

S I N C E 1 9 2 3

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 33, No 2 | APRIL ▪ MAY ▪ JUNE 2006 | \$3.00

LAY MISSIONARIES
TWO OF A KIND

ARTS
WHEN ECUMENISM
EMBRACES CINEMA

IN FOCUS
UNITY AMONG CHRISTIANS

DISCOVERING
HIDDEN TREASURES



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

There is a certain quality in life that allows you to strive for anything, lets you go beyond your wildest dreams, to live in the fullness of life and love, never losing hope and even makes it possible for you to leap into the infinite. It is the most important quality in the whole world: the spirit of wonderment.

François Garagnon, Jade

Wonderment is that precise moment when a new dimension emerges in us; it is the privileged moment when, for an instant, we are suddenly healed of ourselves.

Maurice Zundel

We become that which we most admire.

Gandhi

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February: *Cuba*

March: *Philippines*

April: *Haiti*

May: *Canada*

June: *Bolivia and Chile*

July: *Malawi and Zambia*

August: *Hong Kong and Taiwan*

September: *Madagascar*

October: *Peru*

November: *Japan*

December: *Canada*



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CONTENTS

VOL. 33, No 2 | ARPIL • MAY • JUNE 2006

COLUMNS

SPIRITUAL LIFE

4 The Spiritual Path of Language Learning

Robin Dick

LAY MISSIONARIES

6 Two of a Kind

Interview with Guy Gervais and Ruth Luna, missionary couple

8 Eyes Filled With Hope

Dominique Leman, lay missionary

YOUTH

10 Studying English, Experiencing Christ

Two Students from Hong Kong

ARTS

12 When Ecumenism Embraces Cinema

Gilles Leblanc

IN FOCUS



13-20

Unity among Christians

Discovering
Hidden Treasures

ABOUT THE MICs

NEWS FROM THE INSTITUTE

21 The Memorial Kipu

Louise Pagé, M.I.C.

WITNESSING

22 Becoming a Religious at 94 Years Old!

Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

24 Giving Street Children a Chance

Josephine Leal, M.I.C.

MISSIONARY NEWS

25 The Words that Unite Us

Journey for Better Understanding

Christian Unity: An Urgent Situation for the World



Yves Demers Paris

Marie-Eve Homier

Sometimes walls build up between friends, causing distances to develop. In several languages, the words « hell » and « imprisonment » share the same root. Sin is thus separation. Jesus died in order to do away with division, so that we should be one.¹ His final prayer—His testament to us—reveals His desire for a unified Church so that the testimony of Christians could be credible.² If we believe that Christ's project—human dignity for each person—is best for humanity, we cannot allow our divisions to diminish it.

This unity will not come to be without each and every one of us. Refusing to believe in it and to participate in it is to stand in the way of Jesus' desire. *Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?*³ Every time Saul killed a Christian, it was Jesus himself that he was persecuting, for we are His Body. *When we create divisions, we fracture, tear apart, and break Christ's body. Our divisions are the bonds that tie His hands behind His back while he is being whipped. His arms bound, He cannot reach out to give His peace,* teaches Laurent Fabre, founder of Chemin Neuf, a Catholic community with an ecumenical vocation.

God loves to forgive. He is profoundly pleased when a sinner returns to Him. The worst sin in the world is to give more importance to sins themselves and to sadness than to hope and absolute faith in God's mercy. Nothing pleases God more than when we trust Him completely, for that's when He can do something. Unity is above all a question of trust in God. He is the One who will bring us together.

God loves originality. He created us different from each other. Unity does not mean uniformity. Let us rather convert the way we see others. Ecumenism is like a pilgrimage, for a life in Christ is a perpetual conversion that unites us to Him, and it's when each one individually is united to Christ that we will *all be united together*.

Ecumenism is also a dialogue, an exchange of gifts and talents particular to each Christian confession. We can learn from each other and be united even while savouring the richness of our diversity. In truth, there are more things that unite us than things that divide us. Let us concentrate on what we have in common so that we can build bridges. Let us become explorers, curious to discover the spiritual traditions of others and curious to deepen our own tradition.

Above all, let us pray for Christian unity.

micmissionnews@pressemic.org calls out to you!

This column belongs to you. Share your impressions and comments with us in order to deepen our reflection. Make yourselves heard!

MIC Mission News does not publish unsigned letters, nor letters whose subject matter infringes on the journalistic code of ethics. We reserve the right to abridge letters.

Caroline Caron, Longueuil

I must admit I read the last issue of your magazine in one sitting. The theme of wonder, dreams, the re-discovery of self, and the beauty of the world touched me deeply. Your articles managed to awaken in me the innocence and hope of the child who goes to sleep after a prayer to the good Lord asking him for... a flying horse or peace on earth... and who awakens fascinated by this world filled with wonders. Whether we are believers or not, we all need to discover how awesome it is to be fully alive to the beauties and blessings in our lives. Thanks for reminding us all of this, and bravo for the quality of your magazine!

Suzanne Gervais, Joliette

I simply relished the last edition of *MIC Mission News*. I'd like to thank you and congratulate you for the new format and content. We do regret however, that it comes out only every three months because the new format is wonderful nourishment for the soul and heart.

Suzanne Gaulin, O.S.C., Salaberry-de-Valleyfield

Ever since I received the latest edition of your magazine I wanted to write to express all my appreciation for the excellent editing work. I must admit I found the articles most interesting and enriching. The theme was very well chosen, the content and the articles were excellent and inspiring, and the presentation was fresh and new. Congratulations for your investment and the outcome. Please keep it up...

Helene Levac Laforte, Rockland, Ontario

I love the new feel of the magazine, even if I don't read all of it. With its one theme per issue, it has acquired a personality of its own.

After receiving the latest issue of *MIC Mission News*, I read *From the Mouth of Children* first. I was much taken up with the paragraph *A Child's Way of Seeing Things*. That night, at the liturgical meeting of our parish, I told the story to the others. Just as we reached the point when the child says, "What are we going to do about it?" Francoise, the lively one, replied spontaneously, "You'd better keep quiet or else we'll do the same thing for you!" Of course the whole group burst out laughing. And the parish priest Jean-Francois added, "Ah, what a marvellous opportunity for a catechesis lesson!", picturing the little lad sitting on the altar contemplating the Cross.

We have received a great number of comments, all very interesting. Thank you very much! Let's keep up this edifying exchange! Keep making yourselves heard!

¹ Ephesians 2: 14

² John 17: 22

³ Acts 9: 4

THE SPIRITUAL PATH OF LEARNING A LANGUAGE

To most of us, foreign languages at first seem like impenetrable walls. But slowly, as we learn their secrets, we discover not only a new way to communicate, but truths about ourselves and our spiritual life.

by Robin Dick

About the Author:

Robin Dick, originally from Alberta, has been an ESL (English as Second Language) and linguistics teacher for more than 20 years in Quebec. An inventor of language learning games, translator, enthusiastic language learner, and organizer of cultural exchanges to Italy, Cuba and the U.S., he is also the proud father of 7 children.

For Further Reflection:

Not much has been written about this subject, but movies such as *Lost in Translation* by Sofia Coppola (2003) and *L'Auberge espagnole* by Cedric Klapisch (2002), and books on translation such as *After Babel*, by George Steiner, and *Experiences in Translation*, by Umberto Eco, certainly provide some interesting food for thought about the deeper questions a multilingual context forces us to deal with.

LANGUAGE LEARNING has always been part of the missionary experience, although the process has been simplified a lot from the time when first contact was established with peoples whose language appeared to be a stream of unintelligible sounds. Learning a new language now consists in taking courses, studying books, listening to pre-recorded conversations and so on, methods prepared for us by experts so that we just have to follow the path on the road to fluency in a new idiom. It's still not an easy process, as any language learner can attest to, but the preliminary work has been done for us.

ONLY A MEANS TO AN END?

Still, all the preparation in the world can't soften the shock of actually taking the plunge into the heart of a new cultural and linguistic reality, of trying to share the daily life of a new people who often live in conditions much different from our own. Building relationships of trust and sharing the struggles of different people is at the heart of our faith, and in many ways, at the heart of our religious experience.

Learning languages has thus been seen as a means to allow us to express our faith and understand the lives and beliefs of others, and not really as a part of the religious experience itself. I'm sure that I'm not the first person to observe, however, that there are many spiritual lessons to be learned and truths to be applied in the process of learning a foreign tongue.

LEARNING TO BE A CHILD AGAIN

The first lesson you learn when tackling a new language is the lesson of humility, the kind of humble simplicity of a child who, in his enthusiasm to communicate with a potential friend, doesn't hesitate to playfully repeat sounds he can scarcely comprehend. Although research seems to indicate that children do not necessarily learn languages more quickly or better than adult learners, they do have a definite advantage when it comes to pronunciation.

From my observation of adult and adolescents in the language classroom, it's obvious that those who progress the fastest and furthest are those who "play" with the language, who aren't afraid to appear a little silly, who have fun making strange new sounds with their mouths, who, for a time at least, aren't afraid to express the simple, even simplistic ideas that a limited familiarity with the language allows them.

I've always thought that this was an excellent illustration of Jesus' injunction to "become as children". There's a kind of humility, a willingness to set aside our "adult" pretensions that makes us open to receiving a foreign reality, whether it's in the form of a language to be learned, the cultural differences of a new people, the point of view of someone we disagree with, or of God's sometimes astonishing message of love.



