

MIC Mission News

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

JANUARY - FEBRUARY - MARCH 2005



Christianity and the Environment

*25 years of MIC Association
WYD 2005: It's a go!*

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Editorial

Planet Earth, a Territory for Mission

For the first time in history, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded in 2004 to an environmentalist! Kenyan "tree planter" Wangari Maathai, whose work is slowing down the African continent's desertification, considers that there are "connections between peace and the environment when the scarcity of resources such as oil, water, minerals or wood are at the heart of disputes." Examples for this are many. For instance the Israeli-Palestinian tensions, the crisis in

The above are only a few recent examples to show that when caring for our planet's health, we also tackle issues of peace, democracy, and lasting development. Currently, 20% of the Earth's inhabitants live on a grand scale... taking advantage of the other 80%. Is that not a great source of tension, conflict and suffering? Given that the common good is a central value of Christian faith, should we not be asking ourselves in what ways do the environmental problems raise special concerns for us who are baptized? What is our share of responsibility and what hope can we bring to the world? Of course, many before us have spoken words of wisdom from which we can benefit. Others have invented creative solutions in response to the universal crisis. We present here a few examples, so that we may be inspired to be innovative too.

Speaking of creation...

Surely you have noticed that *MIC Mission News* is turning over a new leaf. We are replacing the previous team whom we dearly acknowledge for their excellent work. Filled with enthusiasm and guided by the Spirit, we promise to offer you an inspiring magazine that can nourish your faith and kindle your commitments in the world. We even mustered up a bonus section: flip to our new humour column!



Yves Demers Paris

"Us" stands for Carole Guévin, administrative assistant, Paulette Gagné, M.I.C., directress of publication, and Marie-Eve Homier, editor-in-chief.

Darfour, and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are all related to the scarcity of hotly disputed natural resources.

Furthermore, the Coulombe Commission confirmed last December that Quebec's forests are overexploited. Its daring propositions appear as nothing short of a small revolution in modern-day forestry. Concurrently, February 16, 2005 became a landmark day for the world when the Kyoto Agreements finally came into force 7 years after the end of negotiations.

Missionary intentions

JANUARY

May the Lord continue to call holy and selfless men and women eager to proclaim the Gospel.

FEBRUARY

May missionaries grow in fervent love, indispensable for proclaiming the Gospel with conviction.

MARCH

May local Churches realize the need to form Christians to face the challenges of new evangelization.

However, the revitalization of *MIC Mission News* has only begun. Therefore, please share your comments with us regarding the improvements we hope to bring to your magazine! A few minutes of your time can make a great difference to us.

May the Holy Spirit guide our hearts and steps in the great adventure of mission!

Carole *Marie-Eve*
Paulette

NB: Please note our new email address:
micmissionnews@pressemic.org

An Innovative Spiritual Connection?

Most religious Institutes — the newer ones as well as the older — are launching out into special relationships with Christian groups: associated lay people, Third Orders, evangelical life groups or other forms of membership. This is something unexpected, unforeseen! A great effort to develop these ties further has been underway.

Paulette Gagné, M.I.C.

re-examination of the current forms of alliances between lay people and consecrated people and the ties that bind them.

Strengthening Links

The symposium's theme was *Linking lay and consecrated people: an innovative spiritual connection?* For a deeper understanding of this overlap, let us take a look at the ways Associates are being defined. Who are they? Whom have they associated with? Are they mere observers? Imitators of religious life? Consumers following in religious people's wake? Spare wheels? Satellites orbiting around our Institutes? Are they not just people thirsty for Jesus Christ and who are discovering new ways to live their faith together with their consecrated sisters and brothers? Lay people possessing unexpected richness that they alone can contribute?

A little history

Sophie Tremblay, professor at the Dominican Pastoral Institute, illuminated our thinking with a brief historical overview. During the first decades of the history of Christianity, everyone shared the same spirituality founded on baptismal faith and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. As early as the end of the first millennium, the development of a hierarchy of the states in life was beginning. The result was a profound and lasting deval-

uation of baptism and the life led by the lay people was relegated to cultural, spiritual and moral inferiority. This legacy still marks the relationships between religious and lay people today. The eleventh century marks the beginning of a spiritual awakening among lay people and a transformation of religious life. The rediscovery, in the *Acts of the Apostles*, of the life led by the first community in Jerusalem awakened in men and women of that era a great desire to walk into the footsteps of the early Church. This return to the source resulted in new forms of religious life, and also in innovative ways of life that hybridized religious and secular life. Lay people found it possible to live an intense spiritual life, but the positive value of secular state in life was not necessarily recognized yet.

From the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, the Protestant Reformation and the Council of Trent significantly influenced the relationship between religious and secular life. New confraternities emerged in the wake of religious communities or apostolates. Similarly, groups whose form resembled that of secular orders appeared. The foundation of the Church in New France is a perfect example of the remarkable growth of the associations experienced during those times. However, the distinction between lay and consecrated people seemed to have been maintained more clearly and firmly. It seems legitimate to wonder how lay

With a view toward exploring these new challenges, a symposium was organized by the Manresa Spiritual Centre, the Canadian Religious Conference and Laval University's Faculty of Theology and Religious Sciences, on November 27 and 28, 2004 on the Notre-Dame-de-Foy Campus in Cap-Rouge, Québec. This symposium was intended for theological reflection as well as for a

Sophie Caron

people could envision their faith life differently than a mere imitation of religious life.

The nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries were filled with the preceding centuries' gains. However, in the 1930s the promotion of the laity and a growing acknowledgement of the positive theological and spiritual value of secularity was beginning. The Second Vatican Council marks a shift towards an ecclesiology of communion. The call to sanctity of all baptized persons is affirmed in the conciliar document *Lumen Gentium*. In other respects, religious life has been going through a period of transformation and reflection for half a century. Moreover, new communities are emerging, among which some tend to further deconstruct the distinctions between religious and secular life. As during the Middle Ages, the recent innovations spring not so much from a superficial submission to the spirit of the times but rather from a will to live the Gospel in the most authentic way possible.

Gathering around the charisms of founders

Wishing to live the Gospel in depth and in different ways, some lay people have felt the desire to share the charism, mission and spirituality of this or that founder or foundress. Dominican Rick van Lier reminds us that a "charism is a gift from God, linked to the action of the Spirit, and given to a person in view of the edification of the Body of Christ, the Church." Hence, lay people are called out by the Spirit to live the charism of one or another religious family. The variety of these gifts presents a range of choices to those Christians who wish to live communion within the same gift.

