

MIC Mission News

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

APRIL - MAY - JUNE 2005



The
Family:
Hub of Life and Faith

Missionary Prayer Intentions

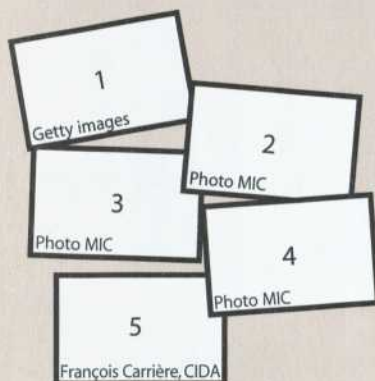
JUNE

May Christians come to an ever deeper realization that the Most Holy Eucharist is the pulsing heart of the Church.

JULY

Whatever their state of life may all the baptized be committed to transforming the world with the light of the Gospel.

COVER



- 1- In Africa, a father with his two daughters
- 2- In Quebec, the Bélanger grand-parents and their grandchildren Vincent and Stéphanie
- 3- In the Philippines, daddy Raza with his daughter Sandrine
- 4- In Madagascar, a young couple with their first-born son
- 5- In Haiti, a young mother with her daughter

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MIC Mission News

since 1923

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The Family: a Place of Hope

A giant has left us. John Paul II left us a huge inheritance, especially with regards to the great value of the human person, of marriage and the family. He considered the family to be an incomparable place of growth and development, a spiritual way and a fundamental unit of society that determines a nation's future.

The family is also a place where faith is imparted. After the Second Vatican Council, society took a turn, suggesting that true freedom would be to talk of neither God nor religion, to leave people free to choose in this area. *Parents have both the responsibility and the privilege of passing on an inheritance to their children so that when they become adults, they are capable of choosing,* underlined Lise Thibault, Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec and six-time grandmother, during World Youth Day in Toronto.

Speaking of family also evokes grandparents, John Paul II further said. *With their wisdom, acquired through their long life as a couple, they are a support for their children and a point of reference and of stability for their grandchildren. Often times, they also are the first people to talk to them about Christ.*

The grandparent/grandchildren relationship probably is the greatest love story of all for human beings because it is so unconditional.

However, the question tackled in this issue is not the kind that calls for a single answer. Starting from the proposed ideal, the project of married life and family can subsequently be defined in an infinite variety of possible situations.

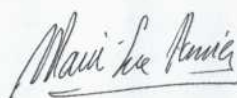
**Dear families, I tell
you once more
Christ's words: you
are "the salt of the
earth" and "the
light of the world".**

John Paul II

Will the articles in this theme section thoroughly challenge our behaviours with our family members with regards to faith? It would be a terrific opportunity! For when doubt is overcome, we may better live our faith.

Truly, this section is an invitation to listen. Listen to Christ present where we would least expect him... As usual!

Dear families, like John Paul II wishes you, *with Christ's help and the love that unites you, may you live in joy!*



Marie-Eve Homier
meredactrice@pressemic.org

Readers' Corner

Dear Readers:

This column belongs to you. Share with us your impressions or react to the questions asked at the end of some articles in order to further our reflection.

Make yourselves heard! MIC Mission News does not publish unsigned letters. We reserve ourselves the right to abridge letters.

Email: micmissionnews@pressemic.org
Fax: (450) 972-1512

Catherine Foisy, Montreal

Could there not be a section devoted to the 18-30 year old? To their experiences of social commitment in general? MIC Mission News also calls for the renewal of ideas, the opening of news paths. Louis Vaillancourt's article was very good, but it would have been appropriate to push readers further ahead in their reflection, to create a little discomfort in them that would have called upon them in their daily life. That is where coherence is established and where, in the name of our faith, we can build a better world based on Love, Justice and Peace. As per the article concerning lay associates to religious congregations, honestly, the picture of the sky behind the title really got on my nerves! As soon as we talk of spirituality, people think of the sky. It's in daily life that it ought to be built, not just in a celestial dimension!

Duc Tran, Montreal

I liked the article "An Innovative Spiritual Connection". Christians are called to be the light of Christ and small communities, to beam with joy for the world around them. Thus, many lay people benefit from this light and it is contagious! As per "An ecological Asceticism" by Louis Vaillancourt... roll on voluntary simplicity! Life can be absolutely beautiful with fewer resources! Living in Jesus Christ requires little, as Saint Francis of Assisi teaches it: "Live like birds, they are content with little."

Jean Laflamme, Saint-Bruno

I always like to read your missionary magazine. It gives me a broad point of view on the world and a realistic perspective on the actual human experience. As a scientist and a Christian volunteer involved in my community, I felt called upon by Louis Vaillancourt's excellent article. My wife and I have been working for 35 years with Serena, a national organization that promotes, enables and supports natural family planning. I can only note that both male and female fertility are rapidly declining, that women are already incubating an ecological crisis in their bodies and that the male-female relationship in couples is in crisis. Transmitting life has become a nearly impossible mission in the present technical-economical context.

Jean et Marie Rozon, Brossard

What a brilliant parallel drawn between the ecological crisis and Man in crisis! More than half a century separates these two visions (Louis Vaillancourt and Chief Seattle) that nonetheless come together with different words, different approaches. A section on things that missionaries have lived through would make a lively column. It would be of special interest if it were narrated by insiders and if it talked of concrete accomplishments.

Diane Lauzon, Saint-Jérôme

I would like to see what the Missionary Sisters are doing here in Canada to help our people. We experience poverty and difficulties here, too. Stories from abroad stimulate our minds and ignite our curiosity, but we also have our challenges and our people need help.

Cécile Lussier, p.m., Laval

Congratulations for your MIC Mission News magazine. You are the wind in our sails! Keep up the great work!

The Precursor turns 85!

Paulette Gagné, M.I.C.

In May your missionary magazine celebrates its 85th anniversary. What does this strange title mean, that has gone through so many eras and styles? The brilliant example of John Paul II, that illustrious missionary of modern times, enlightens us...

John Paul II, the travelling pope, reminded us that it is not enough to discover Christ, we must bring him to others. *Do not be afraid of proposing Christ to those who do*

ference by shouting at them: Prepare a way for the Lord; make a straight path for him to travel! (Mt 3:3)

The word *precursor* is derived from Latin and means "one who runs before," one who is in charge of preparing an important person's way. Like John the Baptist, John Paul II was a true precursor for our times. During the World Youth Day in Santiago de Compostela, he recalled to the youth that *announcing also means proclaiming, carrying the Word of Salvation to others. There is, said he, a great ignorance around the Christian faith, but also a deep desire to listen to the Word of God. And faith is born from listening.*

To be Christian, to be baptised, means to be a missionary, to be an apostle, to be a precursor of Christ. *The man who will come after me is much greater than I am, proclaimed John the Baptist (Mc 1:7).*

To help a brother or a sister discover Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, the Life, is a true act of love towards the neighbour, recalled John Paul II. Speaking of God nowadays is not an easy task. More often than not, we come up against a wall of indifference, and even of hostility. Let not yourselves be discouraged, for you are not alone. The Lord will not fail to accompany you, as he has promised: And I will be with you always, to the end of the age (Mt 28:20).