Photograph: S. Leutenegger (Taizé)

God's truth
also reveals
itself in the
way we learn
to communi-
cate with
each other. }

THE ROAD TO PERFECTION

One of the worst barriers a language learner can create for himself is what might be called misplaced perfectionism. Of course there's nothing wrong with wanting to speak well, but often students develop an obsession about making mistakes, to the point that they can't bring themselves to speak unless they're sure that their sentence is perfectly constructed and as close to perfectly pronounced as possible. Having suffered from this myself, I know how much of a barrier it can be. And what often makes the problem worse is a sort of obsessional rehashing of what the person has said, re-examining utterances to see if there were perhaps better ways of formulating them.

What happens to these people is that they develop an excellent theoretical understanding of the language, but have trouble communicating with real people because they know they will inevitably find themselves in situations where they will make mistakes. But anyone who has learned a language knows very well that before any degree of fluency is reached, a lot of errors will have been made and corrected, and that no one really speaks a language perfectly.

Is this so different from Christians who have a mortal fear of sinning, of committing moral or doctrinal errors, and who seem to show little confidence both in their own ability to evolve and in God's ability (and desire) to forgive? Like in language learning, the desire for perfection in our Christian life has to be a humble progression toward an

ideal we know in advance we will never fully reach. And often, it's when we err that we seem to learn the most.

A RICH SPIRITUAL PATH

Much more could be said about the "spiritual path" of language learning: developing a sense of humour about oneself, focussing less on oneself and more on the other, learning to discern the essential from the peripheral, and even learning "God's language". For is it not a major challenge for a Christian to learn to communicate with God: by praying, by listening to his message "which is beyond our thoughts", and by seeking his will, sometimes so difficult to seize?

I'm sure there are many missionaries who would have much to say about the subject. Many have seen how God manifests himself in nature; others have pointed to the need to see the face of Christ in our fellow men. My own experience as a linguist and language teacher and learner has shown me that God's truth also reveals itself in the way we learn to communicate with each other. ☺



Ruth Luna and Guy Gervais in Congo
Photograph: Terre Sans Frontières

A bush pilot, missionary and also a priest, Guy traded the Roman collar for a ring on his finger when he married Ruth, a nurse who was also a missionary. For this pair of enthusiastic Christians, it was not only the beginning of a love story, but also an incredible adventure...

TWO of a Kind

by Stéphane Duhamel

Combining a missionary vocation with marital love doesn't always turn out very well! What often happens is that two people, eager to build their lives together, feel torn: one wishes to devote heart and soul to a cause that would take him around the world to serve the disadvantaged; the other would rather try to build a stable family.

Nevertheless, when two missionaries meet and decide to build upon not only their love for each other, but upon their shared love of God, their union becomes almost indestructible. This is what happened to Guy Gervais and Ruth Luna. However, no one could have predicted that their paths would cross.

Missionary of the Sky

At the age of nineteen, young Guy, having caught wind of the Montfortain Fathers' desire to establish a mission at the ends of the

earth with the Papuans in New Guinea, saw his future all mapped out. After seven years in the novitiate, he became a priest and continued his studies in sociology and anthropology.

A little while later, he was offered an opportunity that would forever change the course of his life: to train to be an airplane pilot. And so he threw himself into an adventure that would carry him beyond the savanna and the jungle, into hostile areas to the heart of the bush. This was in 1959.

In his plane, Guy Gervais travelled to many countries such as New Guinea, Indonesia, Peru, Guatemala and Honduras. By air, he was able to help people who were isolated because there were no roads or transportation. The underprivileged and poorly organized people needed schools, farms, agricultural cooperatives and... landing strips! Guy was not satisfied just to fly; he got fully involved.

Two Heads Are Better Than One!

In 1968, he met Ruth Luna, a young Peruvian nurse with whom he fell madly in love. Although he forsook the priesthood to marry his beloved in 1973, Guy was far from losing the faith that he shared fervently with his wife. They worked together, in Congo, among other places, for the organization *Terre Sans Frontières*. However, they were also called to each work on their own.

Ruth worked closely with AIDS victims. She gave training sessions in Peru and in Congo for the prevention of this disease. *It is sometimes possible, she says, to protect a child from being born with this terrible disease, even if the mother is infected. However, the child's development must be monitored closely during the first year of its life.* Ruth was also involved in Montreal with Maison d'Hérelle, an organization that helps people to convalesce following a difficult bout of the disease, or who, unfortunately, are in its final stages.

As for Guy, he has accumulated tens of thousands of flight hours with his humanitarian plane. Between 1981 and 1985, he was actually the personal pilot of the famous Commandant Jacques-Yves Cousteau for a study on the Amazon River in Latin

My reason for living
is the Gospel. }

America. It is with him that Guy was awakened to the ecological dangers that threaten the environment. Just three days before his death, the famous oceanographer wrote the foreword to Guy Gervais's book, *Come Fly with Me*.

Despite all their adventures, they still managed to raise three children who, having reached adulthood, have now left the family home. *We took the children along with us on missions, but when they reached eleven years old, they remained here in Quebec, says Ruth. It often happened that one or the other of us would leave for three or four months on a mission. Our missionary commitment is something we live together, but by respecting each other's way of living it,* Ruth continues.

"Looking Together in the Same Direction"¹

Ruth and Guy are strongly bound by their Christian faith. From a very early age, Ruth had always felt attracted by the love of Christ. Jesus was for her a model whom she wished to imitate... *but not at the same level, of course!* she clarifies, while laughing. *For me, mission means serving, it doesn't matter in what way, she says. Her spiritual refuge is prayer and meditation. My reason for living is the Gospel. It has everything!*

For Guy, the sky is his cathedral. *No need for heating or lighting, the sun takes care of that. The sky is freedom. You're flying along, and clouds or birds pass right in front of you!* explains Guy. He also wants to do things in the same spirit as Christ. *Jesus said: you will do things more marvelous than I,* continues Guy. *Jesus Christ couldn't fly a plane! He didn't look after young people with AIDS. AIDS didn't exist in his time; the problem then was leprosy. But in any case, for me, the present moment and whatever I can do to help others is what counts,* explains the pilot.

At 74 years old, Guy Gervais has not yet given up his pilot's license, although now he mostly just gives talks in Quebec, at Senior Citizens' Flying clubs and to young people in high schools and Cegeps. At the end of his speeches, he likes to add some personal reflections. Even though he is not involved in the prevention of AIDS like his wife, he makes a point of telling young people that this is a disease that really can be caught. *There is an age for sex and an age to study and graduate.* He also tells them that he quit smoking... because he chose not to die.

The missionary adventures of this couple are many, and Hollywood is even thinking of adapting *Come Fly with Me*, the story of their lives, for the screen. As for them, they continue to live humbly the Gospel each day. One of the thoughts Guy shares during his talks sums up their missionary journey: *Those who rest in the comfort of privilege end up falling asleep. But if they are pushed around, tormented, and beaten about by difficulties, only then do they have a chance to learn how to live.*

¹ "Loving is not looking at one another; it is looking together in the same direction."

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry,
Wind, Sand and Stars.

For Further Reflection:

Come Fly with Me:
The Adventures of a Humanitarian Bush Pilot,
Guy Gervais. Summit Publishing
Group, 2000, 221 p.

To order the book:

Terre sans frontières
399, rue des Conseillers, suite #23
La Prairie, QC J5R 4H6
Phone: (450) 659-7717



Eyes Filled with Hope

Located at an altitude of 2,500 metres, Cochabamba, Bolivia, has become my land of adoption. Surrounded by mountains, inhabited by a million souls, it is the third largest city in the country, and the birthplace of the native Quechua culture...

by Dominique Leman, lay missionary

I came here
to discover
another nation
and to live
in solidarity
with them...
but how far
am I willing
to go out of
solidarity?

Since November 2005, I have been sharing everyday life with MIC sisters in a community home comprising five sisters—four Canadian and one Peruvian—all engaged in complementary fields, sharing the challenges and hopes of the Bolivian people.

Where to be Involved?

As soon as I arrived in Cochabamba, I sought a place where I could fit in. I was motivated by two desires: to address existing needs and to find assignments that were related to my professional training as a pastoral counsellor.

I started by offering individual psychological support in two homes for abandoned or maltreated children. When I arrived, my experience as a child counsellor was inexistent: I felt paralyzed, I was afraid to harm them rather than help them! Nevertheless, when I understood how important each moment of individual and confidential attention could be, I revised my expectations. I also learned new techniques and read up on the subject—I will continue to do this all through my trip.

A few months later, I discovered the Family Counselling Services, where I could also work with adults, and the Centre for Ignatian Spirituality, which is now developing a program for psycho-spiritual counselling and spiritual direction.

My integration is still ongoing: it demands patience, flexibility and the capacity to let go. Things rarely happen as they are expected to...

Politics and Society

Bolivia is one of the poorest countries in Latin America. 60% of its population of 8 million people are members of the Native communities. On December 18, 2005, Evo Morales, a Native and the former union chief for Bolivia's coca growers, won the presidential elections. He committed himself to eradicating illiteracy (affecting 20% of the population of Bolivia), corruption and bureaucracy, to abolishing the Neo-Liberal economic model, to nationalizing the country's natural resources, and to developing the processing industry for these same resources. He also promised to combat the drug-trafficking industry, but he persists in seeking to decriminalize the coca leaf, which is considered sacred in the ancient cultural belief of the Incas, ancestors of the Quechuas. For

the first time since Bolivia's founding in 1825, the *Wiphala* (pronounced "wee-pa-la")—the Andean civilizations' national emblem for more than 2,000 years—floats in the wind on government buildings, beside the Bolivian flag. You can imagine how proud the Native people must be after so many years of oppression...

Despite these promises and hopes, begging is frequent among elderly people, street children, and Quechua women who've come from the North from the region of Potosi, with their babies and children so they can arouse more pity. This arid region, located in the high plains of the Andes cordillera, is the poorest in Bolivia.

What's more, one of the present scourges is the exodus of Bolivians abroad. Statistics show that 700,000 people leave Bolivia each year: that is 8% of the country's population.