Since lay people are invited to live the charism of the founder, it goes without saying that both consecrated and lay people are heirs to this same charism. This gift was received for the growth of the people of God and hence belongs to them. This is what the Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life hold in the document *Starting Afresh From Christ*: "The fact that the charisms of founders and foundresses, having

"God has given us everything, even his own Son, how can we pay Him back? From that came the thanksgiving spirituality whose source lies in an awareness of the freely-given love of the Father through Creation and Revelation."

Délie Tétreault

been born of the Spirit for the good of all, must once again be placed at the centre of the Church, open to the communion and participation by all the People of God, is being increasingly discovered."

Furthermore, this communion implies from both sides a lasting commitment, attachment to the founder or foundress, welcoming of the Spirit who forever creates new things, and great love of the Church. The above-mentioned document emphasizes this. "Communion and mutuality in the Church are never one way streets. In this new climate of ecclesial communion, priests, religious and laity, far from ignoring each other or coming together

only for a common activity, can once again find the just relationships of communion and a renewed experience of evangelical communion and mutual charismatic esteem resulting in a complementarity which respects the differences."



Spirituality and mission

For a number of consecrated people, it is the Institute's mission that has made them choose it. To this day, lay people feel attracted to charitable works, missionary works or other kinds of works. The deeper their knowledge of the Institute, the greater is the awakening of their desire to share not only the Institute's mission, but its spirituality as well.

Innovative connections

In spite of a desire for communion, progress is mixed with hesitation. Minds are slow to change.

It is a constant challenge, requiring flexibility and humility, for consecrated people to avoid distinguishing themselves from lay people and to give them full credibility and a place of their own. We must welcome together the Holy Spirit's surprises and establish bonds that are fruitful for all, in a changing and questioning Church. The various religious Institutes have given themselves diverse and particular structures; they will now have to create new means to allow everyone to have a voice.

Little by little, the face of the Church is transforming from with-

in. A great many Christians are unaware of these trends toward association. Nonetheless, new organisms spring forth here and there, filled with hope, inspired by the same Spirit who has touched the founders and foundresses.

Our Institute's Associates

The symposium's invitation letter had several questions that attracted our attention: What is your Institute's history of association with lay people? What is the originality of your group's association with regards to your Institute's spirituality? In our *MIC Mission News* magazine No. 4, 2003, an article outlined our Institute's

Associates, also known as ASMIC throughout the world. In Canada, they will be celebrating their 25th anniversary this year. It is a timely moment to look back at the road travelled together and to further reflect with the Sisters upon the richness and opportunity of sharing a common charism in order that we achieve the best possible connection. May this 25th anniversary see us all begin anew with the liveliness of Mary of the Visitation!†

NB: The Acts of the Symposium will appear in the "*Cahiers de spiritualité ignatienne*," June 2005, No. 113.

Elementary, my dear!

When the Sisters leave on mission, they begin by learning the country's language... which at times can turn out to be quite comical!

Shall we dance the cucaracha?

A Sister was living with a Spanish-speaking family. During a meal, they offered her dessert but they forgot the spoon, the *cuchara*. She asked them: "Could you please give me a *cucaracha*?" In Spanish, it means a cockroach! Try eating with that!

Looking intelligent...

Another Sister had been working only shortly in Latin America when a man dropped in for a visit. Knowing that his wife had recently broken a leg, she inquired: "Is your wife's leg still in *queso*?" ... in other words, in cheese! The poor thing meant *yeso*, for cast!



Crazy about horses

A young missionary working at the archbishopric informed a priest that a horse was standing by the entrance waiting to see him. Slight mistake! She had confused *caballo* (horse) and *caballero* (man). Bearing in mind this subtle distinction, she later went to see an electrician to have her hairdryer repaired. She asked the technician: "Sir, would you kindly repair my horse dryer?" This time, she had used *caballo* (horse) instead of *cabello* (hair)! Truly, this Sister had a strong liking for horses!



Falling for a man!

A Sister was studying Spanish in a Latin American country. On a specially crowded bus, the driver suddenly braked hard. She landed straight into a man's arms! Grateful to her "saviour", she thanked him with a heartfelt *Mucho gusto!*, which means in English: "It's my pleasure!"

A Time for Listening

Good day to each and every one of you:

On May 11, 2004, I bade farewell to you, my family and friends from Québec, and headed back to Bolivia. What can I tell you about being transplanted again to this soil?

We are four M.I.C. sisters living in the heart of Cochabamba, a city that has seen much progress in recent years. It's hard to believe that two out of three Bolivians are less than 29 years old! We wondered how we could be present to this world full of youths. Together, we chose to accompany them in their human, spiritual, social and missionary development.

At the Rural Education Institute, 70 young women from the countryside can complete elementary or high school, and become medical aids or veterinary assistants. Personal growth is also part of the program so they can realize their potential and become leaders in their communities. Psycho-spiritual support for young religious people, both men and women, is in the hands of two M.I.C. sisters. We know that these young people represent the present and the future of the Church.

I suppose you've guessed that, while journeying with these girls and boys, I am still only at the listening phase, supporting them quietly. I want to share in their thirst for their own well-being, their brothers' and sisters', and their country's.

Dear friends from my homeland, as you can see, the mission in Bolivia resembles what you experience yourselves in the midst of your daily life. Let us live wherever we are with this passion for Christ and humanity. Then, without even realizing it, we shall be witnesses of the Resurrected Christ.

Your sister,

Murielle Dubé, M.I.C.

You've Got Mail!



Henry Flores Maturano

A mission animator through and through, Murielle Dubé, M.I.C., has acted as assistant to Bishop Pierre Blanchard for the diocese of Montreal's mission ministry. Back in Bolivia, she is shown above with two young associates, Maria-Angela Barrios (left) and Rosario Lujan (right).

