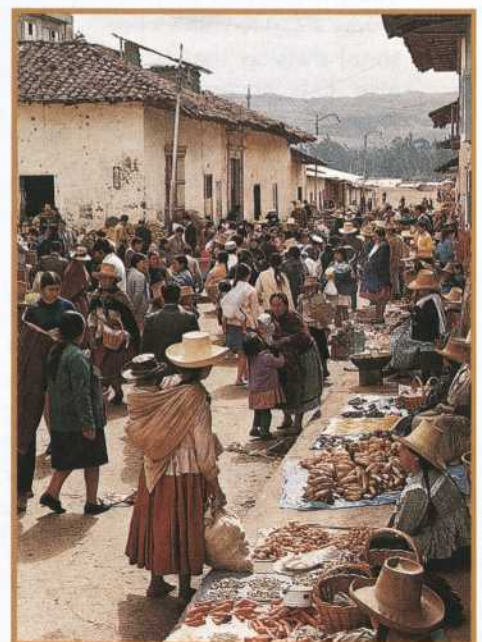
I am from the small village of Yauri-Espinar located some 4000 metres above sea level. I was born and raised in the Andes cordillera, the nesting place of the condor, but also the location of the *pampa*, a vast plain in which vicunas and llamas thrive.

Quechua is my mother tongue. Pedrona and Remigio, my mother and father, had seven

children: five girls and two boys. I am the fifth child in the family. With the people of our village, we are a closely united community, rooted in the history and age-old culture of our ancestors, the Incas. We live in the cradle of the *Tawantisuyo*, that vast and fabulous empire built by the Incas. Cuzco, the ancient imperial capital and its surrounding areas preserve the vestiges of our cultural and spiritual heritage.

The history of our Inca ancestors is woven with myths and sacred rites. From generation to generation, parents recount it at special events or at evening meals around the fire. This is how we preserve our traditions and our reasons for being, struggling and living for one another. The Incas revere a good God whom they call *Tayta Inti*. He is not merely a star shining in the sky: this would not mean anything. He is the

Transcendent One, the Living One. He has a heart, He has feelings. He is full of love! In our Andean religious experience, God is in everything. God is a mystery and cannot be reduced to a sim-



Market Day in Cajamarca

Photo: Vivant Univers



Symbol of leadership
in Ancient Peru

ple human expression. We have masculine and feminine names for Him, according to His many faces and manifestations. Thus, I, Cipriana, am a *daughter of Father Sun*, the Creator and Giver of life. I am also a *daughter of Pachamama*, Mother Earth, who never gets tired of giving us life, food and all that we see and admire...

What was your journey of faith from the time of your childhood?

When I was about seven, I left my father's home to study in the city of Arequipa. I lived at my aunt's house with my older sisters who were also students. It was around that time that I was introduced to the God of Christians. Until then, I only knew God according to his Andean face, the one of my ancestors and of my Inca culture. As I entered in a relationship with the God whom I was getting to know and pray to, I tried in every possible way to find out more about Him.

I then started to search for God by reading the Bible. But all my efforts left me thirsting for more. So I wanted to provoke Him. I was still very young when I said to Jesus, *What do you want of me? Why do you fascinate me so much since you know who I am? You know that I am not one of your people. Would you by any chance want me to become a religious, while knowing perfectly well who I am?* I



Sr. Cipriana in her
traditional costume

tried to ignore this possibility and to find another way. And there was one. I remember that afternoon. It was the year when I turned 21. I was on the actual shore of *Uchok'arko* River, feeling tired and exhausted. All of a sudden, I had the sensation of being all wrapped in love to the depth of my soul. It was Jesus! We talked for a long while... I felt Him so close to me, to my people, my marginalized and, exploited people. He was indeed the God of the whole universe!

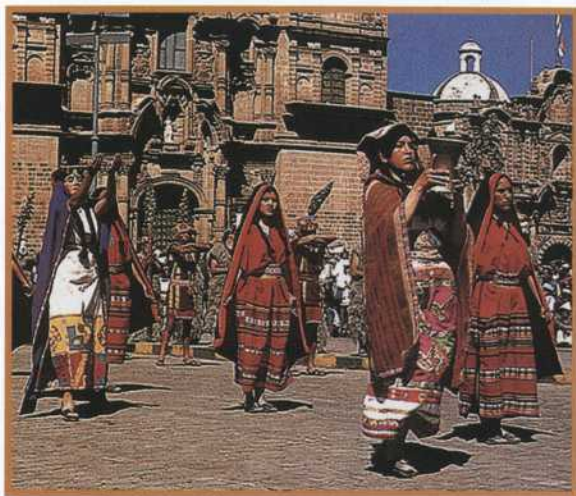


Cuzco. On June 24, the feast of the Sun commemorates the glorious past of the Incas.

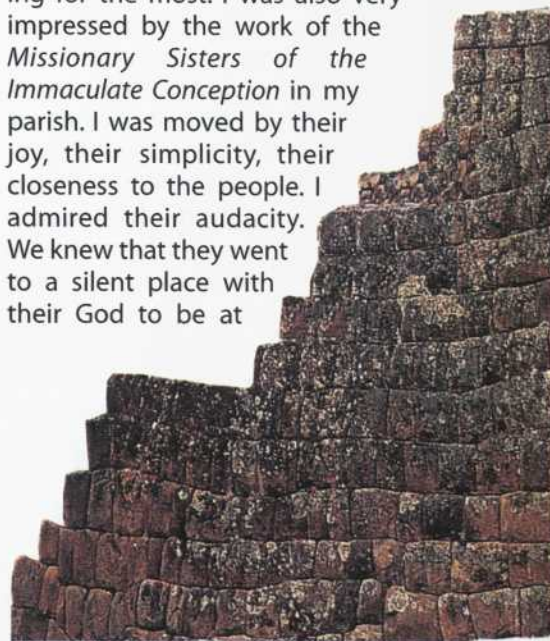
What happened then?

At that time, I was living in Yauri and teaching the children of surrounding villages. I started searching where I might make my commitment. I first felt called to enter a brand new community of native Sisters in Sicuani, my native region. We received a formation as missionaries among our own people. For five years, this experience enabled me to share my most beautiful missionary dreams with the people of Espinar. Yet, this was not where God was calling me. So, I left for Lima in order to better prepare myself to help the people of my country.

With all my heart, I wanted to help the poorest of the poor, wherever they were. That is what I was looking for the most. I was also very impressed by the work of the *Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception* in my parish. I was moved by their joy, their simplicity, their closeness to the people. I admired their audacity. We knew that they went to a silent place with their God to be at



At Cuzco, the feast of the Sun is celebrated according to the Incas rites.





Meeting with some young people from Cajabamba. Sr. Cipriana (3rd r.)



Picking grapes in Pachacutec. Cipriana, M.I.C. (1st l.), Isabel Ayala, M.I.C. (at center), Carmen Tito, M.I.C. (standing 2nd r.)

His total service afterwards. They strongly challenged me and unconsciously attracted me to their own adventure. And I thought, *God has done so much for me... He gave me His life in abundance. How much He loves me though I am so little! For me to thank Him, there can be no better community than that of these Sisters who are dedicated to Thanksgiving.* That is why I chose this community.

What are the values of your culture that you can live out in Cajabamba?

In Cajabamba, I mingle with country people and I consider it a privilege to be able to share all that makes up their life. Actually, we differ on certain points, for they are from the north of the Andes, and I, from the south. But we own the same values: community work, the joy of our feasts and celebrations, a close relationship with nature and a deep sense of religious

reverence. Unfortunately, several values of our culture have fallen into oblivion since the Spaniards have imposed their culture on us.