Our world today is a mission land, a holy land, like John Paul II reminded us during his visit to the province of Quebec. Wherever we are, the Word of God calls upon us to become, in our own lives, witnesses to the Resurrected Christ. It is the simplest

way of evangelizing, yet the most efficient we have, for our world needs credible witnesses and true apostles.

An Evangelization Medium

Délia Tétreault, the foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, understood that those who want to announce Christ have a wide range of means within their reach. She was a visionary woman who listened to the Holy Spirit. In 1920, she created a missionary magazine in French under the prophetic name of: THE PRECURSOR; the English magazine was created in 1923. (The English magazine's name was changed in 1974 to the current *MIC Mission News*.) For 85 years, this magazine has pursued its vocation: to be a **precursor of Christ** here and elsewhere, through its articles and its missionary testimonies. ✝

THANK YOU to all of you, loyal readers!

THANK YOU to the devoted collaborators that support the magazine!

THANK YOU to the "missionary journalists" from here and elsewhere...

May our 85th anniversary inspire us to "run ahead" announcing Christ to the others, like John the Baptist, the Precursor of Christ, and John Paul II, the Pilgrim of the World!

With your precious collaboration, let us make a crazy appointment for the 100th anniversary in May 2020!



"Do not be afraid of proposing Christ to those who do not know him yet!"

not know him yet!, he said to the youth gathered in Santiago de Compostela. Christ is the true answer, the most complete answer to all the questions concerning Man and his destiny.

Before him, John the Baptist shook his fellow citizens out of their indif-

John the Fire-Hearted

Saint John the Baptist Day dates back to the first years of the colony. Three hundred years later, on February 5th 1908, this saint was officially established as the special patron saint of the French Canadians by Pope Pius X.

One striking aspect of John the Baptist's life is that whoever turns to him finds himself very quickly with Christ... Indeed, John walked with him "to prepare his road for him" (Luke 1:76); he put him up as the light of the world. Therefore it is natural that our ancestors, desirous to establish a new country here with a Christian soul, chose this Jewish prophet as patron saint.

A patron saint for today's world

Here we are at the beginning of a new millennium, also desirous of building a new society, a "civilization of love" as John Paul II put it. Faced with this great challenge, our patron saint reveals himself as extraordinarily real and relevant, he who had a mission to tell the people of his time: *all you who seek happiness, all you who long for freedom and salvation, turn toward Christ and go to him. It is in his message and in him that you shall not only find light and peace, but also that you will draw strength and courage to leave the roads that lead nowhere and commit to the road that brings life, and brings it in abundance.* (Cardinal Turcotte, 2002 homily)

Thanks be to God

The Mass of Saint John allows us to thank God for the faith in Christ that was passed down to us and that we want to preserve. The day's psalm expresses this extremely well: *I praise you for I am wonderfully made!* On the occasion of the 24th of June, let us acknowledge our responsibility in passing down in our turn the Christian inheritance that we have received and whose richness we appreciate. *May we follow the sound advice of our patron saint, John the Baptist: may we grow closer to Christ and walk with him! He is the Way, he is the Truth and he is the Life (Jn 4:6).* (Cardinal Turcotte, 2004 homily)



Let us open new ways!

Photo MIC

World Communications Day

Last May 8th was both Ascension Sunday and World Communications Day.

A Reality That Impacts Us All

John Paul II described the media as *a great forum that allows the exchange of technical information, constructive ideas, and healthy values. (...) All this challenges the Church (...) to insert the Gospel message into the "new culture" created by modern communication.* This manner of speaking tells of the media's fundamental importance in our society and in our daily life! It is not surprising that the Church invites the whole world to devote one day to exchange, reflect and pray.

Have your say!

How can we contribute to this Christian mission in media? By speaking up! Firstly to encourage everything that is beautiful and good. If we want more quality productions, we must take the trouble to make it known. As Christians, we also have a kind of "support role" to encourage and congratulate those who contribute to the promotion of positive values on the moral and spiritual level.

In Communion with All the Church

Lastly, let our personal prayer and that of our Sunday assemblies be to open ourselves to the scope of this huge world of media and communications. May it mostly be **praise and thanksgiving**. We are fortunate to live in an era of extraordinary means of communication!

Source : Communications et Société
www.officecom.qc.ca

Up Hill and Down Dale

Paulette Gagné, M.I.C.

The month of May is traditionally devoted to Mary. Like John the Baptist later on, she goes to meet the neighbour and prepare for Jesus' coming.

The Gospel of Luke relates the announcement made to Zechariah: *Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son. You are to name him John. Zechariah said to the angel, "How shall I know if this is so? I am an old man, and my wife is old also."* (Luke 1:13.18)

An anonymous artist from Vietnam took the liberty of representing Elizabeth as a young woman joyfully welcoming her Cousin Mary arriving from Nazareth. What originality, what radiance emanating from this painting! Mary carries Jesus, Light of the World; his presence has Elizabeth's child leap with joy in her womb. She exclaims: *Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord's mother comes to visit me?* (Luke 1:43)

Délia Tétreault, the M.I.C.'s devoted foundress, wrote in 1913 to her young missionaries abroad: *As in the example of Mary, you shall have to travel over hill and dale to help the beloved neighbour and your life will hereafter be an everlasting Magnificat.*

Elizabeth and Mary, women of welcoming, make us more aware of the Life we carry, of the Light that transfigures and of the Joy that makes us set out.... in utter confidence!

Lord Jesus, we thank you
with Elizabeth, John and Zechariah
for your visit in their house;
We thank you for all the times
you have visited us in our lives
and in our families.

We thank you, Father almighty,
for the coming of the greatest of all guests,
Your only begotten Son made man for us.
He is your gift but through your grace
Mary is also a gift to us.

Grant to us that, like Mary,
we also may bring Jesus,
his blessing and his peace
to our friends, to everyone we meet.

We thank you, Mary, with all the people
to whose houses you have brought
the blessing and peace of Christ.
Bless us with your greeting "Shalom,"
and pray for us that we may be attentive
to the many signs of the coming
of Christ into our life. Amen.

Mary And Your Everyday Life, Bernard Häring, C.Ss.R.



Our Lady of the Visitation. Anonymous Artist, Vietnam.

Celebrating a 50th!

It is with a heart full of joy that I come to tell you about a landmark event for us, the M.I.C.'s of Zambia. Last November, in front of many parishioners and our bishop, Rev. George Zumaile Lungu, we marked fifty years of missionary work in the eastern province of Zambia. Rita Guay, M.I.C., began by presenting the major facts which marked this half-century. She also mentioned the 76 M.I.C.'s who worked there, 21 of whom have already gone home to the Father. Before the reading of the Gospel, in a symbolic gesture, the Bible was passed from the hands of the Canadians to those of the Zambians. Mission accomplished! It was a very moving and meaningful moment... At the end of the Eucharistic celebration, a novice, named Judith, and two of her friends, gaily dressed for the occasion, expressed their joy and gratitude through dance, to the song of the Magnificat. After an exchange of gifts and friendly words, we thanked the Lord together for the gift of the missionaries, the welcome of the Zambian people, and the priceless mutual collaboration

With you, I rejoice in this seed thrown on the ground, which has produced fruit... many good fruits!