The Malagasy Prince

Dearest friends:

You will surely agree with me that it is by teaching that one becomes a teacher. From my point of view, teaching the Christian doctrine is one thing, but proposing a Christian lifestyle and its values is something else. What challenges me most is the teaching of catechism in Morondava and in our other schools. Muslims attend the same classes as Catholics, Protestants and non-Christians. What then should we present to these students? I began by tuning into the Malagasy culture, listening to its legends, proverbs and language. I discovered marvels of life! I like to use the Malagasy word for God: *Andriamanitra*, meaning the "Perfumed Prince", the Prince that smells good. All Creation is balmy with God's fragrant presence. To be Christian to me is to feel the presence of that Good Lord.

I am presently involved with the training of leaders. I like to offer them simple words and means, accessible to all, so they may in turn carry forth the Good News. Dear friends, may you find the right words to speak of God today in your own culture.

Veloma finaritra!

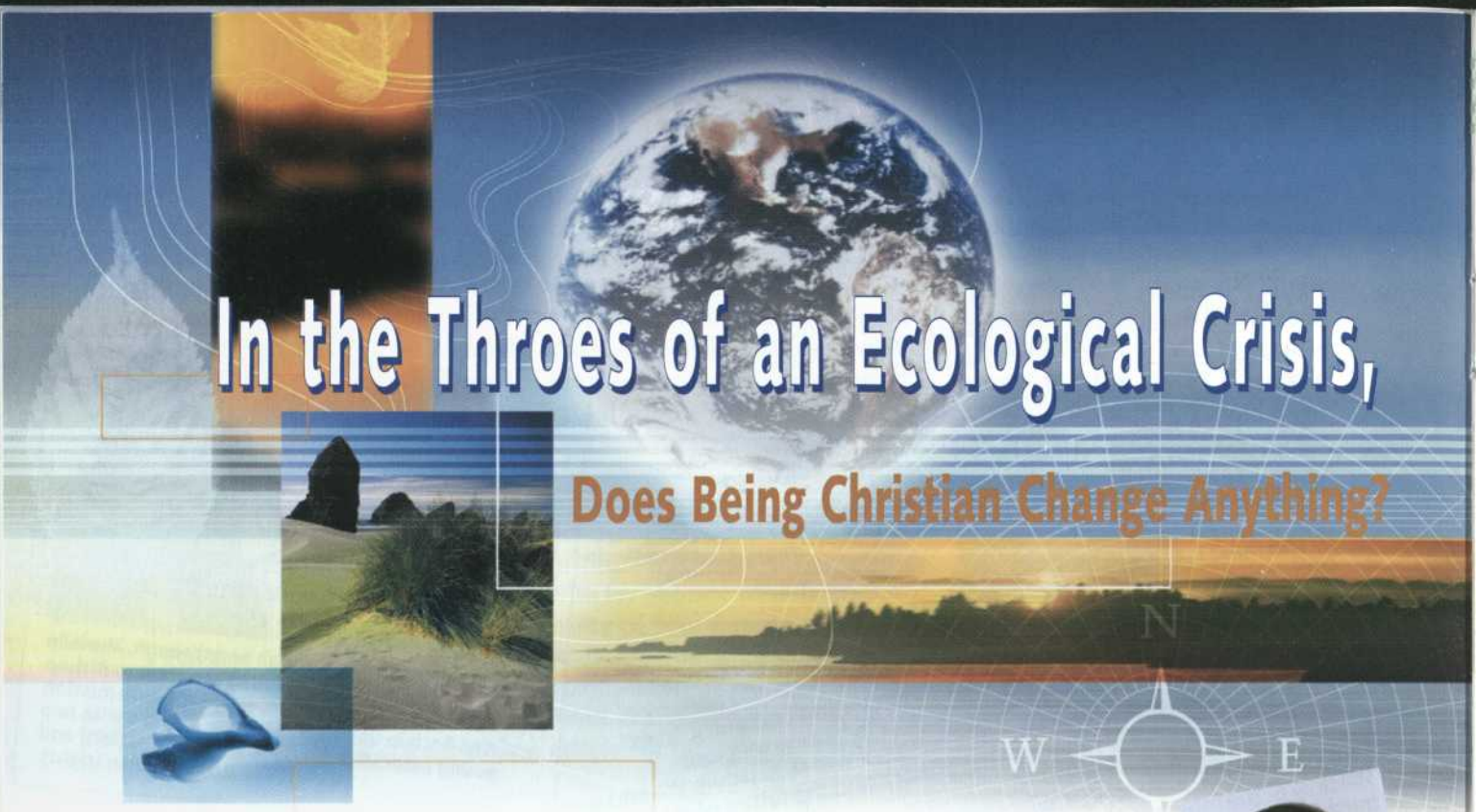
May you be vibrant and happy!

Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C.



Photo MIC

Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C., a missionary in Madagascar for many years



In the Throes of an Ecological Crisis,

Does Being Christian Change Anything?

Beyond strictly demographic and technological problems, the current ecological crisis leads us to the foundation of our relationship with nature, with ourselves and with God. Seen from this contemporary point of view, the Christian tradition gives us an insight that can deeply transform our destructive way of living in the world.

Most people are aware that something isn't working in our world. One of the most obvious symptoms, is what we call the *ecological crisis*. What is it that makes us cause such wrong to life on earth? From the beginning, human beings have always transformed their environment, modifying the world in order to live. What is different today? To begin with, we could say that on the one hand, there are more people, and on the other hand, in developing technological tools, we have given ourselves tremendous power over nature. The ecological crisis, then, is the result of our over-reaching success as a species. We have adapted too well to our environment, which allowed us to become very numerous. Consequently, our impact on nature increased proportionally, up to the point that we see today. This way of viewing things is not false, but a deeper, more profound reflection leads us to see the ecological crisis much differently. Beyond a strictly demographic and technological problem, the crisis leads us to consider something more fundamental. What we must question is our way of *being* in relation to the world. Current thought increasingly concludes from this that the cause of the problem is the way in which mankind perceives himself. As humans we determine our relationship with nature

according to the image we have of ourselves. In effect, this is where the ecological crisis takes root.



Louis Vaillancourt,
Associate Professor,
Faculty of Theology,
Ethics and Philosophy,
University of Sherbrooke

A crisis of humankind in relation to itself

How does mankind come to perceive himself in one way or another? This is determined in large part by our beliefs, which derive mainly from the perceptions posited to us by religion. This is why many say that the current ecological crisis is in fact a spiritual crisis, a crisis of man in relation to himself, or more precisely, in relation to the understanding of his own existence and the meaning that he gives to his life. Some theologians have begun to question the prevailing concept that man has of himself and of nature. But what is the popular understanding that man has of himself in our society? In the West, we see ourselves like all-powerful technocrats, i.e. we regard ourselves as the "Masters of nature". Thanks to technology, we have the power to intrude on nature, to control it and dominate it. In short, we believe ourselves capable of doing just about anything; it's only a matter of time. We believe ourselves to be superior to nature, above it all. This is the mentality in which we live our daily lives; we are steeped in it.