What takes place in the Bible study groups?

I work in collaboration with the Centre of Latin American Bible Ministry in Peru and I draw inspiration from the method proposed for their workshops. Our goal is to bring the Word of God to the people and to help them live by it with love in the practical aspects of their lives.

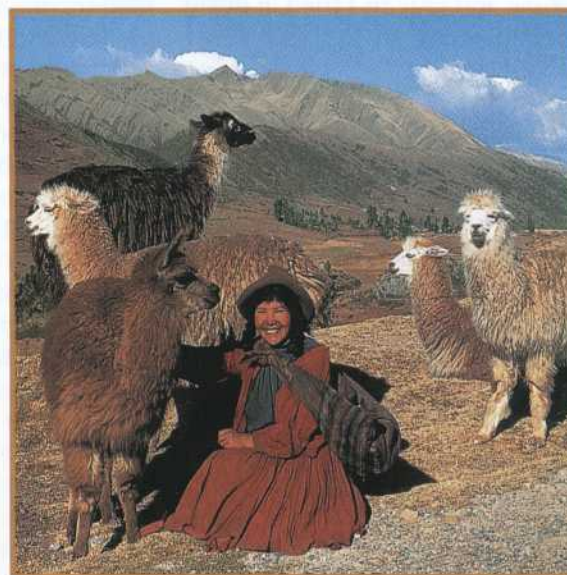
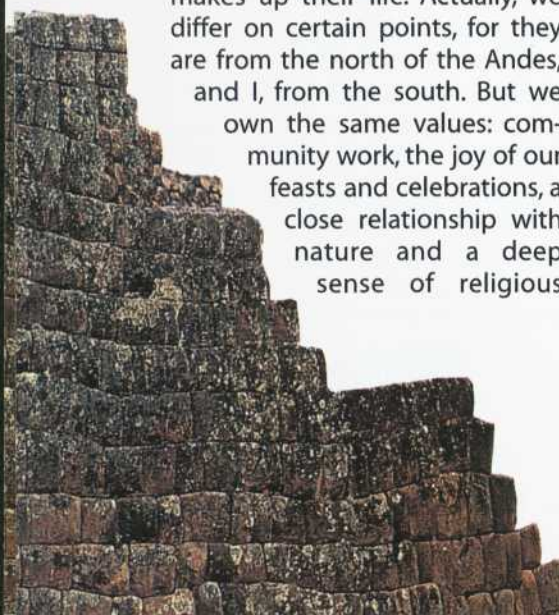
We also hope to lead them to discover and experience that God is close to them, that He listens to their cry and accompanies them in their struggles for a more just society. In my meetings with children as well as with adults, the first step is to help them discover that the Bible tells us the wonderful story of God's love for His people, and of the chosen

people's love for their God. Since we too, are His people, our own life and our own history are mirrored there.

How would you sum up your experience?

My experience in Cajabamba leads me to give thanks. I admire how the people, simple and courageous, receive the Word of God and actually welcome God Himself present in their daily lives.

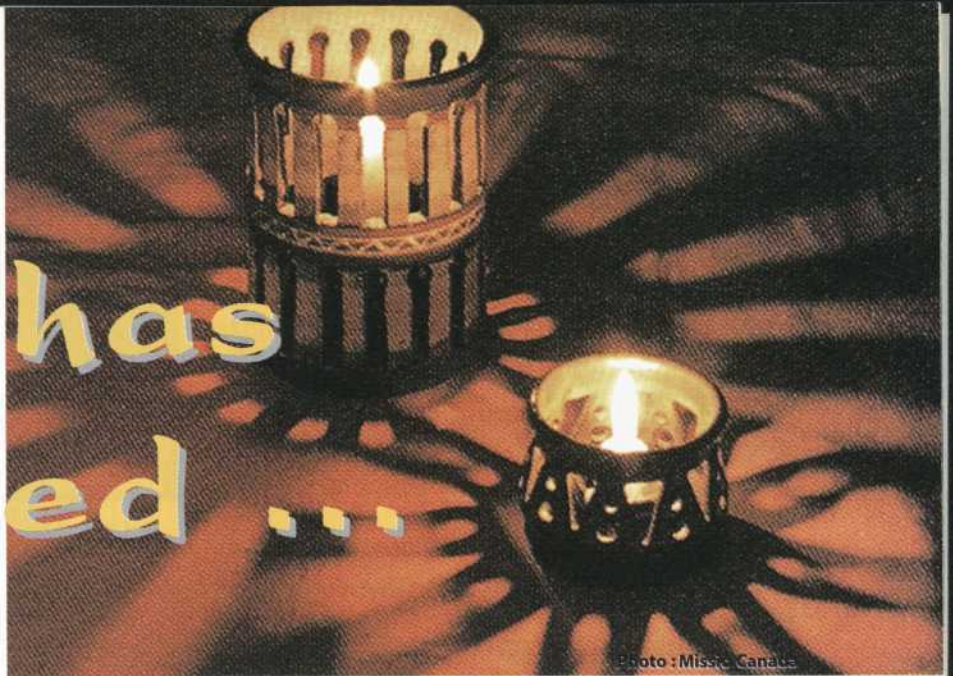
I feel in solidarity with their sufferings and struggles. What a great mission it is to commit myself with them and for them, to God and for God! ✱



Young shepherd with her llamas in the Andes

Light has Dawned ...

Interview with Rossetti Lau, M.I.C.



As a teenager, Rossetti Lau was quite determined to find answers to questions raised by life, no matter how long it would take. The answers came... and with them, unexpected and captivating discoveries. Rossetti, now a religious in our Institute, reveals the truth concerning her mysterious passage from Buddhism to the Christian faith and to the missionary life.

Good morning, Rossetti. Thank you for coming to share with us about your childhood.

I was born and raised in Hong Kong. My parents were from Chiu Chow, a small village in the south of China; neither one of them was a Catholic. They held on firmly to traditional Chinese values: hard work, the primacy of boys over girls, faithfulness to the family, etc. Being the youngest of seven children (5 girls and

2 boys), I was educated by my older sisters, for I was a girl; I had to make my own way in life and to study very hard. As for religious values, I adhered to those of my mother. They were a mixture of Buddhism, Taoism and popular religion. Such are the religious beliefs of most Chinese people in Hong Kong. They are expressed by prayers to multiple deities and by offerings of food, money and paper clothing.

After my elementary studies, I enrolled at Tak Oi, a high school subsidized by the government and administered by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. A warm atmosphere prevailed in this school, along with a climate of freedom and family spirit filled with love, which helped me a great deal during my teenage years. This happy experience elicited a fervent desire: I wanted to become a teacher to help other young people with their personal growth. Once I had completed my university studies, I began my career as a biology teacher, and then, for eleven years, I was entrusted with courses in ethics and religion.

You were a religion teacher in a Catholic school? Had you anticipated doing this?

Let us start from the beginning. The religion of my childhood was a blend of Buddhism, Taoism and popular religion. Even if I went to a Catholic school, I did not intend to join this religion. I felt no attraction to any of the rites and symbols I observed in the Mass celebrated there. However, the education I received awakened in me the desire to look for something deeper.



Hong Kong. Buddhist temple. In front, incense sticks being burned to obtain the protection of the gods

By the time I was in fourth year high school, I was asking myself many questions. Where do I come from? Where will I go when I die? What is the meaning of life? Why is there so much suffering in life? I began searching for answers. For a short while, I went to some Protestant churches and for a longer time, I associated with Buddhism. The teaching of Buddha about life and suffering appealed to me very much, but I was not getting any answer to my question - Where do I come from?