Before Leaving

A two-year missionary endeavour is not something you can improvise! The Intercommunity Missionary Training Program for Laypeople, offered by several missionary religious communities, was crucial in my decision to leave. There, I clearly confirmed my desire to experience a long-term project in solidarity with brothers and sisters hailing from different horizons.

I wanted to put my faith and my Christian values into practice in a more radical way, which meant putting aside—for the time being—my job security and my personal ties. To bear witness to this liberating, compassionate and steadfast God in whom I have believed for a long time, to work towards the creation of a world that is more humane, more just and more loving: that is an ultimate value that guides me and gives meaning to my life.

Taking leave of my job and my social commitments, saying goodbye to my friends and family took more energy and inner strength than I bargained for. This process of detachment persisted through the first months of my stay in Bolivia. Lately, I have started to feel like I am finally beginning to make my home here, thanks to a daily schedule that grows fuller and more demanding: interesting professional duties, new friendships, new social outings and physical activities, and regular plus enriching contacts with many friends and family members, thanks to the wonder of Internet!

Constant Challenges

Misery is rampant here. I feel it in the words of the children who tell me about their dysfunctional and broken families, of their parents who cannot provide them with adequate living conditions. I hear it in the Bolivian's political and social demands. I see it in the disarming simplicity of the houses of earth and straw in the countryside, so isolated and so desolate.

Poverty does not only concern one individual, one family, or one social class, but it is a systemic reality reflected in the economy, education, the environment, etc. When I stop to think about it, I am filled with a deep feeling of powerlessness and guilt. How can I go from discouragement to compassion, awareness and action? I came here to discover another nation and to live in solidarity with them... but how far am I willing to go out of solidarity?

During the Holy Week, while reading *Walk with Jesus: Stations of the Cross* by Henri Nouwen, while contemplating so many sad faces and troubled gazes, but still calm and full of hope, this condemning and alienating poverty suddenly took on a new face for me: *It can be turned into a challenge!*

Life is stronger than death, I've often been told. Here, life springs forth in a battle where the stakes are very simple: put food on the table at the end of the day, buy a notebook and pencil for a child who goes to school, etc. A battle also against exploitation, against drought or the strong rains that destroy crops, against political decisions that affect national and international trade, against injustice in general. This battle sustains life, keeps away death in every sense of the word. If these people, who are firmly caught up in a daily pattern of struggle and survival, do not let themselves get discouraged, then why should I? I want to face life, their life, with eyes full of hope, to see the small steps—both mine and those of others—and to delight in them instead of always wanting more, hoping for more.

The natural beauty of the magnificent backdrop of hills, fields and valleys, far removed from the city, stands out against the isolation and poverty of the people who live there. At the heart of these contrasts I find new life—a hard life laden with challenges, but a life worth living to the full. Let us not remain burdened with the Cross, with our crosses, but let us go forward in life with confidence... because Christ is risen and wants us to be resolutely alive. 

Studying English, Experiencing Christ

In the Immaculate Heart of Mary parish in Tai Po, New Territories, Hong Kong, Fene Dapitanon, M.I.C., set up a secondary level English Conversation Class for young people. The goal was not only to help them with their academic needs, but to also provide them with human and spiritual training, fellowship and a sense of belonging. All young people are welcome, irrespective of their faith or if they have no religion at all.

In a nutshell, I would say it is New Evangelization through language! exclaims Sister Fene. *The students have grown in self-confidence, as well as in their sense of identity and belonging—both in the parish and among themselves—as they welcome other youth who belong to other faiths or are without any religion.*

As a testimony, two members of the youth group have written the following articles.

With English, the Youth in Tai Po are Finding the Catholic Faith

by Jacob Wong

People grow in their faith in various ways: through prayer, Scriptures, services, spiritual retreats, sharing, discussions, meditation, hymn singing and in other different ways. Every Friday night, the youth in Tai Po use English as a medium to awaken the newly planted faith and the true love hidden deep in their hearts.

We are actually a group of young people from different schools, belonging to different age groups, having different religious beliefs and values. We have different motivations in joining: to learn English, to meet new friends, or to accompany others. You might even say it is only an ordinary English class. But deep down, at every lesson, our Lord Jesus Christ touches our hearts and He shows us His message.

Jesus' salvation is universal. He comes for all humankind, like with the English class! In the class, we see the unity of people with

different religious backgrounds in the love of Jesus. It seems impossible, but reality has proven that some of our friends, non-believers, are willing to become the followers of Christ as they experience the 'love' among us, the 'love' that they have never experienced before – the love of our Father. As Jesus once told us, whenever there are two or more brothers and sisters gathered together, He will be with us. And now, in this English class, from the look in the eyes of the newcomers, we can see the Lord using us as His instruments to open their hearts to Jesus.

Our journey started a year ago. Although there are some who have left the group, it doesn't mean their Catholic Christian life is over. As we learn here, "We come to serve and not to be served". Some are now members of the Mass Choir, instrumentalists in the services, and organizers of activities held in our parish...

We all hope that the spirit we have received in the English class will last, and spread to all our neighbours. Here, we are bringing light to others with our lives and love, and that is exactly how Jesus spread the Good News to us; that is the "extra something" of this English class.

We show a fervent enthusiasm in English, especially the fifth formers, who are willing to sacrifice their study time to welcome others for God.

The fact that people from different schools, different religious and family backgrounds join together to learn English means that we learn a lot from one another. We learn a lot of things we had never experienced before. ☺



Photograph: Some members of the first group.
Jacob Wong seated on floor;
Dennis Cheung KaChun standing first from right;
Fene Dapitanon, M.I.C., seated in middle
MIC Photo

Hello,

I am Dennis, a non-Christian who has joined the English class. I am glad to share my experience in Tai Po Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in the past few months.

Persuaded by my friend, who is a faithful Christian, I was curious about the English class and thought it might improve my English, so I went along with him. The class was made up of young people, and we gathered together to practise speaking English. At first I was quite shy since I had seldom expressed ideas in front of so many people, and I knew nothing about God! Fortunately, they welcomed me, chatted with me and soon I was integrated into the youth group.

Every Friday, after we had set a topic under the guidance of Father, Sister and the church staff, we put forward our own ideas, and sometimes we had discussions. We always shared what we had done in the past week, and in this way we got to know more about each other. We had fun, played games to learn English, held birthday parties for members of the class, and sang catchy English songs. As time passed, my English improved a lot and I considered English an integral part of my life.

I feel grateful for being a part of the youth group; although I am not a Christian, I am lucky that I have gained a lot in the class. The friendship with my friends in church is not superficial. We are very caring towards each other, just like a close family, and this kind of friendship is precious.

The teaching given by the Sisters and Fathers is always thought-provoking, especially Sister Fene's. She always listens to our

ideas patiently, makes comments and summarizes our points. Don't think that she just preaches to us about God; instead, she looks into different issues from different perspectives, giving examples according to God's teachings. I think it is really an effective way to stimulate our thinking. Outside class, she is always willing to help. Sometimes Sister eats with us, she prepares birthday cakes for us if anyone is one year older, she prepares class materials, and she is always ready to listen to our troubles, to give advice and soothing consolation. I experience the unconditional love lived out by Sister, just like Jesus' love towards people.

Moreover, I got to know a bunch of friends who broadened my social network, and I acquired interpersonal skills in getting along with people. In these past few months, I have been converted from a person who doubts the existence of God to one who now tries to think within a Christian mindset.

"God is a shepherd and He is always ready to receive anyone who wants to return to Him." I've received His warm welcome. What about you?

Come and join us!

Cheung Ka Chun Dennis

WHEN ECUMENISM EMBRACES CINEMA

Movies are made above all for entertainment, but they can also serve other ends, such as promoting great causes or denouncing injustices. It's within this context that the Ecumenical Film Prize is awarded to a film that stands out not only for its artistic qualities but also for what it contributes to human progress and to the recognition of ethical, social and spiritual values.

by Gilles Leblanc, Member of the ecumenical jury in Montreal, in 2004

Photographs: Zuno Films
www.kamatakimovie.com

¹ Ken-Antoine
 and his uncle Takuma

² The pottery oven



The prize is called ecumenical because the jury that bestows it is jointly made up of the international Protestant and Catholic film associations, Interfilm and SIGNIS. The main criteria used in the attribution of this award are the following: outstanding artistic quality, positive human values consistent with the Gospel, an ability to inspire social involvement, exemplify its own culture, and bear a universal message.

The activities of SIGNIS in the field of cinematography are based on the heritage of ICOC (International Catholic Organization for Cinema and Audio-visuals), which was founded in 1928 in an attempt to unite the efforts of Catholics active in the film world. Since 1947, it has expanded its activities to encompass film festivals. SIGNIS includes Catholic, ecumenical and inter-religious juries in more than 30 international film festivals, including Cannes, Berlin, Venice, Locarno, Moscow and the Montreal World Film Festival (WFF), which takes place at the end of the summer.