When we see the results of this typically Western understanding, we soon realize that our sense of power and superiority over nature does not yield good fruits... the results of technology are ambiguous. There are almost always negative effects. Even if it is not our intention, we must recognize that our actions against nature are increasingly deadly. Humankind is becoming aware that our actions in the world involve increasingly serious disturbances in the natural order. Ultimately, what is at the root of the ecological crisis is the concept that the human beings have given themselves of themselves. In order to legitimate this self-image, we drew upon, among other things, the Christian tradition, which confirmed this superiority through a narrow reading of Genesis. Christianity must bear some of the historical responsibility for the interpretation that led to the development of an idea of humankind as "the Master of nature." Surely that is our weakness, we humans, to want "to be like gods," to be the all-powerful of the world. Nevertheless, the Christian tradition also imparts another vision of the relationship between humankind and nature – one that could contribute to the reversal of our devastating way of living in the world.

The Christian contribution toward a solution to the crisis

Of course we will not find ready-made answers for all our ecological problems in the Bible! However, the Bible does offer us an image of humanity and of nature, which although it does not encourage us to this or that particular action, it does invite us to have an attitude that allows us to live coherently. One of the fundamental things in the Bible is its unique concept of *being*. For the Hebrews, to be isolated, all alone, was not to exist at all. "To be" is always "to be with," to be in relation. To be is "to be with God," "to be with your neighbour," but also - and this is a dimension which we are rediscovering - "to be with nature." This last way of "being" implies a way of acting with nature that is both benevolent and beneficial. Indeed, the Great Commandment of Jesus – to love one another and love your neighbor as yourself – would that not also apply to the earth? Today, I think that we are bound to realize that the earth is also our neighbor and that the love that God invites us to bring to people must also extend to these "others" which are not human, i.e. with all of God's creatures. To love creation is part of our faith. It's not just a ques-

tion of finding creation *beautiful*, but truly *worthy of love*, and therefore to love it in the way we act. Because to love one's neighbor is to do them good, to want their happiness, to desire that they live in abundance and flourish. Love for creation is part of love of neighbor. That is implicit in the biblical message; it is up to us to make it more explicit in the world today.

A new image of ourselves

The Bible, however, goes beyond the obligation to extend the command of love to all creation in order to live our faith in a coherent way. It leads us to call into question the image that we have of ourselves. We associate being in "the image and likeness of God" with power and domination. But what characterizes God the most? Is it power? No. It is love. Could it be that to be in the image and likeness of God is precisely to be able to love like Him? And what if this love also extends toward nature? Moreover, if God is love, He wanted, by creating it, that His creation should flourish, that it be the reflection of His love. Thus we must not see ourselves as all-powerful beings next to nature, but rather that we have the opportunity to take care of something. Basically, what the Bible tells us is that our differences with other creatures do not make us "superior" beings. Our true difference is that we have a divine calling to achieve a unique mission within creation: the responsibility for life and for nature. We are responsible to embody the loving presence of God in nature, and to act as He would. The Bible abounds with examples of this: the shepherd who takes care of his sheep, the vine grower or the gardener who cultivates the ground so that it bears fruit, etc. These parables do not tell us to do this or to do that, but they indicate the fundamental attitude for us to adopt as Christians vis-à-vis nature: we are the guardians of life.

Stewards of creation

The Christian faith leads us to see ourselves differently, and at the same time, to view nature differently too. The biblical image that probably best describes who we are and the relationship we should have with nature is that of the steward. A steward is a little bit like a manager: he is the person to whom the responsibility for something that does not belong to him is entrusted and for which he will someday have to give an accounting. (Several parables in the Bible speak of this.) Basically, it describes our relationship to nature.

The earth does not belong to us; it belongs to God. God entrusts it to us, lends it to us, and asks us to take care of it. Obviously, He gave us what is necessary to exercise this responsibility: intelligence, the capacity to love and to be creative, freedom, will, etc. Why are we the stewards of creation? Because we are in a very particular position: we are at the intersection of two universes, which, in all creation, is unique to our species. We are the only ones to belong at the same time to two worlds. On the one hand, we are full members of the community of God's creatures. The laws of biology and our understanding of our interrelationship with the cosmos prove well our full participation in nature. In addition, we are also part of the "spiritual" universe, because in the first place, we are made in the "image of God" as "sons and daughters of God" and secondly, we are destined for a life beyond the simple physical life, a life of relationship in union with a loving God. This is why our role, our vocation, is one of stewardship. The steward is someone who is connected to his Master, for whom he is his right arm, and at the same time, he is connected the Master's workers, of which he is also a member. His role is to represent his Master, who is absent (because he cannot be present everywhere), in the management of land or property. Thus, God places us on the earth as His stewards to take care of His creation. We are here to represent Him, to act as He would act towards nature, i.e. with love. At the same time, since we are full members of the community of His creation, we represent creation before God. Of course, we are not the only creatures able to communicate - the animals, for example, have their own language and communicate between themselves - but only human beings can speak. Our language is the only one that is sufficiently developed to be able to communicate love. God places us in creation so that we represent it in

front of him, so that we offer to Him, in the name of creation, the praise of thanksgiving of the creatures, the suffering of creation, and also the hope of creation (see Rom 8, 18-22).

Sacerdotal creatures

This role as God's representative in creation and creation's representative before God is traditionally assumed by the priest. We are thus sacerdotal creatures. Our fundamental mission is to act as priests in creation, because when we say, "to be stewards," that is synonymous with "to be priests of creation." It is our job to tell creation of the love that God brings to it and to tell God of the joy that creation has for its existence. Obviously, the latter shouts the joy of existence itself: birds sing, cats purr... all nature has its way of expressing itself. But it is only humans who are able to employ words for voicing to God the joy of his creatures. And that must start with us... It is we who, as the most advanced, must be able to delight in being His creatures, for us then to be able to take care of the whole of creation.