As I lingered somewhat idly in Buddhism, I took the opportunity offered me to join a catechism class in a Catholic church. The sessions, I thought, would enable me to find out more about the Catholic faith and that, at the end of two years, I would only need to decide whether or not to receive Baptism. After a year and a half, I had found no answers yet to all my questions. However, when asked if I wanted to receive Baptism, I felt that in those two years of searching, a peaceful river had flowed into my soul; there was no reason to stop its calm waters... After ten years of searching, I said Yes!

What happened then?

I was baptized in 1986 during the Easter Vigil. This event completely transformed the way I perceived my life. I felt more positive, more cheerful, more alive. This transformation was, of course, the result of numerous meetings, activities and sessions in which I took part on the diocesan level. It can also be attributed to the vibrant life of the parish community in which I was involved.



Hong Kong. Sr. Rossetti's baptism in 1986



Philippines. Sr. Rossetti (1st L.) and her companions during her formation to the religious life at our novitiate in Baguio

A short while afterwards, I went through some hard times. I was faced with challenges: illness, the experience of my own limitations and inherent difficulties of life. But these challenges proved to be moments of grace. They enabled me to welcome the healing love of God. The Lord was leading me on tortuous paths where I experienced within myself His loving presence, a strong, intense presence. The more He filled me with His love, the more I felt urged to share with others this message, this Good News of Salvation: Jesus is our personal Saviour, He brings us hope, life and joy!

This phase lasted several years, until I asked the Lord, My God, you gave me so much, what more can I do for you? Then, as my relationship with Him was becoming more intense, another question emerged: Would religious life not be a way of living my relationship with God more fully? Such a decision was not easy to make, for I had a stable job, a family, friends who loved me, etc. Moreover, I did not want to become a Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception merely because I had studied in their school. I began to look around at other religious communities to find the one where I could live my life with God. This went on for a short while, less than two years, for I soon understood that no matter the amount of information I might gather or the number of people I might consult, ultimately, I was the only one who had to plunge into the unknown. I therefore requested my admission at the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Why did I end up choosing this Community? Because the spirituality of Thanksgiving which is theirs corresponds perfectly with my faith experience. One sentence by our Mother Foundress, Délia Tétreault, says it very well: God has given us all things, even his own Son;



Hong Kong. Sr. Rossetti at Good Hope School during her formation to missionary life

what better way of repaying him than to give him children, chosen ones who will in turn praise him for his kindness forever?

For you, the best way to come closer to God and to give Him thanks is to take part in the Mission. How did you receive the missionary project in Africa proposed to you by the Community?

I went into this missionary experience with trust in God, knowing that He would draw something good from it. I was pleased to hear that I would teach biology at Marymount Secondary School in Mzuzu. It is a fascinating subject that opens our eyes to the wonders of God the Creator. Besides, I really enjoy teaching and accompanying young people in their growth. But I was not without fear. I worried about my adjustment as a teacher in another culture: will the students accept me? ...will they understand me, a foreigner?

What is your experience in Malawi?

Marymount Secondary School accommodates approximately 600 students. Each class has from 70 to 80 girls who come from all parts of the country. Besides teaching biology in first and second high school, I also lead a Missionary Club. It has around fifteen young members. I learn a lot from their sharing. My work in Mzuzu fully meets my aspirations.

At Marymount, both teachers and students communicate easily with people of other nationalities and welcome them graciously. I am very impressed by their openness. Malawians are warm, friendly and hos-



Mzuzu, Malawi. Sr. Rossetti with her students

pitable. Through my contacts with them, I discover another culture overflowing with joie de vivre, song and dance. I am learning a different view of time and a different philosophy of efficiency and development. For the people, what is important is the acceptance of life. To take life as it comes, with a smile; to be able to wait, to start over, without making a big deal of difficulties. I am moved by their way of relating to God: it is quite natural and easy for them to pray, to talk to Him. They humbly acknowledge themselves as His creatures, in need of Him.

There is still much for me to discover! I am slowly integrating into African life. God is very generous to me through my missionary experience. It is so enriching that I take time each day to savour it. By giving me the grace to serve in Africa, God leads me to a better understanding of myself and of my own culture and values and to welcome those of others. In this way, I come to experience His Love more deeply and to better appreciate the wonders of His creation. ✱



Some Marymount Secondary School students in Mzuzu

OPENING UP TO LIFE



In collaboration with Rita Amabili-Rivet

Zambia. Sr. Cecilia (3rd row, 7th r.) during a day of formation at Vilimukulu

As a child, Cecilia Mzumara grew up in a family filled with vibrant faith and rich in apostolic and social commitments. She met people who had a passionate desire to help others in their human and spiritual growth. Today, Cecilia draws from that valuable experience. Therein, she discovers what has nourished and still nourishes her religious and missionary vocation.

Cecilia Mzumara was born in Mzimba, Malawi, a country of Central Africa, where 20% of the people are Catholic. Six brothers and three sisters enlivened her childhood days, but she is especially close to Maggie, her twin sister. Her parents, both of whom were teachers, are Christians of strong conviction and intense commitment. For two years, her father cooperated in the translation of an ecumenical edition of the Bible. Her mother, who headed the teaching of domestic arts in the elementary schools of the district of Mzuzu, visited the village schools to train teachers and supervise their work. When Cecilia recalls the little girl she once was, the memory of her mother, Elizabeth, readily comes to her mind. *Mama was very involved as a catechist in the parish. This occupied her whole day on Saturday. Moreover, every Sunday after Mass, she went with Sister Gabrielle to the remote villages to animate the small Christian communities and to pray with the people. Seeing all this, I would say to myself, 'Since Sister Gabrielle welcomed the help of Mama, that means she is short of people to work with her on this mission. When I grow up, I will go and help her.'*

A Listening Heart

At eight years of age, Cecilia already observed with great attention how her mother and the Missionary

Sisters of the Immaculate Conception worked together with extraordinary harmony and with untiring devotion. The Sisters and her mother were united in their thirst for God and in their joy of helping others to grow humanly and spiritually. She also noted how these missionaries worked with the catechists in her school and got deeply involved in the integral formation of women.

Sister Cecilia still treasures the memory of her long conversations with her mother. I loved to receive her confidences. She would tell me about her admiration for Délia Tétreault, the foundress of the Missionary



Mzuzu, Malawi. Sr. Cecilia (2nd r.) with her parents and her twin sister, Maggie



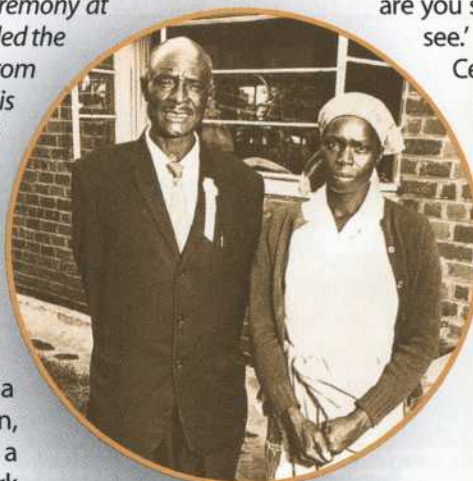
To give life... to continue the ancestors' lineage!

Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. I also listened with great delight to her stories about my grandfather Ignasio. She would tell me of his determination to become a Catholic. He had patiently studied the catechism and prayed unceasingly that he might be baptized in 1935. Having become a teacher in a small village school, and then the first catechist of the mission of Katete, he worked for more than 30 years with untiring devotion. Generously facing situations that called for sacrifices of all kinds, he was an unrelenting witness to his faith, bringing the Gospel to others. Without a catechist, these Christian communities could not have survived. Mama never forgot the impressive religious ceremony at which my grandfather was awarded the golden Bene Merenti medal from Pope John XXIII, in gratitude for his services as a catechist. Besides this, he received a Papal blessing for himself and his whole family. What a festive occasion for the whole community of Katete!

Discerning the Calls

After her secondary school and a special training in education, Cecilia embarked on her role as a teacher. She enjoyed this work and devoted herself to it unsparingly. In this period of her life, the Lord's call to religious life became more and more direct and continuous. She questioned herself and gave it much thought and prayer. *What choice do I make? Marriage or religious life? What does God want for me?* She greatly admired her aunt Ernestina, a member of the *Sisters of the Holy Rosary*, a young typically African congregation, well rooted in the country and working with great competence in various ministries. She knew other religious institutes as well, for within a few years, the Church of Malawi had grown rapidly and religious life was now quite flourishing. However, it was with the *Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception* that she decided to verify whether God was really calling her to religious life.

During a retreat at the Sisters' convent, a Gospel passage struck a particular chord and resounded strongly in her: *Jesus saw the two disciples following Him and*



Katete, Malawi, 1961. Ignasio Chirwa and his wife Cecilia, grandparents of Sr. Cecilia



Zambia. At the golden jubilee of the Diocese of Chipata, our missionaries and young African women who recently joined our Institute. Sr. Cecilia (standing, 2nd r.)

He asked: 'What do you want?' They said, 'Rabbi, where are you staying?' 'Come,' He said, 'and you will see.' (Jn 1:38). A light began to shine in Cecilia's heart. She was moved by a keen desire to meet Christ and a profound eagerness to reach out to others. With all her heart, she welcomed the vocation to which God was calling her: she would be a missionary. *I was now ready to reveal my desire to join the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.*

On The Way to the Future

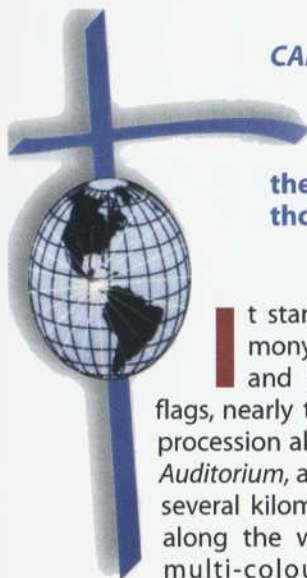
In Africa, young women are not pressured to enter the convent. Women represent the promise of numerous children and their duty

consists in giving life to perpetuate the lineage of the ancestors. In this context, to give up motherhood implies an experience of bereavement. But Cecilia held on to the deep conviction that a life dedicated to God is a fruitful life.

Having become a religious missionary, she was sent to Zambia on a pastoral internship and then was recalled to Malawi where she was asked to take charge of the formation of young African women interested in joining our Institute. Ever attentive to God's call, Cecilia continued her inner journey. Today, she is beginning in Canada a very special period of formation at the International Scholasticate. She keeps vibrant in her heart the ardent desire to bring to others the Gospel message of Jesus Christ who longs to meet us and to give Himself. In her beats the heart of Africa. What she received at home, she shares it here! ✱

The 2nd American Mission

By Murielle Dubé, M.I.C.



CAM 2, a congress long prepared in prayer, remains a wonderful memory for those who had the privilege of taking part in it. How can anyone give an adequate account of this unique experience lived in Guatemala last November? What were the highlights of those days during which 170 Canadians were among the 3,500 Christians from all parts of America? Murielle Dubé, M.I.C., answers those questions by describing the flow of events of this major gathering.

It started with a superb opening ceremony in a climate of joy, enthusiasm and beauty. Carrying their respective flags, nearly three thousand people walked in procession along the streets to the *John Paul II Auditorium*, a venue for large gatherings. Over several kilometres, the route was carpeted all along the wayside, with mosaic designs of multi-coloured sawdust assembled during the night by Guatemalan artists. These designs illustrated the theme of the Congress and presented the different provinces of the host country. With the fervour of a faith meant to be shared, the delegates were already entering a culture of gratuitousness and giving!

The participants were given the same welcome *as if Jesus Himself was being received*: with unlimited attention and thoughtfulness. Families opened their hearts and homes, joyfully giving warm hospitality and serving traditional local breakfast and evening meals. Thus immersed in the daily life of the locals, the visitors discovered the customs, songs and dances and in particular, the rich and profound faith of the Guatemalan people.



ASMIC delegates at the Congress: Monique Lefebvre, Jocelyne Dallaire, Roquina Orillaneda and Viviane Perreault

A Church of Martyrs

During the Congress, the participants experienced exceptional moments of prayer, rich in meaning. Animated by the native communities of Guatemala and expressed in the language and according to the specific customs of each group, those moments

enabled everyone present to be in communion with the real life of the Guatemalan people. They evoked the memory of the martyrdom of catechists, sisters and priests assassinated because their faith placed them at the service of the poor and the outcast and disturbed the order of established power.

The Church of Central America and especially that of Guatemala, witnesses to the love of God through poverty, littleness and martyrdom. It is a model of courage and perseverance for the whole world. One always remembers with great emotion our brothers Oscar Romero, Juan Gerardi and innumerable



Young participants from Canada and their animators. Ida Brochu, M.I.C. (2nd row, 2nd r.)



Congress (CAM2)



others who shed their blood so that the people might live their faith in freedom and serenity. The Church of the XXIst century continues to be a Church of martyrs.

A Message that Revives the Mission

The daily lectures highlighted the diversity of missionary situations throughout the world and the challenges facing the Mission today. They presented the importance of uniting our energies to eradicate poverty, misery and injustice. A new impulse is given to the Mission: the message of peace, justice and love of Christ should be shared with other people outside our own milieu.

The assembly especially appreciated the lecture given by Bishop François Lapierre of Saint-Hyacinthe. In a simple language, enlivened with humour, he explained the importance of openness to others, of dialogue and solidarity. *The Gospel of Luke*, he said, tells the story of Mary's visit to her cousin Elizabeth as a marvellous model of proclamation of the gospel of life. These are two simple, pregnant women; theirs is an intergenerational encounter. This visitation reminds us that God visits and redeems His people; the Mission is first of all the Mission of God! We can experience this every time we go out of ourselves to reach out to others, like Mary who went to her cousin Elizabeth. We are therefore invited to abandon our parochial mentality and to develop a new consciousness of the mission as an encounter, a mutual sharing, an experience of giving and receiving.

An Eloquent Witness

On the initiative of the Associates of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (ASMIC) of Saint-Jean, Quebec, a project was set up to collect funds in view of acquiring Spanish Bibles to offer to the people of Guatemala. The ASMIC delegates of Quebec to CAM 2 thus went to Quilada in Guatemala to present their precious gifts to young people of the place.