Yvonne Ayotte, M.I.C.

You've Got Mail!



Mission accomplished... mission continues! Emeldah Katongo, M.I.C., and Suzanne Leclair, M.I.C.

A school at Dubuisson

Hello everyone!

I happily send you good news! At Dubuisson, Haiti, where I live with two M.I.C.'s, the construction of a school for children and a domestic centre has been completed.

For us, building a school means just the basics: some posts and a roof. Still, it is better than the outdoor school, with trees for a "roof"! Now, the children are able to withstand the sun and the rain during their classes. It also will be an excellent place for the sewing center. As for the Sisters, they live in a new house, built at a turtle's pace, on a hill in a beautiful and green countryside.

With our M.I.C. sisters and two parish priests, we went to the edge of the neighboring parish. We have been studying the possibility of establishing a Christian formation centre for those who live on the outskirts of Dubuisson. Those who live in this area, called *Bien Placé* (Well Located), are too far away to be part of our Christian community. They have been very touched by this initiative of our parish pastor. Another project to carry on! As you might observe, life in Dubuisson is very simple, but full of enthusiastic promises, projects and accomplishments.

Missionaries in formation, the team at Dubuisson wishes you the Strength of Spirit to discover which road to take to find the way to your happiness.

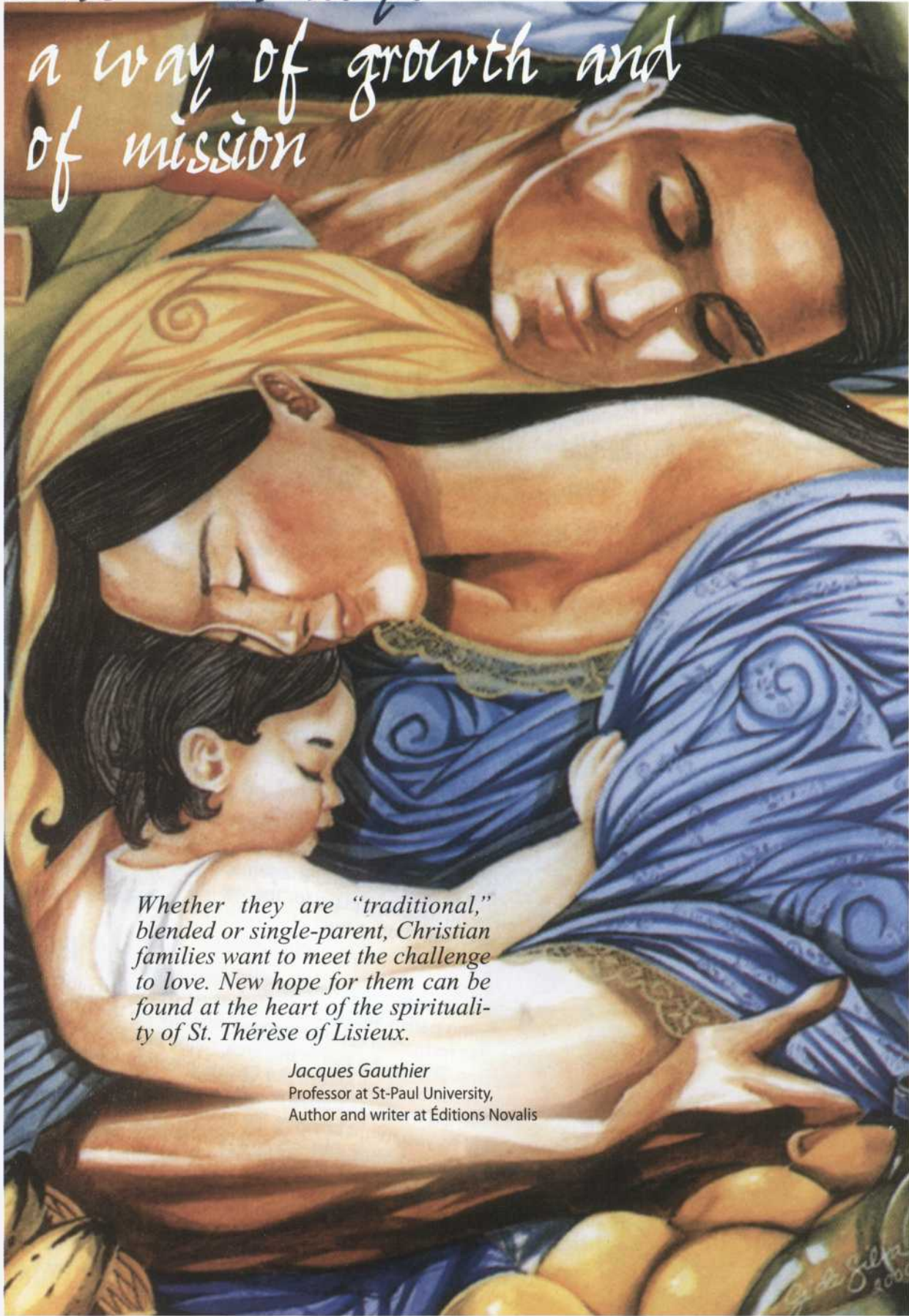
Myrtha Michel, M.I.C.



Preparation for baptism with Myrtha Michel, M.I.C.

The Family:

*a way of growth and
of mission*



*Whether they are "traditional,"
blended or single-parent, Christian
families want to meet the challenge
to love. New hope for them can be
found at the heart of the spirituali-
ty of St. Thérèse of Lisieux.*

Jacques Gauthier
Professor at St-Paul University,
Author and writer at Éditions Novalis

Filipino painter Christiana Jade De Silva was only thirteen years old at the time of this painting, yet the maturity, complexity and sophistication of her art were already striking. She has over 80 awards and citations



Photo MIC

Little Thérèse, Doctor of the Church and Patron of Missions, offers us the example of an interior life that is like a family program for living, so that the Church also dwells in the home, as it did during the time of the Acts of the Apostles. Here are some of examples of the interior attitudes she expressed during her life:

To live love · To be inspired by the values of Jesus ·
To create an atmosphere of welcoming and listening · To give priority to those who suffer most ·
To accept our solitude in unity with those around us · To take pleasure in doing things for Jesus and for others ·
To suffer in love and because of love · To marvel at the little things of daily life · To sing of the mercies of the Lord ·
To accept our weaknesses · To bear serenely our imperfections · To go beyond our nuclear family to the extended family.

In the place where God reveals Himself

The family, like the Church, is not static; it is a growing community. When we speak of growing, we speak of learning through training and experience. The family, a place of development and discourse, is undergoing many changes. How the family lives is reflected on society and the Church, and how society lives also influences the family and the Church.

Three concepts ideally describe the Christian family: It is a **theological place** where God the Father reveals himself in his Son and invites each of us to holiness. God the Creator continues his creation in human fatherhood and motherhood. The family is also a **domestic church** where Christ communicates through the concrete realities of life. The Saviour-Son continues his Redemption to every end of the family. Finally, the family is a **place of evangelization** by example, where the profession of faith can be communicated as a desire to live. The Spirit Sanctifier continues his Pentecost while building communion between the spouses and children.