An ecological asceticism

"To love your neighbor as yourself" implies we are to love other creatures by making a place for them to exist and to live. That is to say to give up our desire for power. Of course, the human has to have power over nature. The problem occurs when this power is exercised in a despotic, even tyrannical manner, and it becomes a source of pride and excess. Our work, as Christians, thus consists in reestablishing a perspective on things. We will reach that point only by adopting an attitude of voluntary restraint, traditionally called asceticism: I decide to limit myself in my consumption; I limit myself in my desire to develop nature; I limit myself in the power which I could exert on it. The question to ask is:



Why doesn't Jesus' Great Commandment apply equally to the earth? Since creation is also our neighbour, it deserves our love and its fragility calls for our attentive care.



Robert Homier

Only mankind is at the intersection of two universes, the spiritual and the material, a bridge between God and His creation. He has made us His stewards.

can the intelligent creatures that we are use the resources of the earth at a rate that is respectful of the ecosystem's capacity for renewal? Respectful of the ecosystems, yes, but also respectful of our own profound nature, which means much more than being unrestrained consumers, missing the essence of life. Therefore, this asceticism is actually a discipline of life that has a double goal: to safeguard nature and at the same time, to allow us to develop as human beings. This fundamental attitude of voluntary restraint to which the Christian faith calls us will take many varied forms in our day-to-day lives, from limiting our drinking water consumption to committed activism. The idea is not to begin by putting the emphasis on "what has to be done" (even if we should obviously be doing concrete things), but rather to ask: *do I feel really responsible and respectful of what surrounds me, of what was lent to me, preserving it for others who will come after me?* We lived the last century as if we were the last people on earth. We outrageously misused nonrenewable resources. We should be aware that our love for God must be embodied in a love for nature, which is at the same time a love of those yet to be born, for whom we must be accountable today. To be concerned about nature is to be concerned about those who are here and those who will come after me, so that everyone can benefit equitably from the goods of the earth.

A mission for the Church

If creation is for us, Christian men and women, the most precious good that was entrusted to humanity, if we recognize that it is fragile and that our

fundamental vocation is to take care of it, our entire way of living will be conditioned by this radically different point of view. Believing women and men, committed to this perspective, can contribute to the transformation from the destructive technocrat mentality into a way of living founded on respect and love of creation. We cannot be Christian and neglect to exercise our ecological responsibility. It is part and parcel with our faith and the survival of our marvelous planet. +

TO LEARN MORE

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CHIEF SEATTLE'S 1854 ORATION



Chief Seattle (1786-1866), a hereditary leader of the Suquamish Tribe, recited this speech during treaty negotiations in 1854 after the U.S. Government made an offer for a large area of Indian land and promised a "reservation" for the Indian people. Though regarded as one of the greatest statements ever made concerning the relationship between a people and the earth, there is a great deal of controversy surrounding Chief Seattle's reply. There are many sources of information, various versions of the speech, and debates over its very existence. The speech was first published in October 1887 in the Seattle Sunday Star by government official Dr. Henry Smith who took notes as Seattle spoke in Suquamish. The version reproduced here for you gained wide currency in the 1970s. It is said to have been rewritten for a documentary on environment, which would explain the anachronistic mentions of buffalo. Nonetheless, these words come across as strikingly inspiring.

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us. If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every clearing and humming insect – all are holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the Red man. We are part of the earth and it is part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the dew in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man – all belong to the same family.

So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us. The Great Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably to ourselves. He will be our father and we will be his children.

So, we will consider your offer to buy our land. But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us. This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you the land, you must remember that it is sacred, and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers are our brothers. They quench our thirst. They carry our canoes and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children, that the rivers are our brothers and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

We know that the White man does not understand our ways. One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. He leaves his father's grave behind, and he does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children, and he does not care. His father's grave, and his children's birthright are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

Our ways are different than your ways. The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the Red man.

There is no quiet place in the



White man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring or the rustle of the insect's wings. The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around the pond at night? I am a Red man and do not understand. The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond and the smell of the wind itself, cleaned by a midday rain, or scented with pinion pine.

The air is precious to the Red man for all things share the same breath, the beast, the tree, the man, they all share the same breath. The White man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also received his last sigh. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it apart and sacred as a place where even the White man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

So, we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to

I am a Red man and do not understand any other way. I have seen a thousand rotting buffaloes on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train. I am a savage and do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be made more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.

What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of the spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts, soon happens to man. *All things are connected.*



Getty Images

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children, that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.

This we know; the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know. All things are connected like the blood which unites one family. Man did not weave the web of life. He is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

Even the White man, whose God walks and talks with him as friend to friend, cannot be exempt from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. We shall see. One thing we know which the White man may one day discover; our God is also your God. You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the Red man and the White. The earth is precious to Him, and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its creator. The whites too shall pass; perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Contaminate your bed and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing, you will shine brightly fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man.

That destiny is a mystery to us for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are all tamed, the secret corners of the forest are heavy with the scent of many men and the view of the ripe hills is blotted with talking wires.

When the last red man has vanished with this wilderness, and his memory is only the shadow of a cloud moving across the prairie, will these shores and forests still be here? Will there be any of the spirit of my people left?

Where will the thicket be? Gone! Where will the eagle be? Gone! And what is to say goodbye to the swift pony and then hunt? ***The end of living and the beginning of survival.*** ☉

accept,
I will make
one condition
- the White man
must treat the beasts of
this land as his brothers.



Getty Images

An Oasis in a Concrete Jungle

Pauline Yuen, M.I.C.

In the glow of its economic success, Hong Kong is rediscovering the value of oases of greenery in the midst of urban frenzy. Between tradition and modernity, here and there traditional Chinese gardens are beginning to dot the concrete landscape.

Any visitors to Hong Kong will be overwhelmed by the sky-scrapers and massive concrete edifices all around. In short, one can describe Hong Kong as a concrete jungle. In recent years high-rise after high-rise has been set up here and there by tycoons and business men part of a surge of commercial and residential development. Harbour reclamation is deemed the most expedient method to make room for more buildings. As a result, the skyline and the beauty of Hong Kong's natural landscape in the harbour area are greatly undermined. The harbour reclamation project causes protest from people who are concerned with environmental protection as well as preservation of the natural heritage of Hong Kong.