Films selected in 2004 and 2005

At the 2005 WFF, the ecumenical jury was made up of 6 people from different Christian denominations coming from Germany, France, the United States, Australia and Canada. The film *Kamataki* by Canadian director Claude Gagnon won top honours. The story is about young Ken-Antoine who, after attempting suicide, is sent by his mother to Japan to live with his uncle Takuma, a highly respected 60 year old potter. Although at first indifferent to local customs, Ken is

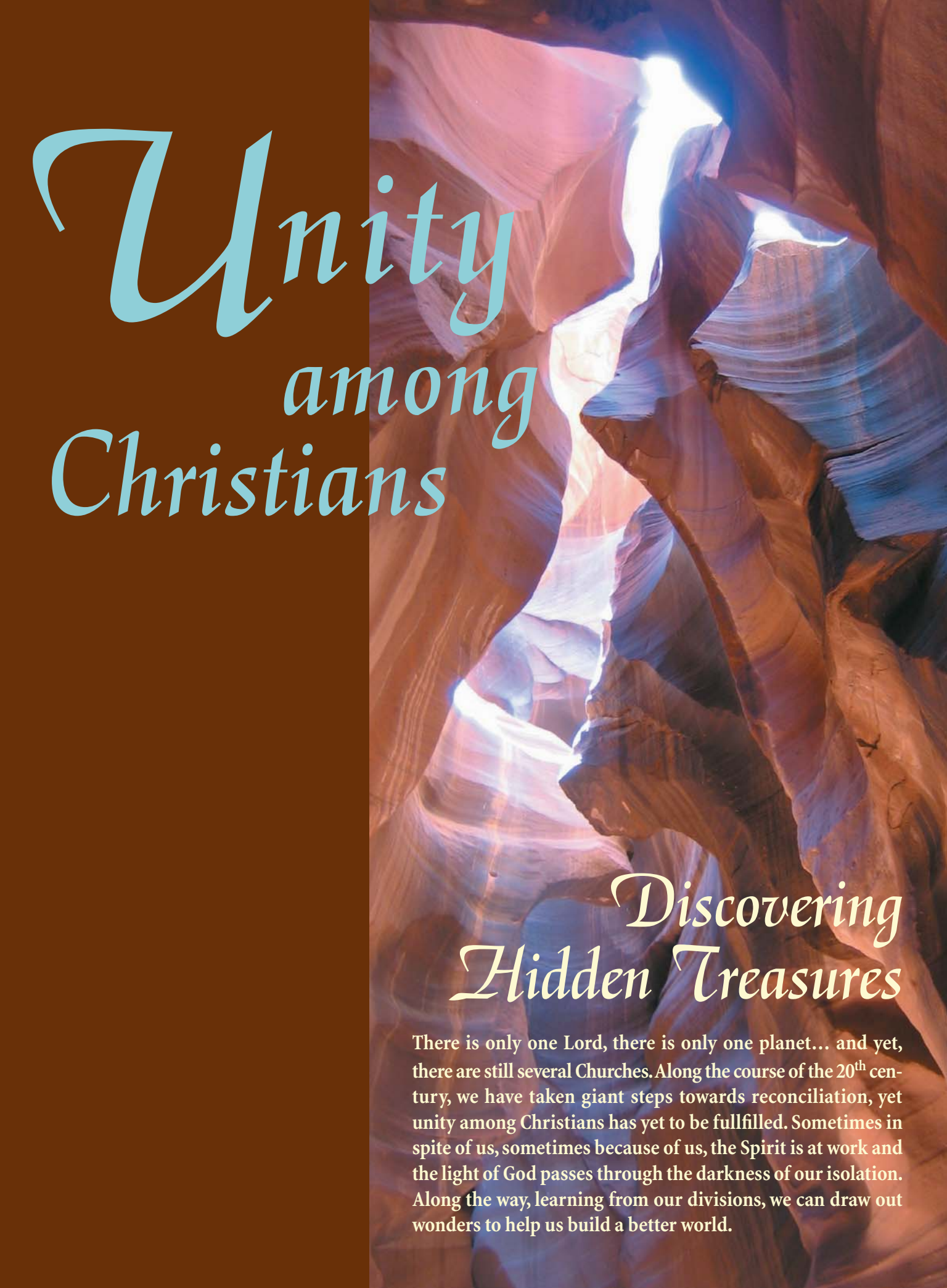
gradually drawn towards the ancestral art his uncle is heir to.

According to the jury, the production “describes the journey of a young Japanese-Canadian who goes from despair to self-affirmation thanks to the wise teachings of his Japanese uncle. The title *Kamataki* refers to the traditional process of pottery-making. This becomes a metaphor for the beauty, wisdom and love that come to life in the encounter of two cultures, in a harmony that is as much inward as outward”.

The year before, in 2004, the ecumenical jury was composed of French, English, Chinese, Canadian, and American members. The Prize was awarded to *La Fiancée syrienne*, an Israeli production by director Eran Riklis, who denounces the dramatic situation of a forgotten community, the Druzes of the Golan Heights. Under Israeli occupation since 1967, this land was annexed in 1982.

Here we find ourselves in the presence of a family about to celebrate the wedding of young Mona with Tallel, a Syrian television star who lives on the other side of the border. When he tries to cross the Syria-Israel border, Tallel gets caught up in the border officials' endless red tape. The jury appreciated the story of this wedding feast “that turns into a veritable epic. This film shows the courageous choices that must be made in order to cross the psychological barriers and national borders that separate families and peoples”. ☺

List of winners since 1979:
www.officecom.qc.ca/Index/jury.html



Unity among Christians

Discovering Hidden Treasures

There is only one Lord, there is only one planet... and yet, there are still several Churches. Along the course of the 20th century, we have taken giant steps towards reconciliation, yet unity among Christians has yet to be fulfilled. Sometimes in spite of us, sometimes because of us, the Spirit is at work and the light of God passes through the darkness of our isolation. Along the way, learning from our divisions, we can draw out wonders to help us build a better world.

Extract from:

"Many Churches,
Many Faiths, One Planet"

By **Douglas John Hall**

Published in the magazine
Ecumenism, No 156,
December 2004

About the Author:

Professor of Christian Theology
at the Faculty of Religious
Studies at McGill University
(Montreal) for 20 years,

Douglas John Hall was granted
the distinction Emeritus
Professor in 1996. He is the
author of numerous books and
articles and he continues to lec-
ture widely in the United States,
Canada and elsewhere. In the
spring of 2003, he was made a
Member of the Order of Canada.

Photographs: Grand Canyon,
Alexandre Léveillé

DIALOGUE between the divided and once-militantly-independent faith-communities of Christendom has by now gained a century's worth of encounters and struggle towards greater unity—and I refer only to the modern ecumenical movement, which goes back to the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910, which led to the establishment of the International Missionary Council in 1925. The World Council of Churches grew out of these deliberations, and was actually conceived in 1937 though, on account of the Second World War, its inauguration was delayed until 1948. Despite the acknowledged fact that ecumenism has never been able to overcome the entrenched and stubborn divisions churches', and despite the fact that still today its course is characterized by an alternating "ebb and flow", no one can gainsay the extent and depth of a hundred years of concrete experience in the quest for Christian unity. All who are able personally to remember the ecclesiastical situation that prevailed prior to—let us say—1950 can only marvel at the distance we have come, in fifty or sixty years, from that kind of non-communication among the churches. With the Second Vatican Council in 1962 and beyond, a whole new era in Christian life opened up almost overnight, and those of us who experienced it at close range are still, many of us, in a state of happy astonishment.

security and influence, dialogue between them was bound to flounder. But when they felt themselves led by the divine Spirit and by the Gospel itself to discern and develop a genuine regard for the fate of the earth, they experienced the grace of a sufficient self-forgetfulness to be in dialogue with one another as participants in a common task: namely, the peace, prosperity and flowering of God's beloved world.

While ecumenical deliberations over these hundred odd years have frequently degenerated into preoccupation with narrowly-conceived ecclesiastical relationships, the great exponents of Christian ecumenism (like W.A. Visser t'Hooft and Karl Rahner) have always reminded the churches that the fundamental rationale of the movement towards unity is not the well-being of the Church but the well-being of the world.

The one-ness of the Church, said the great ecumenists, is not and must not become an end-in-itself; it is only a means—for Christians the most pressing means—to a right and credible communication to the world of the truth and trustworthiness of God's abiding love for and commitment to creation. A gospel of reconciling love proclaimed by a church notoriously divided within itself is a contradiction in terms.

2) PARTICULARITY AS ENTRY TO UNIVERSALITY.

At the center of the Christian confession of faith there stands the figure of an historical person, entirely human, yet representing in the very fullness of his humanity a transcendence that has prevented the Church, even in its more humanistic expressions, from describing him in human terms alone. This "christocentric" concentration is not optional for Christians. What would Christianity mean without Jesus as the Christ at its centre and core?

Every religion—even those which assume direct access to the absolute—is involved with particularity, whether that be the particularity of a person (Mohammed or Moses of Baha Ullah), the particularity of a text, particular historical events or experiences, or whatever. And what one may ask, based on Christian ecumenical experience, is whether the particularities associated with other religious traditions do not also contain or suggest openness to the other as Christian ecumenists, in their internal debates, have found to be the case in a christology that is pursued at depth.

The fundamental rationale of the movement towards unity is not the well-being of the Church but the well-being of the world.



HOW CAN CHRISTIAN ECUMENICAL EXPERIENCE FACILITATE INTERFAITH DIALOGUE?

Christian ecumenical experience has provided a background of both theoretical and practical wisdom from which it is possible to derive certain principles that could prove invaluable in interfaith encounter and dialogue.

1) THE WELL-BEING OF THE WORLD AS THE FOUNDATIONAL RATIONALE OF ECUMENICAL ENDEAVOUR.

The Christian ecumenical movement of the 20th century discovered that, so long as the churches were concerned chiefly for their own

3) THE QUEST FOR POWER ALWAYS IMPAIRS ECUMENICAL DISCOURSE.

It has been the experience of Christians involved in interchurch dialogue that there can be no dialogue when the represented bodies approach the ecumenical task with a prior and adamant commitment to maintaining their own pre-eminence.

This refers not only to the determination to control discourse and to exercise political power in all decision-making; it refers also, and more importantly, to the assumption that a particular doctrinal tradition holds the truth and must therefore maintain itself intact against all alternative perceptions.