A Place of Evangelization

The Christian family reflects the personhood of God: God the Father, revealed in his Son, Jesus, who raises the dead by the power of his Spirit. The radical notion of this Trinitarian God, this God-Family, applies to all forms of family existence. The Church is seen by Saint Paul as the "family of God" (Ep 2, 19), as well as the Church as "people of God" and "body of Christ".

The Christian family is often the first place of transmission and formation in the faith, the first awakening to moral and spiritual values. This understanding of the faith comes from how the family lives and not from abstract data. The family



Alice Moës-Deglin (Belgique)

Be holy and without fault before Him (Ep 1, 4).

does not teach the faith; it forms and educates believers. It is not a school, but a hub of life. Faith lived within the family is a search for meaning, a development path, a plan, a free choice, a meeting with Christ. It is the Church at home.

And like any Church, it has its liturgies. The milestones that a family marks, its joys and sorrows, are just so many occasions to celebrate the great event of Christ's Resurrection. Usually, these family celebrations bring hope; they make it possible for the family to see itself as a "cell" of the Church, to gather around "Our Father," to give a religious meaning to the various stages of growth.

Family Liturgies

Family life follows four major cycles: the cycles of the Church, the couple, the children and the family. Its liturgical seasons are those of the liturgical



The milestones that a family marks can be occasions of small family liturgies. These family celebrations bring hope and make it possible for the family to give a religious meaning to the various stages of growth.

year, the way by which we reach salvation, like Sundays, Advent, Christmas, Lent, and Easter... The couple also has its cycle. Work, marital intimacy, wedding anniversaries, romantic evenings, and deep conversations can all be occasions to bless, to praise, to inquire, to give thanks, to celebrate, to meet Christ present in the other.

Children also reach several milestones that can be occasions of small family liturgies: baptism, first steps, first words and first days of school; first communion, confirmation, profession of faith, birthdays, reaching puberty, etc. It is a question of thanking the Lord by a short celebration, prayer, or

blessing for these stages in their lives. But sometimes it is necessary to know enough to stay quiet, and to help the child or the teenager to be aware of himself or herself by listening and by trusting him or her.

Lastly, there is the cycle specific to the family with its daily routines and its unpredictable events, its rites and its rhythms, which lead to many things to celebrate, if we take the time, and that is what makes the family Church: prayers before and after meals, expressions of forgiveness (a kiss of peace and a word of reconciliation for each one), a gesture of tenderness for somebody who suffers physically or spiritually, thanksgiving at significant news, (awaiting the birth of a child, moving, a friend's visit, Mother's Day and Father's Day), praising God when we travel or enjoy a walk in nature, blessings for each season... It's up to you to continue this list and to build the Church in your home.

A Land for Mission

The Christian family is a community of faith, together with the parish, the school, and the various Christian movements. It affirms that evangelization consists most of all in the act of proclaiming God, who is with us. Its fundamental mission, like that of the Church, is to reconcile all people between themselves and with God: "That all may be one" (Jn 17, 21). It is the place above all others where meaning in life is possible, a place for the person to go beyond himself, following Christ, to forget himself while giving himself to his spouse, to his children and the world, all of whom are loved by God. Ideally, it begins with the desire to be, to live and to love. Faith is anchored in this profound desire.

Jesus did not glorify families, but he did not disparage them either. His desire is that humanity be one big family where everyone loves one another. It is the Kingdom of God that concerns him and the mission for which he was sent. As he said: "The one who loves his father or his mother more than me is not worthy of me. The one who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10:37). Like other earthly realities, the family is a step on the way to build the Kingdom, the passageway from the state of being children of human parents to that of becoming children of God. In order to be really fruitful, mustn't family love lead to a greater love, which frees it from individualism?

The mission of the family is to form people who have a critical sense and who do everything so that the dignity of the person is protected. It is an education in love where the relationship with others is not based on authority but on service, like the example of Jesus who washed the feet of his apostles. In this sense, the more a family is Christian, the more it will be human. This love is not turned in on itself but is open to others. It is what Thérèse of Lisieux achieved with her novices by their giving up their desire and awakening freedom.

Thérèse of Lisieux, an Inspiration

Thérèse proves herself to be an excellent teacher who can encourage the parents in their mission as educators. She knows how to create a true family climate, an atmosphere of confidence, of mutual support among the novices, of listening and of interior freedom. She understands that God uses parents like "instruments to do his work in souls" (*The Story of a Soul*, Ms C 20r). She borrows the image of a canvas (the soul) which does not protest being improved by the brush (the teacher) since it is the artist (God) who directs it and gives

beauty. Each parent can say, following Thérèse: "I am a small brush that Jesus chose to paint his image on the souls that were entrusted to me" (Ms C 20r). She would also say that the children, like gifts from heaven, "do not belong to me, they are lent to me by God" (Ms C 18v-19r). 🙏

TO LEARN MORE

Conversations with Therese of Lisieux, Jacques Gauthier. Novalis and Liguori Publications, 2002.

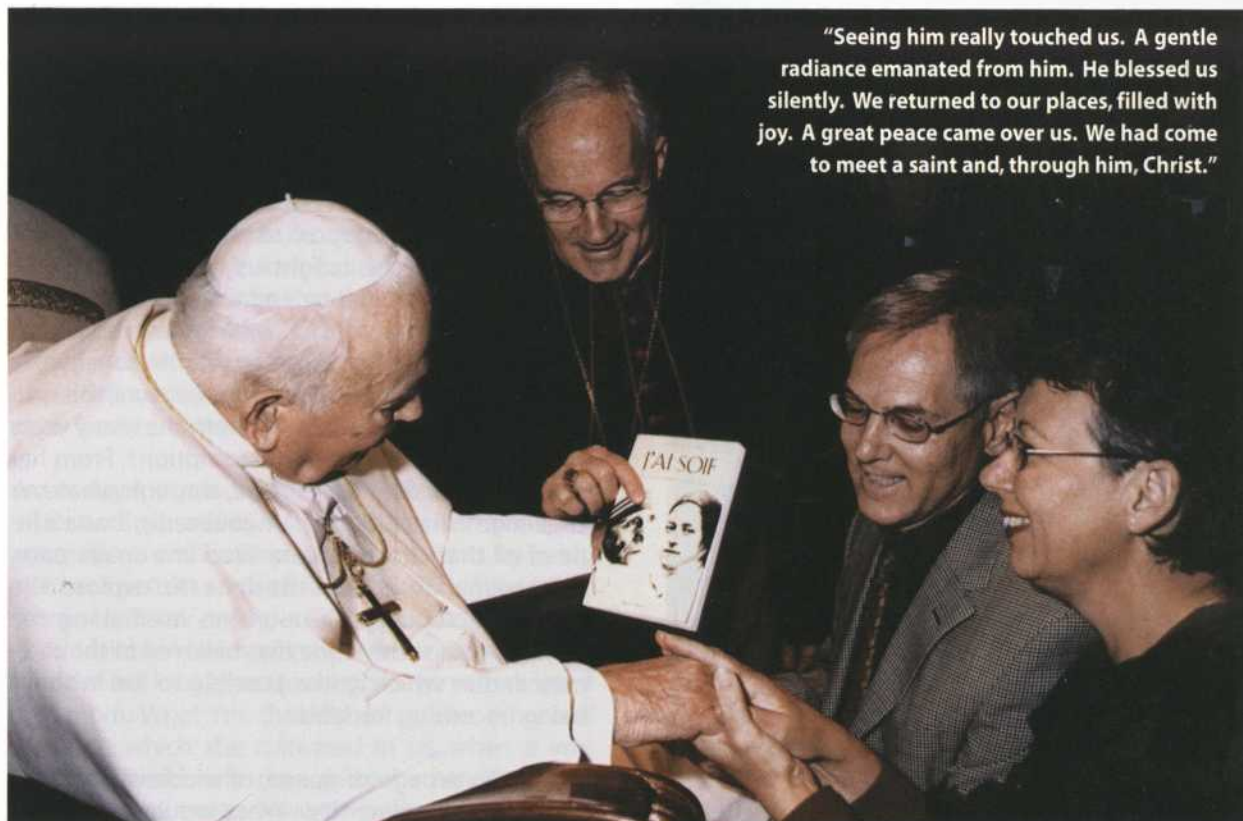
I thirst. Saint Therese of Lisieux and Mother Teresa of Calcutta, Jacques Gauthier. St Pauls, 2005.