One of Hong Kong's districts (the other two being the Kowloon Peninsula and Victoria Island, the heart of Hong Kong). Connected to the mainland, the New Territories used to be Hong Kong's kitchen garden, given its many farms. Nowadays they are home to large and densely populated cities.



Pauline Yuen, M.I.C.

While the harbour reclamation issue remains a controversy yet to be solved between the Government and the dissatisfied citizens, one man in the New Territories is silently doing his best to preserve natural beauty and the cultural heritage with his own initiatives and means.

Lee Yuk Tak built himself a magnificent Chinese garden in the New Territories near Fanling. Building a garden is not just for aesthetic value, according to Mr. Lee, but is a living. Lee feared the taking over of Hong Kong by China in 1997, and so he emigrated to Canada. Unfortunately he lost most of his savings there and had to return to Hong Kong at the turn of the millenium. Then he worked very hard to make as much money as possible. However, in the course of hard work he fell seriously ill and almost died. The brush with death gave him an occasion to refocus his life and to give up the "rat-race". He felt urged to preserve the beauty of the Chinese heritage and culture, especially those represented in a Chinese Scholar's Garden. Such gardens are meant to be sanctuaries from the stress of the world. Many centuries ago, they would have been built by a scholar or an administrator retiring from the Emperor's



Pauline Yuen, M.I.C.

court. These educated and elegant men sought refuge from the unceasing and unnerving tensions of governing, so they would create exquisite gardens integrated with their living space where they could experience inner peace, spiritual harmony and serenity.

Mr. Lee began importing Chinese trees, rocks and ornaments in order to create a tranquil "oasis" with reflecting ponds and scenic courtyards, in which one can breathe fresh air, enjoy serenity and harmony with nature. To do so, he had to conduct extensive research and travel the world looking for materials. The design of a real Chinese garden is an art as well as the synthesis of the Chinese perspective towards life. There are elements of harmony and contrast to bring out the dynamism of yin and yang. A Chinese garden is a carefully designed artifact which captures the beauty of nature through a three dimensional representation. It is meant to evoke one's sense of contemplation and wonder. So in the garden, Mr. Lee carefully placed the stones, plants and ponds to achieve an ambience of oneness with Mother Nature and to make the scenery appear like a Chinese painting.

His care for natural heritage is not just limited to plants but also extends to the preservation of wild life, especially the protection of endangered species of birds and other kinds of animals. He has a huge pond teeming with big and beautiful carps. He took time to raise them in good conditions and incidentally, one of his fish won the first prize in a competition in Japan. Besides carps, Mr. Lee also keeps exotic birds from the Amazon.

The two birds seemed to be very happy to meet us for they chirped loudly as we approached them. When asked if he was afraid of the avian flu (which was rampant at the time we visited him), he said with a smile, "No, not the least". He explained to us that the spread of the avian flu was actually due to unhealthy and inhuman treatment of the poultry. If they had been kept in airy and clean environment, the epidemic would not have happened. That is why he plans to expand his property so as to have a separate area as sanctuary for endangered species, be they birds or animals.

To make his house blend in harmony with the garden, Mr. Lee converted his 2 storey bungalow into a Chinese architectural structure with pavilion. Inside the house there is beautiful Chinese rosewood furniture, as well as porcelain and artifacts from Mainland China. They are carefully placed in such a way that anyone visiting these living spaces has a sense of studied airiness and connectedness, creating harmony. One feels transported back to a highly civilized but less frenetic life, unlike that of today.

Mr. Lee is willing to share his gardens with friends and acquaintance but he would not open it to the public for fear of ruining the peace and calm of the



Pauline Yuen, M.I.C.

house. He is not a Christian but his respect for the integrity of nature is worth our admiration. No doubt, the Creator Spirit is working among women and men of good will and inviting them to participate in his loving project of conservation of the universe. ✿

TO LEARN MORE

Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden in Vancouver:
www.virtualmuseum.ca/Exhibitions/ScholarGarden

Cultivating *Dignity* in Haiti

Violent political unrest, a powerful tropical storm, disastrous floods... Many days of mourning have brought sadness to Haiti's bicentennial year. Although some foreign countries generously responded to its distress calls, reconstruction remains an enormous challenge because the natural disasters worsened an already precarious situation. Well beyond the emergency of the first weeks, humanitarian aid continues to focus on people's lives, security and mostly their dignity in order to help them take their destiny in hand again. That's why Oxfam-Québec cooperant in Haiti Sylvie Ouellet decided to be there.

**INTERVIEW WITH SYLVIE OUELLET
BY MARIE-EVE HOMIER**



Monique Bigras, m.i.c.

**Le nègre marron in Port-au-Prince,
symbol of independence**

Sylvie has been involved for nearly four years now with many humanitarian aid projects in Haiti. Her most recent one concerns soil decontamination by natural means. She has developed a simple yet strikingly effective philosophy: feed the earth and

the earth will feed its people. "If you were to see your mother homeless and indigent, what would you do? Give her clothing! Protect her, of course! It's the same thing with the nourishing earth. It is our mother. It too needs to be fed and protected." Assisted by an agronomist and an instructor, Sylvie demonstrated soil fertilisation with "green fertilizers" (natural fertilizers) in a community garden. They offered training, which generated a feeling of belonging among the group. "When they realise that all this is for them, they become motivated to work and the project's participation rate goes up."

Destination education

For Sylvie, living out a mission means opening people up to different ways of seeing and doing so they are

able to make choices. Yet choosing involves the capacity to analyse which comes from education. The latter must be distinguished from mere schooling, because in spite of an illiteracy rate nearing 70%, one can be, as Haitians say, "illiterate but not a nitwit!"

"To ensure that the training we give is useful and appropriate, we must reach out to people and meet them where they are. This way, we can see the problem as a whole, not just in its narrow sense, and use the means that are within their reach. What use would there be to teach a fish to swim, let alone when we are scuba-diving ourselves? For, after all, I am and will remain a Canadian working in Haiti." Also, we must distinguish between "customs" and "culture" because the latter is an open door to excuses and reasons of all kinds.



Sylvie Ouellet

Eye to eye, Metellus (right) proudly explains his farming to the agronomist (left). A year ago, he would have kept his eyes lowered and would not even have dared address him.