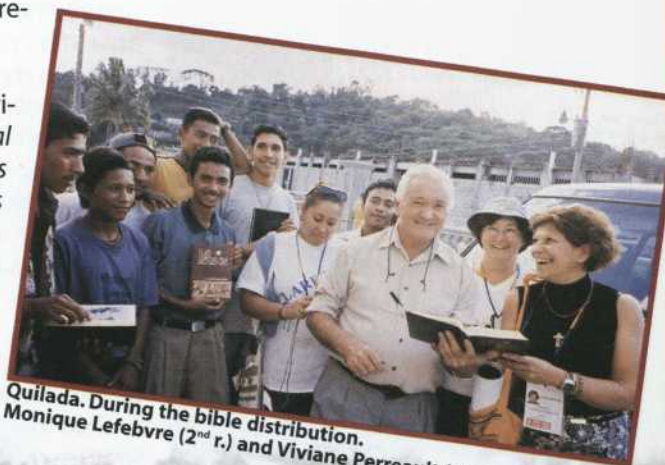
Mrs. Viviane Perreault, an ASMIC delegate, relates her experience: *For my companions and myself, this was a very special moment. Bringing the Bibles to the young people of Quilada was like bringing the Good News of Hope to them. I saw in their eyes and in their smiles a great joy and a moving gratitude; through them, I recognized the face of Christ...I am at a loss on how to explain it all!...But in some way, a light dawned on me: I understood that these young people of a poor country had developed a great inner wealth: Love. A deep peace and serenity then came over me; I realized that in spite of the poverty I personally feel with regard to the mission, I am able to make known to my brothers and sisters the Good News of the Gospel and the gentleness of a God who loves them.**



Father Roger Bédard from Missio Canada, Marie-Rosette Lafortune, M.I.C. from Missio Haiti and Marc Hébert from Jeunesse du Monde, Montreal

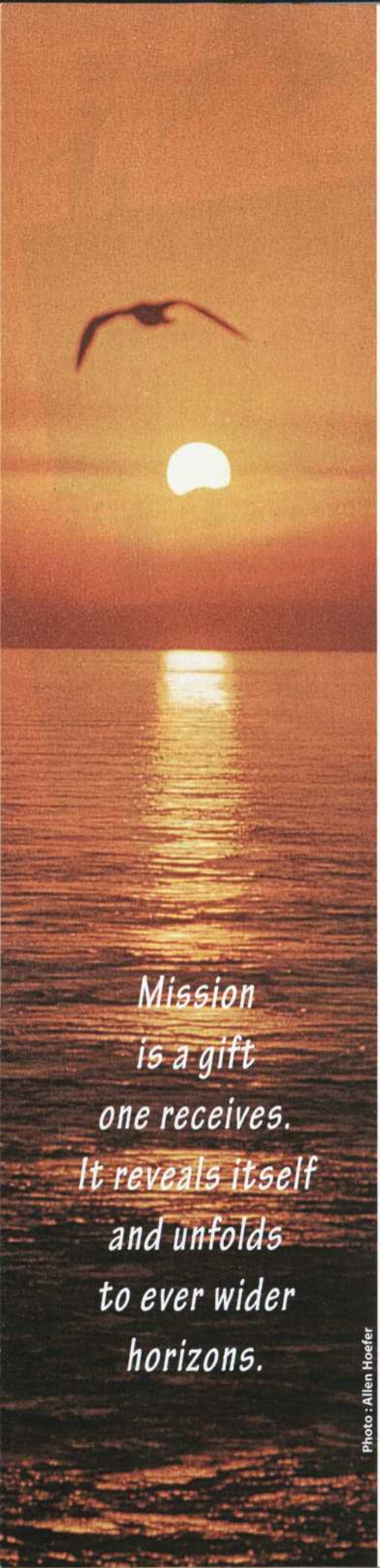


Roquina Orillaneda, ASMIC, and her new Guatemalan friends



Quilada. During the bible distribution. Monique Lefebvre (2nd r.) and Viviane Perreault (1st r.)





Towards a Greater Well-Being

By Marie-Paul Ross, M.I.C.



IIDI
Institut International de
Développement Intégral

A nurse and psychotherapist, Marie-Paul Ross, M.I.C., holds a Master's degree in Sexological Counselling and a Doctorate in Clinical Sexology from the University of Laval in Quebec. Her professional qualifications have led her to work in different countries of Europe, Asia and America. For the last 25 years, she has given courses, lectures and facilitated sessions for groups of 10 to 750 participants. Quite an unusual curriculum for a religious missionary! *Mission is a gift one receives, she says. It reveals itself and unfolds to ever-wider horizons.*

When I was born, the doctor said: *She will not live long... She will soon become an angel in heaven!* As a child, I was frail, shy and fearful. From elementary to secondary school, I had great difficulty; I did not feel comfortable in such a milieu. Failures nourished my desire to quit school. Yet, with much perseverance, I managed to finish my eleventh grade at age 17.

In my teens, I just wanted to be left alone. I did not enjoy visiting people nor travelling. My favourite place was home where I could avoid people and withdraw in my secret places. I was preoccupied with existential questions regarding the future. As for sexuality, I understood nothing about it. I chose to ignore those troubling matters and took refuge in a little comfortable world without problems. The road to my future became narrower and narrower.

You Do Not Invent Your Mission, You Receive It

How can anyone understand or explain my personal journey? I am convinced that human limitations and the life of Mary steered me to tread mostly unexplored paths filled with unforeseen events and surprises. Suffering, poverty and my own situations of distress led me to devote myself entirely to humanitarian causes. I was moved by the life of missionary sisters dedicated to Mary and living their lives as visible signs of God's action in this wounded world. I chose to become a *Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception*. But more than anything else, it was by looking at Mary, the humble woman of Nazareth, and by letting myself be moulded by her choice to say "yes" to the will of God that I gradually lost my fears and anxieties about the future. With Mary, I said "yes" to my mission. I understood that if I had survived the serious illnesses of my childhood, it was because I was entrusted with a mission to fulfill.

Your Mission Unfolds Gradually

My first missionary experiences in Bolivia and Peru were overshadowed by serious health problems. A constant struggle between my physical frailty and the demands of the mission was the main trial I had to overcome over the years. Those struggles were excellent opportunities of growth and learning. Following these difficulties and since I am a nurse by profession, I sought to understand more clearly the elements of physical and psychological health that lead to greater well-being. This desire led me to pay close attention to human distress and to look for its deep-rooted causes. Wounded sexuality, broken affectivity, a spiritual void, a body bearing the mark of untreated anxiety appeared to be the key factors worth investi-

*Mission
is a gift
one receives.
It reveals itself
and unfolds
to ever wider
horizons.*

Photo: Allen Hoefler

gating and understanding in order to help other people. I thus started offering sex education programs to schoolchildren, young people and parents.

I also helped in the formation of lay people and religious. It appeared obvious to me from the start that human beings have an innate desire to fulfill their mission through greater love and fullness of life. I saw in a clearer light that sexuality prompts human beings to mature and to love freely and in truth. The more human suffering I witnessed, the more compelled I felt to promote the integrity and dignity of persons. Therefore, I tried to make every encounter with others an opportunity to lead them to greater fullness of life. I understood better the true meaning of love:

- *To love someone means to offer that person the best there is; but above all else, it means to lead that person to the best of who he or she is.*
- *To help does not mean to make that person feel comfortable with me, but above all else, it means to promote growth.*

Due to my working experiences, especially as collaborator of CECI (Centre d'Étude et de Coopération Internationale), I was able to develop a more scientific reflection, to organize a clinical intervention and to establish in Lima a Centre that promotes psychological, sexological



Bolivia. Helping someone to grow. Marie-Paul, M.I.C.



At the IIDI, Quebec, a team ready to collaborate towards the well-being of the people, Marie-Paul Ross, M.I.C., foundress and directress of the IIDI (center), Estelle Fortin, M.I.C., orthotherapist (1st I.)

and spiritual development. Many reasons to abandon my projects came up along the way, but the difficulties and criticisms I encountered were occasions for me to come back to this initial call of God within me. What made it possible for me to carry on was Mary's "yes" which gave life to my own "yes" uttered again and again each day, a loving "yes" in faithfulness to my mission and to my own being.