Letter to Families, Pope John Paul II (1994, Year of the Family)

La famille, France Quéré. Le Seuil, 1990.

L'avenir, c'est l'autre. Dix conférences sur l'amour et la famille, Xavier Lacroix. Cerf (coll. Recherches morales), 2000.

Les mirages de l'amour, Xavier Lacroix. Bayard/Novalis, 1997.



"Seeing him really touched us. A gentle radiance emanated from him. He blessed us silently. We returned to our places, filled with joy. A great peace came over us. We had come to meet a saint and, through him, Christ."

Jacques Gauthier

With his wife Anne-Marie, author Jacques Gauthier met Pope John Paul II and gave him his book on Mother Teresa, *I thirst*.

Grandma's Rocking Chair

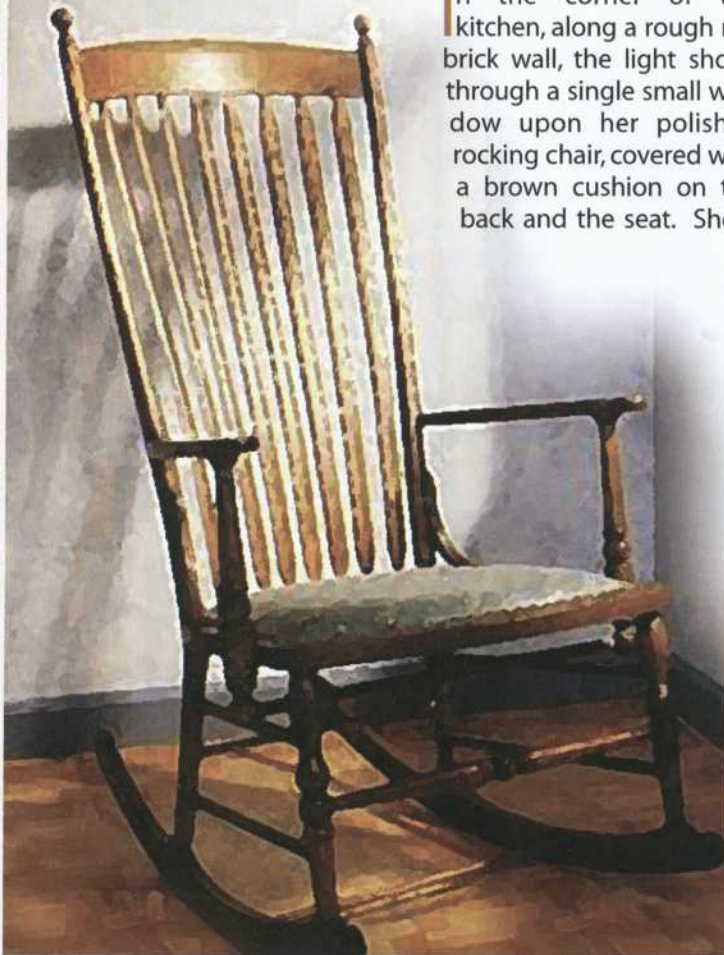
*Whenever someone asks me to choose a seat,
I always choose the rocking chair.
When I am sick,
The memory of that rocking chair comforts me.
When Advent is just around the corner,
The rocking chair moves my heart.
Because when Grandma rocked me on her lap,
I was filled with hope.
I was consoled and I sang of Christmas.*

André Gadbois



Photo MIC

In the corner of the kitchen, along a rough red brick wall, the light shone through a single small window upon her polished rocking chair, covered with a brown cushion on the back and the seat. She –



my grandmother with the thin face – always had her white apron tied around her waist. Over the course of the seasons, the white one, the yellow one, the green one and the russet-red, always she warmed us, nurtured our hope, cheered us up, and provided continuity without interfering in our relationships with our parents. There were two humble tools in the service of her gracious wisdom: a rocking chair to calm us, an apron fragrant with happiness, and a heart always ready to listen. Stripped of any pretension, sometimes drying her worried eyes with the end of her apron, and blaming the “smell of the onions,” she taught us in a few words to weave life with patience and to tend to our flowers... and in her eyes, that’s what we were.

Where did she get this enormous treasure, this outlook that was so refreshing? From the many years she lived in the village of L’Assomption? From her solid, unbreakable faith in God, through whatever challenges she endured? Undoubtedly, it was a little of all that. It was an era lived at a snail’s pace, that animal that takes its time to explore the underbrush and which nourishes itself along the way. It was a slower time that believed in the ordinary and in which it was possible to live without being becoming frenzied.

We live in an age of speed, of modernity, of efficiency and productivity. What would my grandmother Melanie, now deceased, make of all this? I

don't know, but I do know that she has given me a little taste for it when I rock my grandchildren, rocking to soothe them, restoring the calm, taking the time to comfort them, exploring what seems inconsequential to discover what's really important. Never to shatter their illusions, to take the time with them to share in their disappointment, failure or uncertainty, observing how Life is unfolding. In our world where parents are often overwhelmed by the rat race, this "activity" requires time... that is something that grandparents usually have. Indeed!

I can also say that she gives me a taste for it when I tie on a nice big apron, big enough to fill their faces with happiness and hope, to gather with them the necessities for their growth: perseverance in the blinding snow; self-respect to pick themselves up after having fallen; wonder at the unique beauty of their lives and nature, as the aroma of a roast fills the house; silence which allows us to hear the red leaves as well as the snowflakes fall and which gives the wind of the Spirit the chance to reveal itself. Here too, time is necessary; here too, grandparents have a beautiful role to play: to nurture, to bring a spirit of inner peace, to simply breathe in happiness.