Ecumenical dialogue comes to a standstill whenever its participants act on the assumption that they alone are in possession of ultimate verity. This realization is plainly present in the concluding words of the report of the Moderator of the World Council of Churches' 2003 address: "Any religion that aims for power loses its *raison d'être*. God is the owner, protector, sustainer and reconciler of the whole of humanity and creation. Religion is the servant and agent of God's universal plan."

4) HOSPITALITY TOWARDS AND DIALOGUE WITH OTHER TRADITIONS DOES NOT DIMINISH BUT CAN IN FACT ENHANCE ONE'S KNOWLEDGE AND APPRECIATION OF ONE'S OWN TRADITION.

It has been a source of hesitation on the part of many Christians and ecclesiastical groups that the prospect of ecumenical encounter, if entered into earnestly, could have the effect of distancing them from their own tradition, of incorporating them into a kind of globalized spirituality, a Superchurch, in which the familiar comforts and challenges of their own established tradition had been absorbed and, for all practical purposes, forgotten.

Yet most of us who have actually been involved in ecumenical discourse for several decades realize, I believe, that such fear is unfounded. In fact, with few exceptions, the exact opposite is the case.

Not only do we become more knowledgeable about our own ecclesial tradition when we enter into dialogue with persons of other customs, we frequently find ourselves appreciating aspects of our own tradition that had eluded us heretofore. The presence and testimony of the others has illumined both positive and negative qualities in our own received faith. We change, as a result of such illumination; but we do not feel that we lose what is essential to our own historic

faith; rather, we find ways of sharing that essence with others, and of being enriched by what they bring.

ONE STEP AT A TIME, TOGETHER

We must not wait to be perfect before we attempt to apply whatever wisdom we have learned about seeking understanding and unity between religious communities. Part and parcel of our expanded world-consciousness is our increasingly existential awareness of the plurality of religions. The one planet cannot for long hold the human suspicion, envy, competition and revenge that are augmented and emboldened by a religious fervour enclosed exclusively within its own dividing walls of hostility.

As Wilfred Cantwell Smith, specialist in history of religion, put it in his 1962 CBC lectures, "*The religious life of mankind from now on, if it is to be lived at all, will be lived in a context of religious pluralism.... It will become increasingly apparent... that to be a Christian in the modern world, or a Jew, or an agnostic, is to be so in a society in which other [people], intelligent, devout, and righteous, are Buddhists, Muslims, Hindus.*"

“THAT ALL MAY BE ONE!”

A PROTESTANT PASTOR’S THOUGHTS ON ECUMENISM

¹ UQAM: Université du Québec à Montréal

² IKTUS is the Greek word for “fish”. The symbol and the five letters that make up the word allowed the early Christians to identify themselves. It was a sort of acronym that summed up their profession of faith in Jesus Christ Son of the Saving God:
I = Iesus (Jesus)
CH = CHristos (Christ)
TH = THeou (God)
Y = hYios (Son)
S = Soter (Saviour)

³ cf. *MIC Mission News*, July-August-September 2005, page 11.

by Brigitte Bédard

Jesus prayed for unity! “Father, that they all may be one so that the world may believe. (John 17:21)” We must unite with our brothers and sisters of other Christian Churches, says the Evangelical pastor Yves Alarie.

Yves Alarie, for the past ten years pastor of the Metropolitan Christian Centre (MCC) in Montreal, clarifies certain things right from the start: *There are many different Protestant churches in North America, including many that aren’t officially recognized and registered. So I don’t speak on behalf of ALL Protestants, but on behalf of only one church, the MCC, which has no denominational affiliation, meaning that it’s independent, even though it is a member of a network of Evangelical Churches. You can well imagine that among us Protestants, perfect harmony doesn’t exactly reign, even within a single denomination.*

Learning how to talk to each other, listen to each other, develop an interest in each other, and discover each other’s riches—in other words ecumenism—is second nature to Yves Alarie. *I feel I have a calling! God gave me talent for building bridges between different Christian communities based on what we have in common. Like a chameleon, I can easily move from one Christian milieu to another.*

The most important thing about ecumenism is always to be aware that every Christian tradition, every Church, has its strengths and weaknesses; none of us has everything, or owns everything. When you realize that, you create a healthy interdependence. *I want to teach the people around me to open themselves to others and to appreciate the hidden treasures of the other Churches.*

This pastor hasn’t done things halfway: when you receive His call, you answer! That’s how he became one of the founders of UQAM’s¹ ecumenical pastoral centre (the Iktus² Centre). He was on the board of Directors for the Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture. He has visited and is sometimes invited by new Catholic communities, assists in Alpha courses, and has

given occasional talks to groups of young Catholics in Montreal. He has also been invited to preach during the Eucharist celebration in several Catholic communities. In collaboration with groups of young Catholics, the MCC organized an evening with Jean Vanier, who is largely unknown in the Protestant world.

These are the kinds of things that break down prejudices. Interconfessional encounters, such as the “Jesus Cool” event³ or retreats at the Saint-Benoit-du-Lac Abbey, help young Protestants to discover, for example, the contemplative tradition, a form of prayer that is not very well known in Evangelical Christian communities.

All these initiatives generally occur in small groups or in one-on-one situations. They’re the best way to bring faith to life. *We have to build bridges based on what we have in common: the Nicene Creed or the moral and ethical issues we have to deal with in the contemporary world.*

The Protestant Churches have a strength that is proper to them, that of freedom of expression and interpretation. This allows them to study the Word and to proclaim the Gospel in a unique way. Catholics can only gain by sharing in turn what is unique to them: their experience of contemplation and social justice. It’s up to each one of us to take up the challenge. ∞



GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF BY LOVING OTHERS

A CATHOLIC PRIEST'S PERSPECTIVE ON ECUMENISM

by **Brigitte Bédard**

In this day and age, if all Christians held out their hands to one another, they would form a formidable weapon against the attacks that are being levelled from all sides. *Faced with persecution of the Gospel in our contemporary societies, we need to fight together, in spite of and with our differences. We have the same message of liberation! The same Christ!* These few words sum up the profound conviction of Alain Mongeau, a Catholic diocesan priest in Montreal.

In the heart of the trendy Plateau district, he is in charge of two parishes: Saint-Louis-de-France and Saint-Jean-Baptiste. He serves nearly 400 parishioners and maintains close ties with the popular “Bande FM”, a youth group led by young adults with a strong sense of community.

Alain Mongeau's greatest dream would be to share a common Eucharist between Orthodox, Catholics, and Protestants. Why? To be united around the same table. To be able to commune together while taking our differences into account. Not to “convert” others, but to convert ourselves, to know ourselves better, while loving the differences of others. *It is a conversion of our perspective... of our perception of others.*

For Alain Mongeau, ecumenism is a type of spirituality in and of itself. *Isn't it when we relate to other people that we learn to understand ourselves better? It's like a couple! It's the same type of spirituality, it's the same thinking as at the heart of Christian marriage: learning to love oneself by loving the other person's differences.*

Alain Mongeau discovered ecumenism in the mid-1980s. At that time, anti-religious persecution was raging behind the Iron Curtain¹. In those countries, he met men and women who courageously risked their lives to practise their faith. He discovered the extraordinary treasures of the Christian tradition of the East, allowing himself to be moved by its praises, by its mystical, even apophatic sensibility.

A few years later, it was Protestantism's turn to enter into his life. *The spontaneity, the freshness, the liberty that I discovered there fascinated me! It was very different from Orthodoxy. I saw these extremes and realized all of a sudden that I was getting to know myself better. I realized that Catholics were the ones who were closest to the two other large families. I discovered that this was a strength Catholics had and that perhaps it was easier for us to become closer to all Christians.”*

After realizing this, Alain Mongeau did not remain idle. First of all, he noticed that in the real world, leaders were often more advanced in terms of ecumenism than their parishioners. It was necessary to create actual bonds between communities of Christians so that they would stop thinking of other communities as abstract entities. *Each one of us is first a person, a child of God, not a Protestant, Catholic or Orthodox.* He organized meetings between his parish community and other churches, for example with Christ The Saviour parish in Ottawa (Orthodox) and with the Metropolitan Christian Centre in Montreal (Protestant).

Alain Mongeau longs for the day when ecumenism will be a reality all throughout the year, not only during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. Fortunately for us and for all Christians, he is a man of Faith and Action! ☞

¹ The name given to the imaginary line that stretched across Europe during the Cold War, separating the European States under Soviet rule from the States of Western Europe.



EVERYTHING COMES TO THOSE WHO WAIT

AN ORTHODOX PRIEST LOOKS AT ECUMENISM

¹ For the Orthodox, the word “pope” has the same meaning as “parish priest” and the two words are used interchangeably.

by Brigitte Bédard

Ihor Kutash has been an Orthodox pope¹ in Montreal for 37 years. Faithful to the precepts of the Gospel and curious by nature, he firmly believes that ecumenism is the work of the Holy Spirit. *The Lord gave us the gift of curiosity so that we can broaden our minds, increase our sense of wonder and discovery, take an interest in and surprise ourselves by the ways in which others see the world, and in the process find our own place.*

Raised in Winnipeg, Ihor Kutash, a priest of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada, came to Montreal in 1969. After having been assigned to the Cathedral of Sainte-Sophie in the Rosemont district, he later became its dean. In 2001, after 2 sabbatical years, he assumed responsibility for nearby Sainte-Marie-Proteptrice parish. The great majority of his Ukrainian parishioners immigrated to Canada after experiencing persecution under Stalin in their native land. Here, the small community is tightly knit; everyone knows everyone else. That makes it possible for Father Ihor to work more in the area of theological studies at the university level (at Concordia, Université de Sherbrooke à Montréal, St. Paul in Ottawa, and his *alma mater*, Saint-Andrew’s College in Winnipeg) and also to expand his activities into the civic community.