Opening ways

However, educating is not enough. In fact, it generally comes second. More important is that people must be involved right from the beginning so they appropriate the development and make it come from themselves. To do so, Sylvie cleverly built her project on three little questions addressed to the peasants with whom she was working: *Who are you? What do you want? How will you make it happen?*

At the beginning, it was tedious, but people slowly became aware

way things were. They felt emboldened and asserted their identity as peasants. As one of them told her once, "You have come from as far as Canada to help us. What are we doing to help ourselves?" From then on, these peasants became true partners in the project, not mere beneficiaries anymore.

"My job is to make them get into partnerships, for example with an agronomist, a position who is so highly ranked in Haitian society that he seems out of reach for them. I am the catalyst allowing

ment takes care of 0%. Moreover, since every one influences at least four other people, at the end of the year we will have 24 participants who in turn will influence other people... and little by little transformation will have impacted the whole area. Incidentally, peasants who were not participating in the project have already begun to subscribe to it.

My word, a creative power

What is the secret behind such a success? Sylvie believes as with certainty in the power of one's word and bases a great part of her



Sylvie Ouellet in front of the irrigation basin she had dug. Thanks to Quebecois' donations following the September 2004 natural disasters, Sylvie was able to set up 96 teams composed of 1536 people. In 30 days, they cleared out an irrigation system that had been obstructed by mud and rubbish of all kinds, including human remains carried down by the water of the floods. These canals irrigate 12,500 hectares of arable land farmed by... 5,500 families!

that the land they were living on was theirs; that their children, their village, and their heritage would not be looked after by anybody else other than themselves. Transformation begins by taking full and complete responsibility for one's life and surroundings. When they were able to leave the role of victims, they realised that they had the power to change the

them to become aware that they are capable of standing tall and of working for themselves."

Mission: possible

At the end of the first year, Sylvie evaluates the project's success as 10%, meaning six participating farmers. It may not seem like much, but in fact it represents a lot in a country where the govern-

humanitarian intervention on this notion. "My father used to say: *You could lose everything, but you'll always have your word.* Still to this day, there are things that I cannot accept. Like beggary for example. One can be poor, but not dirty, not a beggar or a thief, nor live amongst rubbish. Poor, yet worthy! Besides, is it not demonstrated right in the Bible's first words

that the spoken word has an immense creative power? *God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.* (Genesis, 1:3) If my word is the only thing that belongs to me so completely that no one could ever take it away from me, than that is who I am. I am my word. When I ask them "Who are you?" and they answer: *I am a peasant... I am a human being... I own the most important thing: my word... I do have potential in the end... I am worthy of this...* they declare things so powerful that they are transformed by them. Self-respect, that is, a respect for one's own word, emerges. Logically, respect for another person's word ensues, as well as respect for one's possessions, work, properties, environment, health, etc."

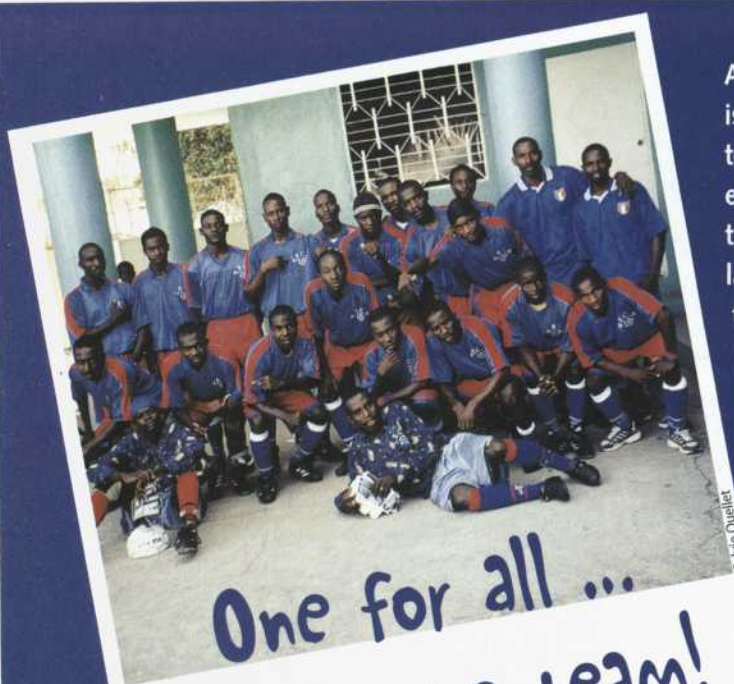


Sylvie Ouellet

In response to the floods, Sylvie thought up these "living barriers" to deflect the rainwater's course. Fruit trees were planted on them so that their roots would hold back the soil and their fruits would feed the population.

This philosophy of the word honoured as oneself stifles violence effectively. For example, during the political unrest in the spring of 2004, Sylvie's teachings somewhat tempered the surge of looting and bloody attacks in her area. "What Haiti lacks most is trust in other people, in one's own neigh-

bour. As long as that problem is not solved, we won't be going anywhere. The solution starts by education and renewing respect for giving one's word. We must come back to the source, quit telling lies and speaking carelessly, and honour our word." 🌱



Sylvie Ouellet

*One for all ...
all for the team!*

Among her many humanitarian aid projects, her favourite is the soccer team which she co-founded. "It's my pastoral!" Taking part in this team has allowed the youth to experience dignity, respect for others, team spirit. Like on this day where they had a match to play outside their village and their truck got bogged down in mud. These teenagers have developed a true sense of belonging and pride that entirely drove out of their heads any desire of going into exile in the cities. This team operates with the means at their disposal, but its existence is threatened by the scarcity of donations. "I am not asking for pity but for involvement. Our Lord went out towards people; He was in action. The only difference between these young people and ours, is that they are born somewhere where there are fewer opportunities within reach."

Sylvie Ouellet can be contacted by email at: oxfamquebechaiti@yahoo.fr

Discovering New Horizons



Murielle Dubé
from N.-D.-du-Bon-Conseil, QC
Mission: Cochabamba, Bolivia



Jeanne d'Arc Corriveau,
from Saint-Sébastien, QC
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Born in Iraq of Aramaic descent, **Badeea Butrus, C.Ss.R.**, came to Quebec after much international travel to become a Redemptorist priest. This former engineer feels called to the youth and their present world. Involved in pastoral work in several countries for the past 15 years, he now devotes himself to serving Québec's young adults.