Lastly, she gives me a taste for listening to them in her way. It is difficult to listen, to be open and to accept them without wanting to change them, without pressuring them, without looking to win them over. Listening to our grandsons or granddaughters, walking with them, accompanying them freely, being there for them when they want us, knowing when to have the confidence to let them be, because they have been steeped in love. To listen to our grandchildren while being aware that they have parents who love them too. To listen, to let them benefit from our experience without directing them in order to assure the continuity of the greatness of Life, from them, their family, and their country.

In her day, my grandmother knew how to rock us, my sister and me, and to wrap us in her warm and fragrant apron without replacing our parents, by being neither too strict nor lenient. Because she lived in our home, I saw her crying, suffering, and laughing very hard. I felt her, I believed in her. I never compared the reach of her long arms that hugged me with those of my mom. What I'm thankful for is the time and patience which she cultivated in us, when it was required, which my parents had sown. And that remains even more relevant in a time when parents are shaken up by a hectic pace in life. 🪑

What about me in all this?

Given that the pace of life of children in the twenty-first century is influenced by noise, violence in the movies and television, the growing numbers of activities after school and on the weekend, and concerns about the instability of family and society, what can grandparents contribute to restore calm, relaxation and confidence in their grandchildren?

"All talk and no action," so the saying goes. "To preach by example," is another often-heard phrase. How can grandparents begin to encourage a sense of perseverance, self-respect, wonder, and inner peace in their grandchildren

How can grandparents, while avoiding being nuisances and moralizers, "enlighten" their grandchildren who experience disappointments and failures, who compare themselves to others, and who are worried about certain realities of life?



Dream or Reality?

The difference between the ideal and the reality is often enormous. Based on his personal experience, a father shares his thoughts on the mission of the Christian family.

Almost 24 years ago, a young man and a young woman, poor and weak, yet full of hope and idealism, met and started a family. A miracle happened! They had 7 beautiful children and had all sorts of adventures: made several moves, held tough jobs, experienced marital ups and downs, went on trips and extraordinary pilgrimages, the adopted a handicapped child and an ailing grandmother... In short, a life full of events both great and small, of immense joys and terrible sorrows, of carefree times and intense moments. It's a beautiful story, one that I've told with a lot of pride and pleasure. I fell into the trap of considering our family exemplary, a model for others to follow.

Nevertheless, the evolution of our family sometimes leaves me perplexed. Our family life has changed so much over the years that my definitions of family, fidelity and love have had to evolve, too. One conviction has remained and deepened, however: Jesus accompanies us in everything we go through, even when he leads us into adventures that go beyond our understanding. He sometimes forces us to seek him on narrow and untraveled paths, but He holds our hand and never lets it go.

Mid-life crises hit us in full force. It's possible to live for a long time on the will to conform to a noble ideal, convincing ourselves that God will give us the strength to assume all the demands of the models He has defined for us in advance. And it's possible that some people really do manage to uphold this conviction all their lives. In times past, the dominant culture strongly incited families to do just that. For better and for worse, since hidden suffering, steeled hearts, and hypocrisy were also part of the picture.

Today, however, things are no longer so obvious. We accept less easily to sacrifice our happiness for the pursuit of an ideal, however noble. Is this the sign of a weakening faith among us, or the recognition that

God wants the abundant, fulfilled life for all of His children? Maybe both, who knows.

After 20 years together, painful truths about the foundations of our couple became evident. They provoked the physical separation of our family and some profound soul-searching. Where are we headed? What will we do now? How will we live our faith now that we no longer correspond to the prescribed model, the ideal? How can we see God at work in such unfamiliar situations? How can we share love when our divergences seem insurmountable? And how can we assume the mission that God entrusts to families, that of the transmission of faith to our children?

When Christians speak or write, it seems to me, it's most often to give answers, offer advice, widen perspectives, or share uplifting experiences. That's

normal, since we can't live only by groping in the dark and asking answerless questions. But what I'm beginning to realize in the current phase of our family's evolution is that God is to be found as much in the moments of imbalance and novelty, as in the familiar and safe. An astonishing discovery for us has been that, when lived in faith, the family's solidity goes well beyond the indi-

vidual will of each of its members. In the family unit, roles and functions may change, rising or falling in importance, ties are stretched or tightened, spaces are created, then filled, without the family's being destroyed. On the contrary, it seems to grow stronger as new crises arise and are overcome.

The marvellous strength to be found in the family is ultimately a reassuring discovery, especially when concrete realities seem troubling. In this rapidly changing world, certain Christian families just might have as their mission to reveal that God can reveal himself in non-conformity to traditional models. 

Robin Dick



Photo MIC

Transmitting the Faith

Curled up in a chair, four-year-old Matthieu and his mother Sylvie are reading a children's book about the life of Jesus. She asks him, "What is a sinner?" Right off the mark, Matthieu replies, "That's someone who Jesus forgives." Out of the mouths of babes! This is the story of a family that was transformed by the unexpected arrival of Christ in their lives.

Sylvie and her friend Fabienne, both single moms, live in great hardship. Fabienne once had a "Road to Damascus" experience at the Abbey of St-Benoit-du-Lac. She set out from there on a spiritual journey. Her guide was a Benedictine monk, who spoke to her one day about *La Famille des Puits de Lumière* (FPL) [The Family – Wellspring of Light] a place of spiritual renewal for families. He was one of the founders.



Sylvie noticed that her friend was becoming more and more radiant... while she herself was becoming terribly depressed. Fabienne's new disposition intrigued her, but stories about Jesus said nothing to her. Despite everything, Sylvie went along one day to FPL with her son... and lots of prejudicial baggage: *A bunch of religious zealots!*

And then, what a shock! What a welcome! Accepted, even loved, from the very beginning, as they were, without being judged. Here, they did not feel that they were in the way... but she knew well that

her family was dysfunctional, that her son had some troubling behaviour, and that she herself was shattered.

With a series of spiritually renewing activities experienced as a family, friendships are born there with other young families, a new life opens within them, and a gradual conversion starts. The FPL became their spiritual family. As a two year member, Sylvie has now made a commitment to service.

What is the secret?

"We do this for families who no longer want to live their faith in an isolated way; this is the challenge of today. We should not be surprised then to see children running everywhere, moms nursing... All the participants understand and accept it. Moreover, Masses are extremely lively!"

To be sure, living the Christian faith in the family is not always easy. Each one according to his or her age and role in the family has different needs that cannot all be met by the same activity. Thus, the FPL offers classes, discussions and sharing adapted to each kind of group, whether they be, children, teenagers and parents.

From all for all

The teens have activities centered on their faith, whether in the outdoors like the construction of a chapel in the woods, or inside, such as when they put on sketches for the Mass. The parents do not see them all day and, when



they return, they share. They make friends, and the organizers speak their language and can connect the faith to their reality. Therefore it is because they truly enjoy it that they regularly come back to the FPL.

For the children, it's not daycare! While their parents are discussing their faith, the children experience organized activities put on by volunteers – activities made to order for them: crafts, games, puppet theatre, etc. Matthieu now knows the whole life story of Jesus. The children are also introduced to Adoration... and they really enjoy the company of their Friend. They take part in Adoration with great fervour.