Toward ever Wider Horizons

My studies in sexology further shed light upon my experience and answered my questions. These enabled me to develop a new model of sexological intervention: the MIGS (Model of Global Intervention in Sexology). This tool helps to integrate the physical, emotional and spiritual components; it fosters personal growth and enables one to

attain emotional maturity and harmonious sexual development.



Lima, Peru. Sr. Marie-Paul (standing, 1st I.) during a session for Peruvian psychologists at the CEDEPSE (Centre de Développement Psycho-Sexologique et Spirituel) founded by her in 1982

Since the year 2000, I feel especially called to work in Canada, my native country. I see the same needs here and receive the same requests. Life has led me to establish the *Institut International de Développement Intégral (IIDI)*, the purpose of which is to offer tools for a better management of one's overall health. For me, to accompany people in their sexual growth means to help them to tap every element of their history that may contribute to their personal development, to their finding their rightful place in love and thus to fulfill their mission in life. I firmly believe that within every human being there is that Life which shows the way to go, that Presence of the God of Life that gives security and peace. ✱

God present in our Life...

*O God,
invisible pilgrim of the human adventure
and secret presence in the history
of every person,
faithful companion on the paths
where we journey
often in darkness.*

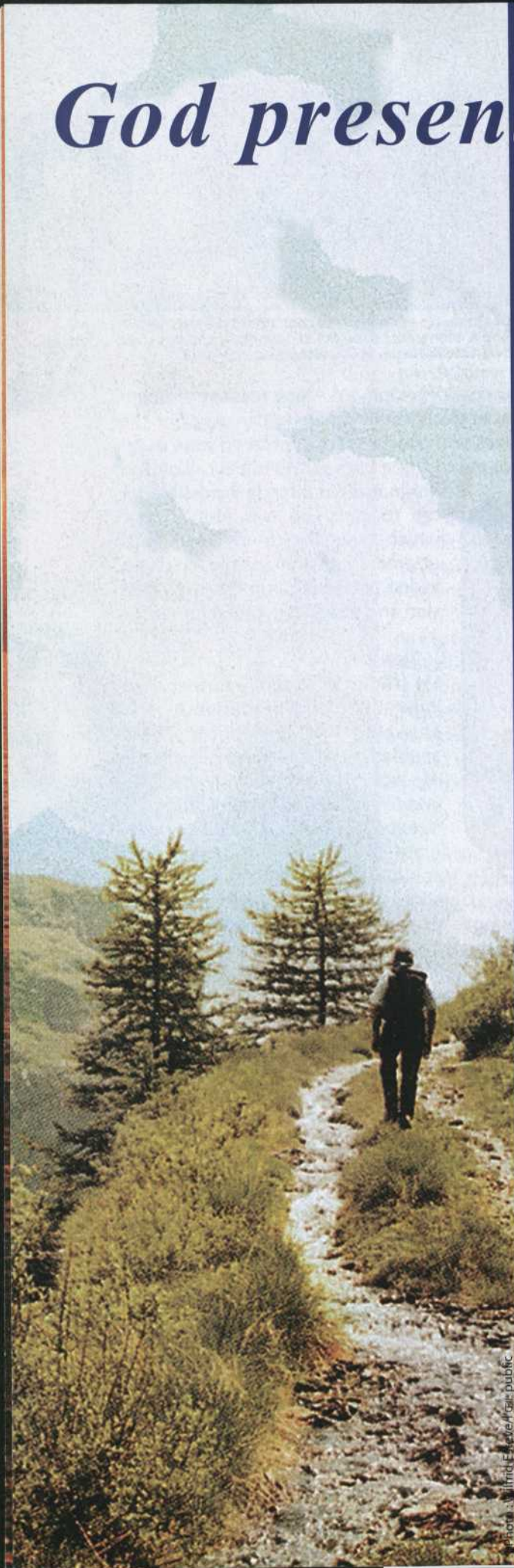
*Breathe in us the impetus needed
to start or resume our journey,
to dare to believe there is always a possibility
to overcome the fear of getting lost
and attempt against all odds
the crossing of the dark night!
Constantly remind us of the essential truth:
it is only by journeying
that we discover the inner kingdom,
the hidden treasure!*

*On their quest for the unknown
in response to an inner call,
pilgrims of all times precede us,
patient and passionate,
filled with the faith that moves mountains.*

*Pilgrims of today,
on the footsteps of our predecessors,
let us obey the Word
as the journey unfolds:
farther, farther, on and on,
deeper and deeper...*

Jacques Musset

God is present in our history, in our life, in our wanderings, like a faithful and invisible pilgrim walking beside us. Is He not the companion, the interior guide who invites us to seek Him deep within ourselves and to keep moving ahead, farther and farther?



Along Mission Routes...

Lord, we ask you to accompany in their mission those who leave in Your name to proclaim your Gospel. By their witness, their friendship and their presence,

*may those who need to be comforted be so;
may those who seek peace find it;
may those who wish to give thanks do so;
and may each one return home
with the joy of having met Jesus Himself,
He, the Way, the Truth and the Life.*



Ederlina Torres, M.I.C.
from Juan Guerra, San Martin
Diocese of Moyobamba, Peru

Having arrived in Montreal last November, Sister Ederlina now collaborates with the missionary animation team in the parishes of Quebec, giving homilies, meeting with the youth, sharing with groups and taking part in cultural evenings. This work allows her to build ties of solidarity, of friendship between the people of her country and those of Quebec. When she was in Peru, Sister Ederlina collaborated in the formation of future religious of our Institute and assumed the responsibilities of animation and administration in our Congregation.



Gisèle Guinois, M.I.C.
from St-Léonard-de-Port-Maurice,
Diocese of Montreal, Québec

Missionary in Peru for 44 years, Sister Gisèle was called to participate in the formation of young religious of our Institute and to that of those responsible for Christian communities in the rural region. For six years, she also ensured the animation and administration of our Congregation in South America. Having returned to Peru, she is presently engaged in a new project of human, Christian and pastoral formation at Cajabamba and in the small villages in the surrounding areas.



Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C.
from Ville-de-la Baie
Diocese of Chicoutimi, Quebec

Sister Yolaine returned to Madagascar where she had previously worked for 40 years. At present national secretary of the Pontifical Missionary Works, she acts equally as missionary animator on the national level and looks after the Missio-Madagascar projects. In Madagascar, Sister Yolaine was especially involved in education and then for 12 years, was in charge of the animation and administration of our Institute.



Sylvie Razafindrakoto, M.I.C.
from Antananarivo
Diocese of Antananarivo,
Madagascar

Sister Sylvie left for Cuba last January to pursue her studies in Spanish and to familiarize herself with the culture of the Cubans before engaging in pastoral work. In Madagascar, she taught catechism at the secondary school and worked in the parish among the youth preparing to receive the sacraments. For seven months she also collaborated toward the human and Christian formation of 250 young peasants of the Ambohibary district who regroup 40 small Christian communities.

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A Message from Délia



A Mission of Joy

When still very young, Délia Tétreault feels that God is calling her for something special. In a prophetic dream, she sees an immense wheat field and suddenly all the golden heads of wheat become heads of children. As an adolescent, Délia discerns a very particular call from God. But what is this call to be? The signs are not clear... With much difficulty, Délia continues for many years to search for the will of God and the direction of her specific vocation. She again wonders what really her vocation is to be.