It was through contact with his fellow seminarians during his post-theological training at McGill University in Montreal, a crossroads of people from many different religious backgrounds, that Ihor Kutash opened his mind to ecumenism.

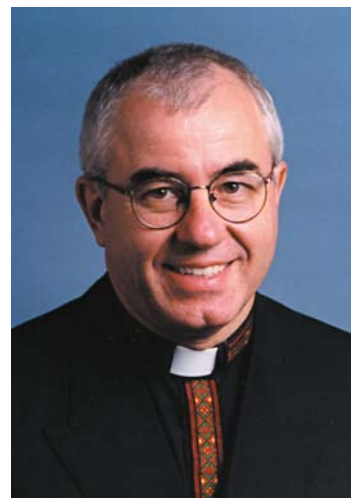
He recommends interdenominational activities to his parishioners. *When I was at Sainte-Sophie, we had a Bible study group to which people of various faiths belonged.* In his two parishes, he also got several women interested in the World Day of Prayer, which brings together Christians of various Churches to pray. This event has taken place several times. In the beginning, the community seemed somewhat wary, inhabited by underlying fears: fear of others and fear of losing the depth of their faith, as if it were going to be diluted.

When I arrived in Montreal 37 years ago, our faithful did not understand the purpose of inter-

Orthodox cooperation. People said: “Why participate with other Orthodox Churches (Russian, Greek, Bulgarian, Rumanian, etc.) when we must participate in the Ukrainian Orthodox Church?” Today, this cooperation between the Orthodox no longer poses any problem. As for cooperation with other Christian communities, it is looked upon more favourably. There is not much of it yet, but it is growing. Nobody raises any more eyebrows when these meetings take place.

A delegate of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Canada to the Canadian Council of Churches since 1988; member of the now-defunct Religious Advisory Council at Radio-Canada; participant for 10 years in the Christian-Jewish Dialogue in Montreal—to name only a few of the efforts he has been involved in—Ihor Kutash understands the development of ecumenism in our communities well. He maintains that things should not be rushed: *I would not use the shared celebration of the Eucharist as a means to reach unity. We would not be in harmony with the rest of our community. If you hurry things, you might leave behind a large part of your community who would be troubled and apprehensive.*

For Ihor Kutash, ecumenism is a question of patience: *Theological convergence will not be reached overnight. Let us prepare the way in our hearts, and rely on God who sees his Church as one and indivisible. Unity in diversity is the model of what Christendom must be.* ∞



At the Crossroads of Two Spiritual Sensibilities: The Icon

Following in the steps of Pope John Paul II, certain Catholics have shown a real interest in the icon of the Orthodox tradition. Others have more trouble with it, considering it austere and too foreign to really touch their spiritual sensibilities and serve its purpose of inviting the believer to encounter God through prayer.



1



2

by Michèle Lévesque

The word icon comes from the Greek “ikon”, image. It is a representation of Christ, of the Theotokos (Mother of God), angels, and saints, produced according to the traditional technique and style of the Christian East. It was at the Second Ecumenical Council, held in Nicea (in present-day Turkey) in 787, that the theological bases and rules for its production were established. The aim of the icon is to bare witness to “the Incarnation, real and not fictional, of the Word of God”. It shows a transfigured world, already a reality although not yet fully manifested (1 John 3: 1-3) and it is inseparable from the Scriptures. It is the fruit of a tradition and not of an intuition, as valid as the latter may be at the spiritual level, for its goal is above all to express a content of faith.

One reproach Orthodox believers address to Catholics who write icons has to do with their understanding of its doctrinal density. The depiction of the Holy Family illustrates well this difference in spiritual sensibility towards the icon.

Created by Sister Marie-Paul, a Benedictine nun from the Mount of Olives monastery in the Holy Land, the prototype of this icon (photo 1) was severely criticized by the Orthodox Church for two main reasons. First, Mary is shown as being smaller than Saint Joseph, while the icon must unambiguously depict her as Theotokos, Mother of God, a title which means that her

dignity is without equal in the created world. Furthermore, Joseph’s affectionate gesture towards Marie, as well as the position of their bodies, might suggest carnal intimacy, while Marial doctrine proclaims Mary’s perpetual virginity. What is decried is obviously not the tenderness of the two spouses, since it is certain that they shared a deep affection for each other and expressed it in their own way. It is rather an invitation to be prudent in these times when Marial dogmas are being seriously put to the test.

Written by Denise Gravel, a Catholic Quebecois iconographer, the second icon illustrated here (photo 2) was received positively by the Orthodox Church. Mary is the same size as Joseph (she could also be a little bigger), their bodies don’t touch, and the spouses are clearly turned towards Emmanuel, whom they indicate as the Way to God (John 14:6). Tenderness is evident in the facial features, the gestures and body positions, yet it is shown with the discretion appropriate to this art, which from its origins was monastic.

To move into another’s terrain with a profound and sincere respect for their differences, while maintaining our attachment to our own tradition, is an immense challenge for our faith. It is above all a joyous invitation to celebrate the diversity of the undivided Church’s treasures. This is an excellent guide for Western appropriation of the traditional icon. ∞

About the Author:

Iconographer, with a B.A. in Fine Arts (UQAM), a Masters in Library and Information Science, Michèle Lévesque is also a doctoral candidate in Theology at the Université de Montréal. She is currently in charge of the **Pantocrator Workshop** (iconographic training), at the Emmaus Centre of Eastern Spirituality:

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To Find Out More:

A Guide to Byzantine Icons on the Internet

www.iconsexplained.com

Orthodox Christian Foundation

www.ocf.org/OrthodoxPage

Orthodox World Links

www.theologic.com/links

Young people come in large numbers to Taizé, a small village in Burgundy, France. They experience what it is they need to experience and then leave again. Might there be something prophetic and ecumenical about this?

TAIZÉ,

Ecumenism as a Way of Life

by André Gadbois

For Further Information:

The Taizé Community's Web site:
www.taize.fr

"Ensemble, c'est tout" (Together is everything) is the title of a fine and remarkably simple novel. Might this have been what inspired Brother Roger Schutz—before the Second World War—to take in brothers who wanted to share the monastic life with him and, later on, to offer hospitality to growing numbers of young people who came knocking at his door wanting to learn how to pray? To hear these young people marvel at the things they've seen and heard in Taizé, we might well believe it was.

Throughout the years, the rise in the number of visits by young travellers (between 2,000 and 6,000 per week in the summer, from all over the world) has made Taizé a unique **stopover** for those seeking God, a haven for hearts longing to listen and speak instead of trying at all costs to justify everything through constant reasoning, a **place of everyday life** where, through washing dishes, singing, praying the same psalms, and sharing common spaces, seekers from all faiths become aware that they are all on the same journey—*together and different before the same God*. No one knows who is Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, or a nonbeliever. This is discovered over the course of the week, but by then communion has already taken place.

Taizé is neither a church nor a Church, nor a forum for discussing ecumenical matters. Even though in the beginning Brother Roger wanted to gather brothers together to form an ecumenical community, the arrival of large numbers of young people gradually transformed it into a **place to seek God in a setting of ecumenical openness**. It is said that one goes to Taizé as to a wellspring: to draw new water and take it back home. The young people who have been to Taizé carry the flame of Taizé's spirituality back to their own culture, which makes Taizé interna-

tional in scope. In every major city in the world, the songs of Taizé are sung during prayer meetings, and gatherings are organized in order to strengthen the faith and deepen what was discovered in Taizé. What's more, the community now includes four houses (in Brazil, Bangladesh, South Korea and Senegal) where the brothers live among the poor in societies that are divided.

In Taizé, the Spirit continues to blow, challenging and moving the many young people who go there to live more simply, to seek as one the face of the God who gathers them together, and to experience a Presence that speaks to their hearts. In this sense, Taizé is prophetic... and a prophetic spirit is generally ecumenical.

To Montreal in 2007!

From April 27 to 29, 2007, the Taizé community will be in Montreal for a gathering with young adults from Canada and the United States. Montreal's parishes will be involved in hosting the young participants. Brother Alois, Brother Roger's successor, will be present.

The meeting in Montreal will be part of the "Pilgrimage of Trust on Earth" launched by Brother Roger in the early 1980s. He envisioned this pilgrimage as a way to encourage young adults to become bearers of peace, trust and reconciliation in the places where they live. On this pilgrimage, we have felt over and over again how helpful it is to gather together to go to the source of trust and hope, and leave behind our discouragement, our isolation, find fresh impetus, and make lasting bonds of prayer and friendship.

To participate or to help:

www.taizemontreal2007.ca



Photograph: S. Leutenegger/Taizé

THE MEMORIAL KIPU

Founded in 1902, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception number nearly 700 members from 17 nationalities working in 13 countries. In their service for the Church, the nuns and their lay associates (ASMIC) work in many capacities: promotion of women, education, health care, parish and diocesan pastoral assistance, social services, etc.

Their founder, Délia Tétreault, left a very rich heritage to the Church and to the world: awakening and developing the missionary aspect of faith, opening up to the world, respecting differences and cultures. Most of all, she handed down to the Christian people a spirituality centered on recognition of God's free gifts to the world, gifts to be shared beyond all borders.

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www.soeurs-mic.qc.ca

After experiencing twenty years of terrorism from 1980 to 2000, the Peruvian people continue to organize themselves, trying to restore the social fabric.

by Louise Pagé, M.I.C.

Since it was established two years ago, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has asked the government for reparation and compensation for the families of 69,280 victims, in the hopes of preventing similar violence from happening again, and to promote reconciliation and solidarity among Peruvians. Since the government had not given a clear response, a large movement was launched throughout all of Peru: every town and every village was invited to build a *kipu*.