Every day of renewal also includes outdoor games for the family,



Families carrying the cross on a family resource day with the theme The Way of the Cross

FPL

always in connection with the faith. It is a wonderful opportunity to meet other families and to create new friendships. The conversations and the testimony of other families enrich us: there is much mutual help, and the exchange of ideas to improve Christian family life, as how to adapt prayers for children.

Witnesses of hope

Matthieu functions well at the daycare now. He is a happy child who relies on himself. At his age,

faith is more a question of feeling. But already, he senses intuitively that at the daycare, the dynamics of competition do not encourage him to speak of Jesus, while the spirit of camaraderie of the FPL gives him a place to grow. Sylvie and Matthieu have both been transformed. For these "veterans," happiness now includes passing on hope to "rookies," as it was passed on to them. ♥

Marie-Eve Homier

La Famille des Puits de Lumière



Founded in 2001 following many requests of parents anxious to live their faith and to transmit it to their children, the *Famille des Puits de Lumière* offers a place of renewal for the family where each member can find his place. Its mission is to help traditional, single-parent, blended and common-law families, to live their faith in a concrete way and to share it with other believing families. The resource people offer spiritual support as well as human, personal and family support. All families are welcome, just as anyone in search of God.

Phone : (450) 297-0495

E-mail: puitsdelumiere@sympatico.ca

Missionary Humour

On the Market Place

In its early years, the Institute relied on very little means to provide for its many Sisters' needs. Dutifully, they would go to the market on Saturdays to beg the charitable merchants for food. Occasionally, on long days they would feel the need to relieve themselves, they would go knocking on doors. If the person who answered was a lady, the Sisters asked for the bathroom; but if it were a man, they would ask for... the time!

Surprise Menu!

In Malawi, a Sister plans the menu for the following Sunday. She intends to serve chicken. To avoid running around for the hen under the burning sun, she goes to the hen house in the evening with a small lantern. Upon entering, she notices that a chicken's legs are sticking out of a cage's cover. She lifts the cover... and discovers, horrified, a snake wrapped around in the cage, quite busy swallowing down the poor chicken. Thank Goodness his mouth was full because it was a spitting snake. "My hair literally stood up straight on my head!," she recalls.

The Miraculous Fishing

A few Sisters in Cuba have the local judge as their Spanish teachers. One day, he brings to his students a superb fish he had just caught. Upon receiving the gift, the portress exclaims: *¡Qué hermoso pecado! ¡Qué maravilloso pecado!*, which means "What a lovely sin! What a marvellous sin!" In Spanish, *pecado* is the word for fish while *pecado* speaks of sin. Oops!

Celestial Gastronomy

A Sister is learning Citumbuka, Northern Malawi's language. She asks the cook one day to roast the onions (*kukazinga anyézi*) but instead she asks her to roast... the stars (*kukazinga nyényézi*)!

From the Mountains to the City

It is the mission of every Christian, every missionary to take up one's walking stick and venture off to meet others.

Interview with Elizabeth Relacion, M.I.C., by Marie-Eve Homier

Originally from the Philippines, Elizabeth Relacion, M.I.C., devoted ten years to the evangelization of the Tagalcaulu, a



Photo MIC

tribal nation in the province of Mindanao in Southern Philippines. After the tribal leaders had asked for a chapel, a first contact was established by a group of priests. Then an evangelisation team followed, comprised of 2 M.I.C. Sisters, including Elizabeth, and a few lay people.

Off she goes!

For every missionary, the starting point is learning a native language. Thanks to the hospitality of one of the tribal chiefs, who welcomed her into his family, Elizabeth spent three months on this task, meanwhile weaving a lasting friendship and creating an unbreakable partnership in the construction of their Christian community.

Her first task consisted in organising the community, which was in great need. However, these tribal people live in small villages scattered here and there across the mountains... With great courage, Elizabeth picked up her walking stick and climbed and hiked to them all! She would spend half of every week doing so and in this way managed to visit two or three mountains a day. "At the beginning, I was accountable for seven communities; by the end, it was sixty! I had never been in such a good shape as I was in those days!"

As soon as she arrived in a community, Elizabeth went either to the kitchens or the fields to help the women with their chores. That is how she gathered the community's news. Meanwhile in the village, the priests and the men discussed the chapel's construction and funding and other public affairs. At the end of the day, the Sisters and the priests met and put together the pieces of information each had gathered. In this way, they managed to draw a complete picture of the community.

Being there

What initially started out as a chapel construction project in answer to the call of various tribes soon evolved into various humanitarian aid projects in order to resolve a sudden famine, severe

illiteracy, the lack of basic medical care, unproductive agricultural methods, etc. "When we arrived at a new tribe, we always sought to know what their needs were."

It is in this mountainous countryside that Elizabeth slowly became aware of her vocation: to be close to people, with them, and to celebrate life together. "That is what Jesus did: he went to see the peo-



Photo MIC

Academic education and Christian formation at the Agape Centre for Tribal Students. The young man now studies at the Foreign Mission Society's seminary in Quebec, Canada.

ple. Mary too; she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth when she was pregnant. We too are being sent towards the other."

When there were fires, Elizabeth pumped out water with the villagers. When there was a famine, she visited the bishop and food



My first winter! How cold!

came. When there was an election, she stayed up all night watching over the ballot boxes. At the market, she inquired about everyone, listened to people, prayed for them, invited them to prayer meetings, and empowered them with the confidence that together they could get out of poverty. "Simple things make a big difference."

From Manila to Montreal

In 1995, Elizabeth, a child of a sun country, was sent out to mission in Montreal. Obviously, adapting to her new place of residence took her some time: here, we often talk to people on the phone rather than in person; here we call each other in the evening... Not to mention the Canadian winter!

After 25 years of religious life as a Missionary of the Immaculate Conception, she had the joy of discovering the roots of her Institute, the very place it was founded. In deep meditation at the tomb of her foundress, Délia Tétrault, she heard an interior

call: "Take care of my people!" This confirmed her on her path.

Elizabeth now works at the Filipino Catholic Mission of Montreal. Her main task is adult faith formation and enrichment. In this most lively parish community where families are actively involved, and all generations are mixed together, she has the "experience of the family of God in the heart of the city." Children have a place of their own. "I have made them my new French teachers! Children have much to teach us!"

These people often have little financial means and work six days a week. Their one and only day off, they choose to spend in the parish community.

Home Visitations

However, her favourite apostolate is home visitation. It allows her to get closer to people, to talk with them about what they experience in their lives, including the difficult aspects. "These meetings give birth to conversations that transform us. They make us consciously sensitive to God's Presence and Action in our lives. Of course, God is *always* here, in every instant, at all times... it is we who are not always aware! My presence, my visit reveals to us together that God is already present in each one of us."

Elizabeth is often invited to take part in the celebrations of the families she visits.



Home Prayer Groups

The parishioners started up prayer groups. A "nomadic team" of families visits other families after the Sunday Mass and together they pray. More than just community support, such visits also are a way of establishing and maintaining bonds with people who are too sick to go to Mass.

Elizabeth is often invited to join in with them, which she does regularly, for she wants to be available for those who need her. "Time is a great richness. In the East, we have lots of time. Here in my adoptive city, people are poor with lack of time."