XX
World Youth Day
Cologne 2005

Young Christians around the world are preparing for the XXth World Youth Day that will be held in Cologne, Germany in August 2005, under the theme "We have come to adore Him!" (Mt 2:2)

Breath of Life

In spite of its modest beginnings on Palm Sunday of 1986 when Pope John Paul II invited the world youth to join him in Rome, the WYD has since taken an ever-increasing place in the life of today's Church. Its boundless success arouses curiosity. A closer look at five of its fundamental characteristics gives us a more accurate understanding of its true facets.

Universality of Church. The universal Church goes beyond borders and differences of race, language and culture. It breaks isolation in the world. Thus hundreds of thousands of youth gathered at the last WYD in Toronto in July 2002 despite the security constraints imposed on travellers following the events of September 11th, 2001.

A youthful Church. Every 4 years, more than a half-million young Christians gather to celebrate their faith in Jesus. Yet, is it not repeated *ad nauseam* that the youth have deserted the Church? The WYD gives hope and proves that, on the contrary, youth responds when it is called upon.

A festive and joyful Church. Through the joy written on every face and the happiness inhabiting every young participant's heart, the WYD strikingly demonstrates that faith still is a source of joy at the dawn of the new millennium.

The Church as an assembled family. In our times known for being individualistic, the Church has become a less and less visible way of coming together. The WYD delivers a double message to our world and today's Church: to leave the spirit of individualism and to live instead in the spirit of communion and sharing as part of a universal family.

The paradox of strength in frailty. The pope's presence is part and parcel of the WYD. Despite his frail condition, he has been surprisingly successful in powerfully touching young people's hearts. What is the secret behind his success? Rather than using the latest mass communication methods, he relies on the language of love: the language of the Holy Spirit. John Paul II fully understands all the strength and power of love.

Avoiding drawbacks

Most Christian youth specialists and workers agree on these 5 characteristics. However, at the same time, they draw attention to drawbacks the WYD must avoid:

- Developing a "pope-mania" culture in young Christians. The WYD's purpose cannot be simply seeing the pope! On the other hand, what would the WYD be without John Paul II's presence?
- Becoming a mere tourism opportunity. The WYD's purpose cannot be simply traveling! Our young "backpack generation" loves moving around and traveling. Small, closed groups of friends are already organising their trip together on their own and taking part in the WYD without the benefit of the spiritual preparation offered by the dioceses.

The ways of the future

The WYD is here to stay, and the Church is already harvesting its fruits. How can it now cultivate a more universal, youthful, joyous, convivial Church, strong in its frailty? One of the approaches to broaden the WYD is *ecumenism*. In recent years, there has been a greater participation of youth belonging to Christian denominations other than Catholic, and even of non-Christian youth. It is time to create a WYD in the image of the Kingdom of God: people coming from East and West, from North and South. *People will come from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and will take their place at the feast in the Kingdom of God.* (Luke 13:29)

A Gust of Fresh Air

Educated in a Protestant faith by my parents, our Evangelical-Lutheran Church community and our Protestant Scout group, I had little contact with the Catholic Church until the beginning of my Civil Engineering studies in Karlsruhe, Germany. Until then, my impression about anything Catholic was not very good, partly because of the Vatican's conservative politics, and partly because of some unpleasant personal experiences.

Slowly but surely

However, Germany nowadays is becoming increasingly secularized. Religious belonging matters far less than ever before. Though most people still *officially* belong to either one of the two main Christian Churches (Catholic and Protestant), only a small number truly participates in a local community, and the number of people belonging to either denomination is diminishing.

The Catholic and the Protestant Churches approach each other slowly but surely. For myself, this happened when I joined the Protestant Student Community in Karlsruhe, which had a lot of contact with the Catholic Student Community. Over the years, I went more and more to the Catholic Student Community, mostly because I had friends there and because I helped with the organisation of our interesting common events. I soon realized that these Catholic students had the same issues and interests as the Protestant students. Most students and even our priest were as critical as I was towards certain official letters from the Vatican. But Rome is far away... In Germany, the local Catholic community practices sometimes differ from the "official directives". For instance, we sometimes received ecumenical communion.

A bold stand for ecumenism

Intercommunion, ordination of female priests and other controversial topics were hot discussions during the first *Ecumenical Church Day* in May 2003 in Berlin, which gathered some 200,000 participants from Germany and abroad. After centuries of war in Europe between Protestants and Catholics and even a lot of intolerance during the 20th century, this was a unique event and a milestone for the ecumenical approach between the Protestant and Catholic Churches, but also with other Christian churches in Germany. Common issues, such as social justice, worldwide freedom and the mediation of Christian values in a global economy, easily overcame the continuing theological differences. Even people who normally do not attend such "liberal mass meetings" reported having felt the ecumenical spirit during these 4 days.

A meeting for Christians of all confessions

The WYD 2005 in Cologne will be more important and more multicultural than the *Ecumenical Church Day* in Berlin. As a volunteer team leader, I really look forward to contributing to this huge organizational structure, supporting the event alongside people from all over the world, and getting new spiritual and intellectual inputs. Moreover, this event will be a window for young people from all continents to discover and hopefully be inspired by Christian life in Germany and in this region of the European Union.



Originally from Germany, civil engineer **Kai Knorpp** is now involved in the construction of a hydroelectric plant in Austria.

A Protestant Christian, this highly committed young man's point of view on the WYD, is emblematic of Germany's unique situation with regards to ecumenism. A volunteer and team leader in several *Protestant Church Days*, he now intends to support the WYD 2005 in Cologne.

Teach Us

*We live in a throwaway, wasteful society, Jesus,
and we desperately need your help.*

*We dump our trash in landfills
and in our beautiful oceans.*

*We use the earth's finite natural resources
as if there were a never-ending supply.*

We are consumed by consumerism.

We buy, use, throw away and buy more.

*Help us to rescue ourselves, Lord,
from this trap into which we have fallen.*

Teach us, again, Your ways of simplicity, sharing and caring.

*Help us to control our consumption of natural resources
and to recycle material things.*

*Help us to share the earth's bounty
so that everyone's basic material needs are satisfied.*

*Remind us frequently that the things of this earth
are here for our temporary use and that
only Your love will last forever. Amen.*

*Share the Healing and the Hope,
Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, 2003.*