The *kipu* (photo 1) is made up of cotton cords, braided and knotted in various colours; the number, colour and knots served as a counting system to the Incas. At the lowest part, each knot represents one unit; at the next level, ten; further up, one hundred; and at the top, one thousand. The colour of the cord indicates the object that is being counted.

Each community tied 10,000 knots. Four months into the project, at a major assembly, all the regional *kipus* were brought together as one: the **Memorial Kipu**. Each of the 69,280 knots represented one of the victims of violence. Also, a tree was planted to symbolize life and peace. One after another, religious leaders from various denominations expressed their solidarity and their hope for a better future.

The fight to ensure that they will not be forgotten is a fight against a great injustice. ☪



¹ A traditional kipu



Photo MIC

Young Peruvian MIC sisters, along with other religious and those in formation, are involved in this justice and peace project. This is a basic act of solidarity for missionaries who are called to witness to universal brotherhood.

Becoming a Religious at 94 Years Old!

One fine Sunday in June 2002, in the MIC chapel in Laval, a very unusual celebration took place: A Foun Wong, of Chinese origin, professed her perpetual vows to this religious institute... at the age of ninety-four!

¹ Cecilia Hong, M.I.C., and Marie-Pauline Wong, M.I.C.

² Lucie Gagné, M.I.C., and Huguette Chapdelaine, M.I.C., with Sister Marie-Pauline
MIC Photos



by Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

THE STORY of this rather late vocation begins in China in the early twentieth century, when many families lived in utter poverty. A Foun Wong, the seventh child in her family, was born in 1909 (or 1908, following the Chinese custom of calculating births) in a village near the city of Canton.

Uprooted

When she was about one year old, her father died suddenly. His death was to dramatically change the course of her life. Her mother was so poor she couldn't even pay for her husband's burial, and she worried about the future of her family. In order to survive, she agreed to sell her daughter, a sickly little girl, to three women for \$30.

When she was seven, the family with whom she was living sold her to a wealthy family, as a servant to a twelve-year-old girl. *Already very aware for my age because of my work*

training, I was intelligent and obliging. I anticipated the needs and desires of my young mistress. By accompanying her to English classes at Holy Spirit School in Canton, A Foun discovered an orphanage very well tended by the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception.

Five years later, the young lady whom she had been serving got married. A Foun, now about twelve years old, was afraid she would be sold yet again. She decided to flee and to seek refuge with the nuns she had known at the orphanage. Meanwhile, her mother was trying to find her. *One day, I heard my mother's voice calling, "A Foun! A Foun!" But I didn't answer because I didn't want to fall back into poverty...*

From the Other Side of the World

Meanwhile, in Montreal, Délia Tétreault, the foundress of the MIC's, was planning to provide for religious education for the Chinese people living in this city, most of whom were

not Christian. Already, two missionary sisters had been called back from China to work at the Chinese Mission in Montreal.

With an exceptional openness to the world, Délia Tétreault then conceived a project of a small association of Chinese catechists who would work at converting their compatriots who had immigrated to Canada.

And so it was that on February 18, 1920, Sister Marie-du-Rosaire returned from a visit to the Chinese missions accompanied by six Cantonese orphans, approximately 16 years of age. A Foun, younger than the rest, was among them, and was well aware of the uprooting that she had accepted by leaving her country. At the end of their long trip, the small group was welcomed with great joy at the Mother House in Montreal.

A New Life and a New Name

Several months later, A Foun asked to be baptized. She had learned the Catholic doctrine while at the orphanage, but she had not yet been baptized. On May 19, 1920, surrounded by her Chinese friends, she received the sacrament in the private chapel of Bishop Paul Bruchési, archbishop of Montreal. Full of happiness, she received her baptism name: Marie-Jeanne-Pauline. What a celebration! From then on, prayers recited and sung in the Cantonese language would become part of the daily routine at the Mother House.

The plan was to arrange for these Chinese young people to take part in the activities of the Institute. They were sent to the Chinese Missions in Montreal and Quebec City and to the Chinese Hospital on La Gauchetière Street in Montreal, three projects run by the MIC's. Because of trouble adapting, only three of them stayed in Canada. The original plan for which they had come was difficult to carry out.

A Foun and her two companions continued to live with the sisters, and their collaboration was greatly appreciated. Their ability to finely and delicately embroider the church vestments expressed the beauty of Chinese art and gave them an income to help the missionaries a little throughout the world. A Foun loved to accompany Délia Tétreault on her numerous visits, and warmly remembers the fond attention the foundress paid her.

Return to Origins

In 1987, the community offered her a trip to China, along with Gertrude Laforest, M.I.C., and Helena Fong, M.I.C., both part of the Chinese community in Quebec.

She who had not returned to China since she left in 1920 was saddened to recognize certain places. A woman took her through Canton and to her native village. What an experience for A Foun! Reviving childhood memories, connecting with the past, rediscovering her Chinese roots...

In thinking about the fact that her mother sold her, A Foun is not bitter. *It was a very difficult time for my mother; she had seven mouths to feed. Making such a decision had to have been very painful.*

God called her from faraway
China, and she served Him with
all her heart. }

An Unexpected Request

Dear Sister Superior General, I have spent my life praying, working and living with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. I am expressing to you now my most profound desire: to become a MIC sister before I die. This is exactly the request that A Foun expressed at the age of 94.

Needless to say, her request, as astonishing and unexpected as it was, did not meet with any opposition! On June 16, 2002, the Institute's centennial year, A Foun became Sister Marie-Pauline Wong, M.I.C.

Since then, she has been proudly walking the corridors of the house in Laval, on her little high-heeled shoes, her face beaming. She really loves it when she is called *Sister Marie-Pauline*.

Having had to deal with suffering, inner conflict and abandonment, the precious multi-coloured embroidery that is little A Foun's life is drawing to a close in the gentleness of the God who called her from faraway China, and whom she served with all her heart. ∞



Josephine Leal, M.I.C., with children of the VIVA project
MIC Photos



Giving Street Children a Chance

¡La monjita llegó! “The sister is here!” With this rallying cry, the children of Romerillo, one of the poorest neighbourhoods in Havana, Cuba, come joyously running up to greet me. This mutual confidence has developed thanks to two years of patiently getting to know each other.

by Josephine Leal, M.I.C.

The romerillo is a pretty yellow flower used in medicines. Strangely, the Havana neighbourhood named after it is adorned only with ramshackle shelters where immigrants from different regions of the country come to settle. Year after year, they expand its construction. Several families live together in a single room. This lack of space and privacy causes very unstable situations.

Having learned about the difficult situation these families find themselves in, I decided to commit myself to helping them. During his visit to Cuba in 1998, Pope John Paul II reminded us that the Church has the duty to give moral, social and religious training so that young Cubans may grow up with human and Christian values. To this end, an exceptional tool has been developed to help children and their families: VIVA (Virtues and Values) workshops, which I chose to lead, along with other workshops, to cultivate and communicate this so badly needed training.

What Energy!

I usually go to Romerilla every Saturday. A family lends us a little corner of their yard for the Viva project. These people help me to organize the area, get the snacks ready, and keep the kids in line. Ten children at once isn't very many, but their number isn't any indication of their exuberance. Several of them, hyperactive, cause animosity wherever

they go. Giving them a big hug and speaking to them in a calm voice are simple and effective ways of calming things down; they feel loved and accepted.

This commitment isn't always easy, since I'm often alone in leading these meetings. However, several times a year, two university students come to help me out. They get the children to sing, dance and play. Recently, five members of the group from San Augustino parish took part in an immersion day: they led the workshop with me and came along on my round of visits to families, whose deplorable conditions really touched them.

Little Word, Great Treasure

To see these children become sociable, sensitive and warm-hearted; to see them participate more and more, take on responsibility and commitments, these are comforting joys indeed! I love their spontaneity, their simplicity, their mischievousness. *Can I have my snack now?*, one of them asks impishly after handing me his hastily completed work. The magic little word, “Thank you!” has become a real treasure for me. The children have learned to say it even for the simplest things that are done for them.

I thank the Lord for the wonderful work that He has accomplished in them. I also give thanks for the people who are helping me accomplish this humble mission. ☺

The Words that Unite Us

Did you know that there is a **Dictionary of Ecumenical Missiology**? Published in French (*Dictionnaire œcuménique de missiologie*) by Éditions du Cerf/Labor and Fides/CLE in 2001, it is the fruit of collaboration between four Christian denominations.

The authors chose a hundred words associated with missiology (the study of missions), then they considered the etymology, scriptural significance, as well as changes in meaning that might have occurred over time. (For example, some words like “syncretism” have become so derogatory that they have been withdrawn from missiologic language). Another interesting thing: to avoid duplicating entries, several words have been incorporated into headings considered to be more comprehensive.

Due to the spectacular renewal that mission sciences have undergone during recent years, this work seeks to clarify certain concepts. Just think of terms like “mission” and “propagation of the faith”. This dictionary also addresses various currents of thought, current problems, and changes in emphasis that missions have had to face in the past and continue to confront in the twenty-first century. It presents simple but science-based definitions, key-words related to missions like “apostolate”, “contextualization”, “conversion”, “evangelization”, “enculturation”, “ecumenism”, “secularization”, etc.

The development of the work was led by an ecumenical team: professors Ion Bria (Orthodox), Jacques Gadille (Catholic), Marc Spindler (Protestant) and Pastor Philippe Song (Protestant).