Délia prays... She listens to the tiny voice of her childhood dream. Little by little, God reveals himself to her but she fears illusion. Could it be that the young girl from Marievalle takes herself for someone else? Could it be that the angel of darkness is disguising itself into an angel of light? The struggle to find the right way is difficult but, at the end of the tunnel, Délia recognizes the silhouette of the childhood dream that is calling her. She accepts the invitation. With enthusiasm, she says an unconditional YES. "Good Master, here I am to do your will!" *But how will this be done?*

Yes, in what way is she to realize the will of God in her life? Gradually, God reveals his great mission to

her. At a time when Jansenism is strong, Délia is called to live a life of thanksgiving, to celebrate the gratuitousness of God and even to become a messenger of praise for the whole world. Délia is confident and has faith. Her whole being exults with joy. Her magnificats abound. What a sublime vocation! Délia cannot hold back... It is impossible to live this vocation alone!

Gradually, new companions come to join her to praise and glorify the Lord. The daily duties of these very ordinary women are done in the spirit of the beatitudes and with joy. The works among the poor and the less fortunate grow. How great it is to make Jesus known and to sing the wonders of God. It is in this spirit of joy that in 1902, Délia founds the first missionary Congregation of the Americas. And, very quickly, hundreds of Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception join forces to go out around the world on this great mission: to live in thanksgiving and to be messengers of joy... messengers who proclaim the Good News of Salvation to those who do not know it... messengers who "give to God children who will sing his goodness for ages to come". (D.T.)

Marie-Thérèse Beaudette, M.I.C.

Favours received

• "God has obtained for us a very great favour through the intercession of Venerable Mother Délia: a reconciliation of our two sons. This had caused us so much sorrow. Thanks to Mother Délia for having interceded for us."

• "After having prayed with great confidence to Venerable Mother Délia, my nephew stopped drinking. Thank you for this small miracle."

• "I fervently prayed Mother Délia to obtain work for my son and behold his contract was renewed. Thank you, Mother Délia"

• "Thanks to Mother Délia for a very great favour received when we were about to go bankrupt. We did not lose everything. I wore her relic and prayed to her everyday. Thank you very much and please continue to pray with us."

Should you receive a special favour through the intercession of Délia Tétreault, we would appreciate it very much if you would share that favour with us. Our address is:

Bureau de la Cause Délia Tétreault
100, Place Juge-Desnoyers
Laval Qc Canada
H7G 1A4

A Spirituality that makes the Heart Sing



God is a father, the best of all fathers. Why not say it? He is a mother also. In 1925, Délia Tétreault thought that way, as she was writing to a missionary: "Yes, my daughter, you are absolutely right in saying that God is a 'mother' and an incomparable mother in the action of divine Providence!" God loves all of us, as much as and even more than a father and a mother together, and he wants us to be happy right now. This, of course, does not mean the happiness of heaven on earth, but the absolute certainty and the unalterable happiness of knowing that we are loved, no matter what, and that we are able to answer to this love.

Mary

Such was Mary's happiness. She accepted with a firm Yes the mission God proposed to her, that of becoming the mother of Jesus. Full of joy, she sang the *Magnificat*



which still fills with emotion so many thankful hearts. Then, she went on living her experience as Christ's first disciple with faith, hope and love.

Mother Délia

Such was also Délia Tétreault's blessing. She had to search for her way to fulfill a mission out of the ordinary: to found the first Institute of Missionary Sisters in America. In her faithfulness to that call, she once exclaimed: "When I stop to think that God loves me divinely... I feel that I am the happiest creature in the world!"

And us

This happiness is not the privilege of a few chosen persons. It is within the reach of all believers who, with a sincere heart, try to perceive what God expects from them and orientate themselves in that direction. These persons find their joy even in the midst of life's hardships. In an ever keener

awareness of God's love for them, those who recognize him as a father, at all times find new reasons to be confident and full of thanksgiving.

Hence...

What can we do now to go ahead on the journey we have already started? Let us recall the itinerary chosen when we began, a few months ago and continue.

- Receive this truth in our heart: God loves me personally.
- Let it invade us, transform us...
- Be attentive to occasions when we can transmit this Good News to a neighbour.
- Read again in the Gospel (Lk 1: 46-55) the *Magnificat*, to make it our own or to create one that is personal: return to it often.

Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C.

News from Here and



Children's Mission Congress. Mézina Paulémon, M.I.C., Prov. Sup., Rosette Lafortune, M.I.C., directress of *Timoun Misyonè* Magazine

LONG LIFE TO TIMOUN MISYONÈ!

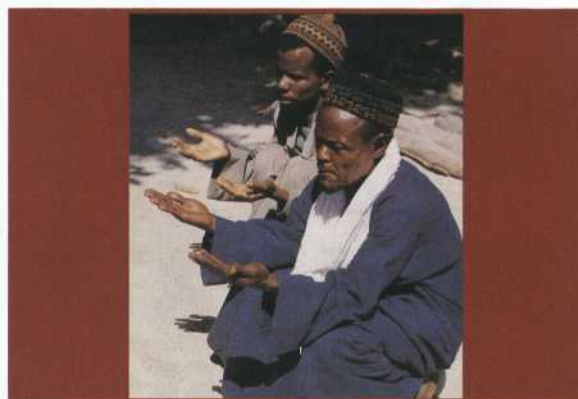
The magazine *Timoun Misyonè* (*Young Missionaries*) was first published in Haiti in 1983. Lucette Gilbert, M.I.C., the initiator of this project, had no idea that this modest journal was to conquer the hearts of thousands of young Haitians. The following year, *Timoun Misyonè* hired its first reporter: *Zanmi Solèy* (Sunshine Friend). Since then, *Zanmi Solèy*, clad all in yellow, draws the children of Haiti into a unique adventure: visits to every part of the world, interviews with missionaries at home and abroad, discovery of outstanding witnesses: Bishop Romero, Nelson Mandela, Rigoberta Menchu, etc. *Zanmi Solèy* also invites children to reflect on various subjects (respect for life, a culture of peace and of solidarity...) and to see what they could do in those areas. On certain occasions, the young reporter takes on a human form when a child dresses up as *Zanmi Solèy* to enliven a meeting with a delightful stage play in which the children feel challenged by this messenger of peace and love and become his friend and partner.

Actively involved in mission animation in Haiti, our Community has been supporting the magazine *Timoun Misyonè* from its very beginnings. Some Sisters have provided for its administration and content; others have worked at its circulation in parishes, schools and organizations. A group of dynamic and competent lay people offer valuable assistance. In the con-

text of insecurity and violence that has prevailed in Haiti for the last 20 years, they have given the children joy and hope for the future. This mission is continued today with love by the enthusiastic team of the magazine headed by Rosette Lafortune, M.I.C.



Zanmi Solèy meets some children.



Two Moslems reciting their prayers

Photo: Vivant Univers

ISLAM IN MALAWI

In Malawi, 11% of the approximately 12 million population are Moslems. The expansion of Islam in this country took place in three major phases. Islam first appeared in Malawi in 1840 with the Arab slave dealers who came from the east coast of Africa. Their first adherents were emancipated slaves, then Yao chiefs and their tribes. When slavery was abolished, the Arabs were expelled from the area, but the Malawian Moslems continued making new converts (1840-1920). Then came a period of growth and consolidation. The Africans integrated certain elements of Islam into their culture. Their educational system emphasized the study of the Koran and of Arab literature more than academic formation. In that period, the African Moslems lived in isolation from the Islamic world and exerted but little influence on the life of the country (1920-1980).