A Name, a Mission

"My first name, Elizabeth, means 'where God dwells'. It is my baptismal name... a gift from God... a vocation! For me, to go where God dwells is to reach out to another person, to discover God in action in this person's life, to be amazed by that and to thank God. That is why I keep taking the road, like on an everlasting pilgrimage, not to go hiking mountains anymore as in the Philippines, but to go where the Lord sends me: towards another culture, other ways of doing things, other people. What strikes me most is that, through my work, my Visitations, I become the evangelised evangelizer! As a missionary, I have everything I could wish for!"

Discovering New Horizons



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The Passion of the Students

Annie-Claudine Tremblay
Master of Theology student
Université de Montréal

During the recent students' strike in Quebec, university students brilliantly demonstrated the solidarity of Jesus with the oppressed, thus revealing to many young people the eternal relevance of His message and the image of the living God in the heart of human concerns.

Last March 14, the students of the Faculty of theology and religious sciences of the Université de Montréal joined with other students on strike against the government's unacceptable cuts to financial assistance. I did not know it then, but I was about to live through events that were going to mark me forever.

As one of those in charge of the strike committee, I firmly believed that, faced with the terrible decision of a government that chose to sacrifice access to education for the poorest of Quebecers, the theology students had something to say and do. For the first time, we had the opportunity to leave our discipline for the world, and to make our mark.

Theology of organization

To begin with, we needed our headquarters. Unfortunately lacking space, the best solution was "the surprise occupation" of a corridor in our department. We baptized it "Corridor of the Just", to the great amusement of the professors and personnel, who were happily surprised to see so much action in our well-behaved department.

Taking over this corridor gave me great happiness. It was like doing something that would be forbidden at any other time, but which was perfectly legitimate in the cir-

cumstances. Consequently, I was convinced that we were in a time like no other, one of those rare and very strange moments that give you the certainty that anything is possible.

We then made signs inspired by theology for the big demonstrations in Montreal. We thought of all kinds of slogans. We were delirious, laughing, painting, stapled... But when I reconsider these moments filled with enthusiasm, I believe that what we truly made is theology: these concepts, these old writings, this Word so often read, we brought them up to date to our time and place. The Word could be inscribed in the heart of our reality, as a thousands-year-old message that transcends fads. It was one truly magic moment, a small corner of the Kingdom, a wedding feast!

In connection with our mission, we came up with many events, among which was a Way of Cross, or rather a *Way of the Debt* for Good Friday. The idea was daring and we hesitated a little before launching ourselves into this project. But since the university is a place of exploration, the moment seemed ideal to us for such a test.

The breath of the Spirit

All those who took part in this project were well aware we were not alone. When we had meetings, I often had this exciting perception of "the breath of the Spirit". Sitting close to each other in our corridor, we considered the scenario, confident that the Spirit would blow and always, the Spirit blew. Martin or Laure or Jean-Sebastien launched a crazy idea and Michaël or Charlotte or Lamphone added something incredibly relevant to it, then Fanny or I or another suggested an unexpected connection with another extraordinary possibility.



Annie-Claudine Tremblay

It was like a high wind carrying our spirits on theological clouds that took the happiest, most amazing forms. We discovered thousands-year-old images that could be cut to our situation, like old jewels insensitive to the passage of time.

Beyond our hopes

When everything was ready, we were directed to a place where, to our near terror, 25 journalists

the texts and the symbols, and not everyone is comfortable with such a use of the sacred.

It was strange, but the little opposition that we encountered opened doors rather than closed them. That encouraged us to put the utmost respect into each of our creations. This respect increased the value of our project, because our concern for those who had reservations forced us to

Jesus, the young people and Quebec

What surprised me in all this is that, no matter what anyone says, the heart of Christianity always beats in the heart of Quebec. Vague and fuzzy perhaps, the sacred Story remains engraved in the memory of young Quebecers just the same, and feelings for Jesus are alive here. To awaken this tendency, which is truly *québécois*, it seems that all that is



awaited us, armed with microphones, cameras and notebooks! Our faith in the power of the Spirit and the relevance of theology bore fruit beyond our wildest hopes. The following day, our Way of the Debt was carried by all the newspapers and television networks, one as far away as Ontario! Not to mention the deep repercussions at the university...

Then, right in the middle of a meeting of those in charge of the strike committees with various departments, young people totally indifferent to Christianity began striking the tables while chanting, "JESUS! JESUS! JESUS!" I couldn't believe it. As improbable as that can seem in 2005 in a secular university, Jesus was now part of our student movement.

Looking for balance

Updating theology, that most fascinating sport, however, also presupposes a great liberty with both

redouble our ingenuity and subtlety. We walked a tightrope; risking slipping into sacrilege with our quite irreverent baggage, in order to hold on to the sacred that is in each human person.

This adventure allowed us to measure to what extent the sacred is a part of what touches the life of a human being. The exceptional reaction we received with our *Way of the Debt* shows, I believe, our success in balancing the sacred and the secular.

Our project was risky. We had taken the chance that between the world that fears the Church and the Church that fears the world, there is space to reveal the presence of God. Certainly, it is necessary to speak about it with different words and images, and to take a chance, while cultivating a deep respect for the symbols, but when that balance is found, small miracles can happen.

necessary is simply to go and encounter the reality of others, in their everyday needs and desires, and to be attentive to the source. But what place does the current culture occupy at the large table at the feast of the Kingdom of God?

The sharpest impression that I felt through these exceptional events is that of living a moment of the Kingdom concretely, yes, the famous Kingdom of God, the true, the only, the promised, truly here. A surprising Kingdom that arrives when it is not expected at all, in the form of a really chaotic event, in a community of members connected by their opposition to a great injustice, certainly, but yet at the same time, completely disparate. Yes, after all that, I can really say, I realize that God, in his interventions, has a **comical side: mischievous and subversive!** *This is my God* 🇩🇪

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Rita Laurent, M.I.C.
1911-2004
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Quebec City, Quebec
Mission : Canada



Gemma Normand, M.I.C.
1920-2005
Sr. Sainte-Antoinette
St-Jean-Port-Joli, Quebec
Mission : Canada, Malawi, Zambia



Carmelle Caron, M.I.C.
1926-2004
Sr. Saint-Clément
St-Clément-de-Tourville, Quebec
Mission : Canada, Madagascar



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Prayer for the Family

*Lord God, from you every family
in heaven and on earth takes its name.*

Father, you are Love and Life.

*Through your Son, Jesus Christ, born of woman,
and through the Holy Spirit, fountain of divine charity,
grant that every family on earth may become
for each successive generation
a true shrine of life and love.*

*Grant that your grace may guide the thoughts
and actions of husbands and wives
for the good of their families and of all
the families in the world.*

*Grant that the young may find in the family
solid support for their human dignity
and for their growth in truth and love.*

*Grant that love,
Strengthened by the grace of the sacrament of marriage,
may prove mightier than all the weakness and trials
through which our families sometimes pass.*

*Through the intercession of the Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that the Church may fruitfully carry out
her worldwide mission in the family
and through the family.*

*Through Christ our Lord, who is the Way,
the Truth and the Life
for ever and ever. Amen.*

John Paul II