This clear and brief work can be of great use for research, and is just as interesting to read simply to gain a better understanding of how missionary activity is evolving today. ☪



Journey for Better Understanding

From June 4th to 17th, 2006, a group of 35 people from three different religious backgrounds (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) gathered in Jerusalem. Through the initiative of Patrice Brodeur, who holds the Canadian Chair on Islam at the Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at Université de Montréal, preparations for this trip began with preliminary meetings in the various places of worship. Pauline Boilard, M.I.C., made the trip and sent us her first impressions by email:

“For everyone who experiences the inescapable emotions, the fellowship of our group is very comforting. We meet daily to dialogue, which is crucial for us to free up an interior space for the next day. Each day brings its set of cultural and religious surprises, not only in our group, but also among those whom we meet. It is not easy to let go of certain ideas that we get from the media in order to form a truer understanding of a world so far removed from us.

“In this very challenging experience, we sense a spiritual power that clearly accompanies us. Yesterday evening, in the forest, we joyously celebrated the annual sukkot (the Festival of the Tents) with our Jewish sisters and brothers. I realize how much God exists beyond the bricks and mortar... He shows me how He works here, through peaceful and fearless people, disregarding the danger.

“Yes, Jesus lived here, but fortunately, today, He meets us wherever we are!”

The participants in this groundbreaking interfaith, inter-cultural and inter-generational journey will collectively publish a book. ☪

Pauline Boilard, M.I.C., (middle) in Jerusalem



You've Got Mail!

Unstoppable!

Dearest friends,

From Kiburioa, in the South of the Philippines, my fellow sister, Mélanie Delfin, M.I.C., and I departed by motorcycle for the village of Kitubo to give religion classes. At our first stop, 14 kilometres away, we were warned that we could not proceed by motorcycle because the previous day's rains had made the roads too slippery. Our solution: go by horseback; it would be our very first time! Mélanie took up the reins and I settled in behind her. I was very uneasy behind my inexperienced guide, and so instead I rode with our scout. After an hour, we finally arrived at our second halt. I decided to continue my journey on foot—it seemed easier—but the path was so muddy that I sank in deeply! At the next stop, someone finally offered me a horse for the last portion of the trip: about two hours. After a few minutes, the horse suddenly turned around and I fell off again because the saddle was not adjusted properly. Mélanie, who was trying as hard as she could to direct her own mount, also fell—just as the path was becoming steep, narrow and perilous...

In Kitubo where two sisters had been expected for some time now, two women now appeared, covered in mud, but luckily safe and sound! Our adventures certainly did amuse the local religious leaders who came to greet us.

After a few hours of catechism classes, the rain started up once again. Believe it or not, Mélanie decided to return straight away to Kiburioa, on horseback and by motorcycle! The brave soul reached her destination... but not without a few more mud baths!

Leticia Dotollo, M.I.C.



Mélanie and the horses
MIC Photo

School Day Tragedy

Greetings to you, dear readers,

On January 25, a tragic event shook the "Institution Mère-Délia", our school in Port-au-Prince: not far from our institution, four students were hit by a vehicle.

As soon as I heard the news I rushed to the spot. Three of the girls were injured but eventually recovered. Sadly, the fourth one had no strength left. *I am going to see Mother Délia*, whispered Smyleen. *Stay awake! Don't sleep!* She tried hard not to shut her eyes... but in vain. She passed away despite four hours of intensive care by hospital staff Bernard Mews.

Smyleen's attitude at the moment of her own death moved me deeply. One week before her passing, we had spoken in class about Délia Térault, our foundress. Smyleen had said: *I want to be a sister like Mother Délia*. Her manner of leaving this world revealed how deeply this desire burned within her.

Smyleen made few waves, but her faith and gentleness will leave a mark on those who knew her. This unfortunate event reminds me of the words of Délia Térault when one very young sister died: *Our Lord came to pick one of the most beautiful flowers in his garden...*

Thank you for your solidarity.

Adeline Bonny, M.I.C



Smyleen Eliacin

DISCOVERING NEW HORIZONS

*May the Spirit
dwell in you and
give you a heart
as vast as the
world, ever joyful
in hope!*



FRANCINE RAVAOARILALA from Antsirabe, Madagascar

After several years working in the General MIC Administration, Sister Francine is undertaking a fresh mission in Cameroon. With her rich store of knowledge she will collaborate with the diocesan team involved in pastoral work.

MIC Photo



PIERRETTE BERNIER (middle) from Saint-Hyacinthe, QC

A psychologist through and through, a generous and beloved missionary, Sister Pierrette is returning to Bolivia. She will continue accompanying Bolivians in their personal growth and promote their well-being.

MIC Photo



LUCILLE LA SALLE from Saint-Paul-de-Joliette, QC

After offering community and pastoral services in Quebec, Sister Lucille is returning to Zambia. She is going to lend a helping hand in the new retreat house. There, many groups will be able to meet to strengthen their faith through reflection, prayer and training sessions.

MIC Photo



MONIQUE LAROUCHE (middle) from Ville-de-la-Baie, QC

Sister Monique is returning to Chile to pursue her work in pastoral ministry after having been a missionary there for many years. Her wide experience and her astuteness will lead her on to people living far removed from the cities.

MIC Photo

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Dawn of a New Life



Marie-Paule Gaudreau, M.I.C.
Sister Marie-Edwidge
(1920-2006)
Amqui, Quebec

In Mzimba, Malawi, Sister Marie-Paule laid the ground for the first ever centre to accommodate handicapped young girls, victims of polio. The generous donations of benefactors helped her to fulfill her dream. Today, the service has been taken up by a community of African nuns.



Gertrude Gagnon, M.I.C.
Sister Joseph-Armand
(1918-2006)
Petit-Saguenay, Quebec

After many years of dedicated service to the Filipinos of Mindanao, Sister Gertrude went into the teaching profession in Quebec. With her experience and vigour, she also contributed much to the MIC Centre for Immigrants in Quebec City.



Marie Bilodeau, M.I.C.
Sister Jeanne-Leber
(1921-2006)
Montreal, Quebec

A gifted artist and painter, Sister Marie taught this art to students in Hong Kong for several years. She was inspired for many of her diverse paintings by notable religious events of her day. One of her last creations, entitled "The Life of Délia Tétreault in 34 paintings", can be found on our MIC Web site.



Jeannette Caron, M.I.C.
Sister Sainte-Brigitte
(1919-2006)
Saint-Georges, Quebec

As a missionary in Malawi for more than 40 years, Sister Jeannette gave herself fully to training African teachers for catechism classes.

Simultaneously, she introduced their wives to the skills of housekeeping. The Good News which she shared continues to be spread to this day.



Lyse Brunet, M.I.C.
Sister Saint-Réal
(1931-2006)
Montreal, Quebec

Sister Lyse, a medical doctor in Malawi, faced many challenges and risks, and witnessed small miracles as well. Each month, she helped more than 100 babies come into the world while rushing for emergencies of all kinds and caring for patients of malaria and HIV.



Antoinette Jean, M.I.C.
Sister Marie-Jacinthe
(1920-2006)
Saint-Jean-de-Dieu, Québec

Known for her friendly smile and good humour, Sister Antoinette occupied many positions of authority all through her missionary life in Quebec. One of her last great joys was to accompany the Associates (ASMICs) of Joliette, handing on the spirituality of the Foundress.

A Modern Parable

One day, Jesus, who had never been to the stadium before, is taken there by his friends. On the program is a fierce match between the Protestant Panthers and the Catholic Crusaders.

The Catholics are the first to score. Jesus cheers enthusiastically and throws his hat in the air. Then suddenly the Protestants tie the game. Jesus cheers loudly and again tosses his hat in the air.

This attitude intrigues the man sitting behind him; he taps Jesus on the shoulder and asks him, "Whose side are you on, my dear man?" "Me?", replies Jesus, obviously completely caught up in the game. "I'm here just for the fun of the game."

The man turns to his neighbour and whispers, "Hmm, he's an atheist!"

*By Anthony de Mello, Indian Jesuit
From Prier magazine (Oct. 1998)*

Secrets of a Missionary Reader

I was in Amazonia, working with the Hospitalières de Saint Joseph sisters in San Pablo, a village of lepers. One

of my favourite grandmothers was supposed to take the boat to the city to have her legs amputated. To keep the whole village from reacting, she was carried away on a stretcher under a white sheet. She looked like a corpse... So, when they got to the boat, a nurse from the leper hospital started singing, "¡Resucitó! ¡Resucitó!" (a Spanish Easter song that means: He is Risen!) Our dear invalid smiled and started laughing under her "shroud". The whole village was laughing!

Peruvian Know-How

A missionary from Pucallpa in Peru got on the bus for Lima, the capital city. Usually it takes 24 hours to travel across the three Andean cordilleras. After 9 hours on the bus, the driver realized that his vehicle was losing gas! And they were in the middle of the mountains! So he stopped the bus, got underneath and saw that the tank had a hole in it. He thought for a minute. Being used to having to make do with next to nothing, he had an idea: he took out his chewing gum, plugged the hole, and away they went. So did it work? It must have, because they got to Lima without a hitch!

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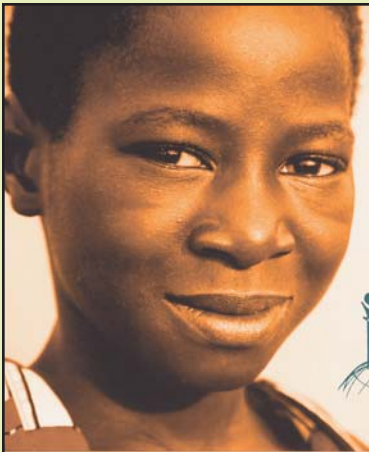
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Prayer for Christian Unity

*Lord Jesus,
who prayed that we might all be one,
we pray to you for Christian unity,
according to your will,
according to your ways.*

*May your Spirit enable us
to experience the suffering caused
by division,
to see our sin,
and to hope beyond all hope.
Amen.*

*(a prayer written by members of the Chemin
Neuf Community, based on the writings of
Abbé Paul Couturier)*