In the last few years, the Moslem society of Malawi underwent many transformations. It maintains close contacts with the international Moslem community. Visible signs in the country mark its presence and influence: construction of mosques, schools of Islamic and secular studies, health care centres; subsidies for humanitarian projects, etc. Faced with this revival of Islam, a pastoral priority of the Malawian Church is to continue the promotion of a friendly dialogue between Christians and Moslems. This is accomplished in

an attitude of openness as well as in the respect of differences. This approach will help both groups to better know and to discover one another as companions on a journey. Together, they are called to cooperate in the development of their country and in the building of a more human and fraternal society.



Symbols of Islam and of Christianity

Louise Lefebvre, M.I.C.



Graduates of 2002. Louise Laberge, M.I.C. (1st row, 3rd r.), Maria Aroyo, M.I.C. (2nd row, 4th r.), directress and teachers

MARÍA DE LA PROVIDENCIA COLLEGE (CMP) : 40 YEARS OF GROWTH AND APOSTOLIC INFLUENCE

In Lima, Peru, our College recently celebrated its forty years of existence. The anniversary was celebrated with joy, pride and thanksgiving. It was a warm family feast to which friends and benefactors the world over were associated.

What a long way we have come since the opening, in April 1963, of the modest parochial school that attracted some 300 girls of Breña, a working class district of the city! Today, the College is attended by 450 young women of elementary and high school levels. This brand new establishment is better suited for current needs. Our former graduates now share their various abilities and talents with their people and those of

other countries. Their commitment is nourished by the typical values of this school (*service, truth, love and gratitude*) and stems from the will to help the poorest of the poor for the betterment of life in society.

Founded to provide the children of the less fortunate families of Breña with quality education, the school has worked from the very beginning in partnership with the State and the families. Today, students, parents, teachers, friends and benefactors work actively together at the different projects initiated to ensure the smooth running of the College and the realization of its goals. With the desire to give its pupils an excellent education, the staff of this educational centre comprising three sisters and twenty-two lay teachers work enthusiastically at the academic, human and spiritual formation of young girls. Its educational programme takes into account the new emerging needs, expectations and possibilities of the socio-cultural environment, which has changed considerably in the last few years. Special accommodation is provided for pastoral activity in order to accompany the young people in their personal growth. Through these pastoral services, the school aims at developing behaviour that is inspired by Gospel values, with a special emphasis on the missionary spirit and trust in Mary. The College continues to help the less fortunate of the Breña district. Various outreach activities broaden the circle of those benefiting from their social and pastoral action. Thus, *Maria de la Providencia College* is gradually realizing what it set out to do, hoping to be able to realize its dreams and fulfill its mission better and better.



In 2003, Thérèse Lebeau, M.I.C., in charge of pastoral ministry, Thérèse Lavoie, M.I.C., directress of the College, and Louise Laberge, M.I.C., administrator

Louise Laberge, M.I.C.

In the Garden of God



Marie-Anne Cyr, M.I.C., 1910-2003

(Sister Saint-Paul-de-la Croix)
Squatteck, Québec

Marie-Anne grew up in faith and joy of living in the midst of a family of singers and musicians. At the age of 22, she left for China where she devoted her life without counting with the orphans, the elderly and the sick of the mission of Pamientchang. The Sino-Japanese conflict and the beginning of the Second World War made life extremely difficult. She had to return to Quebec because of ill health. A woman of faith and of prayer, Sr. Marie-Anne lived out the illness that marked her life very serenely.



Marguerite Dionne, M.I.C., 1905-2003

(Sister Saint-Alban)

St-Jean-Deschaillons, Quebec

Marguerite kept very touching memories of her father. He took advantage of his evenings to relate the beautiful Biblical stories and to transmit to her his love for Jesus. At 23, Marguerite was admitted to our Institute. A talented musician, she pursued a long career teaching music. Her violin charmed all our celebrations.

She also assured our houses in Cuba and Quebec with services of animation and administration. Amiable, gentle, serene, Sister Marguerite was loved by everyone.



Geneviève Saint-Pierre, M.I.C., 1911-2003

(Sister Geneviève-de-Nanterre)

Montreal, Quebec

As a child Geneviève bloomed in a home where faith and love radiated. Generous, ardent, she heard the call to religious life at an early age, but hesitated; she loved life and its pleasures. When she became a religious she was assigned to the Philippines. During 34 years of her missionary life, she was efficient and ardent in the ministry of human and religious formation of the children and the youth. Woman of friendly relations, affectionate for all, Sister Geneviève lived fully her mission and shared her many talents.



Imelda Saurette, M.I.C., 1915-2003

(Sister Sainte-Imelda)

St-Pie-de-Letellier, Manitoba

At the age of three, Imelda lost her dear mother due to the Spanish flu epidemic. After her studies at the Normal School of Winnipeg, she began her long and fruitful teaching career. As a religious she was a missionary in Malawi and in Zambia for nearly 40 years. She was an educator without equal, totally given to the mission, animated by a great love for Christ, for Mary, and for the Church. We like to remember Sister Imelda as a companion with whom we enjoyed living.



Hélène De Serres, M.I.C., 1908-2003

(Sister Dominique-du-Rosaire)

Montreal, Quebec

Hélène received the treasures of faith and culture from her father. He loved speaking to her of Jesus as a Friend ever ready to welcome us. He encouraged her as well to read literary and scientific reviews, so much so that she became an avid reader. In our Institute, Sister Hélène was a valuable archivist and a patient, available researcher. Author of several publications, she impressed us by her deep love for Mary and her great veneration for our Foundress.



Lorette Moran, M.I.C., 1910-2004

(Sister Saint-Jean-d'Éphèse)

St-Pierre Jolys, Manitoba

As a child, Lorette was influenced by the radiating faith of her grandmother who inculcated within her a great love for the religious life. At 20 she already devoted herself to the care of the sick in our dispensaries of Manchuria, a difficult work during the war that raged. In 1945 she underwent a painful internment before being deported to Hong Kong. Assigned to the Philippines, she gave a service of 20 years in education. A missionary with a very large heart, Sister Lorette lived out a love impressed with delicacy, kindness and generosity.

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

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

PROVINCIAL HOUSE

10710 Grande-Allée Blvd.
Montreal (Quebec) Canada
H3L 2M7 Tel.: (514) 384-4624

MISSION ANIMATION CENTRE

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

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

Calle. 33, no 3409 - entre 34 y 36
Playa, Ciudad de la Habana
Cuba 11300

HAITI:

MAISON PROVINCIALE (Delmas)

C.P. 1085 HT 6110
N° 119 Route Delmas
Haïti, Les Antilles

HONG KONG:

PROVINCIAL HOUSE

Mount Good Hope
381 Jat's Incline
Kowloon, Hong Kong, SAR, China

JAPAN:

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8-13-16 Fukazawa, Setagaya-Ku
Tokyo, Japan, 158-0081

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HEARTFELT THANKS!

WE WELCOME ALL REQUESTS FOR INFORMATION.

Write to us:

Mission Procure

Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

121 Maplewood Avenue

Outremont (Quebec) Canada H2V 2M2

Telephone: (514) 274-5691

Fax: (514) 274-3298

Please include name label on reverse side.

Your Hand Leads Me

*Wherever I go, O my God,
you are my companion,
holding my hand and leading me.
On this road where I journey,
you are my only support.*

*By my side
you carry my burden.
Should I stumble on the way,
you lift me up;
you break my resistance,
O God, you urge me onward.
From now on, every person,
woman or man,
is my beloved sister or brother.
Your joy now fills me and surrounds me,
I am like a child
playing at a feast.*

Toukaram, a Hindu mystic

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN THE RELIGIOUS OR LAY MISSIONARY LIFE?
DO YOU WISH TO DISCERN THE LORD'S CALL WITHIN YOU?
CONTACT THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION!**