

S I N C E 1 9 2 3

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 33, No 4 | OCTOBER ▪ NOVEMBER ▪ DECEMBER 2006 | \$3.00

HAITI

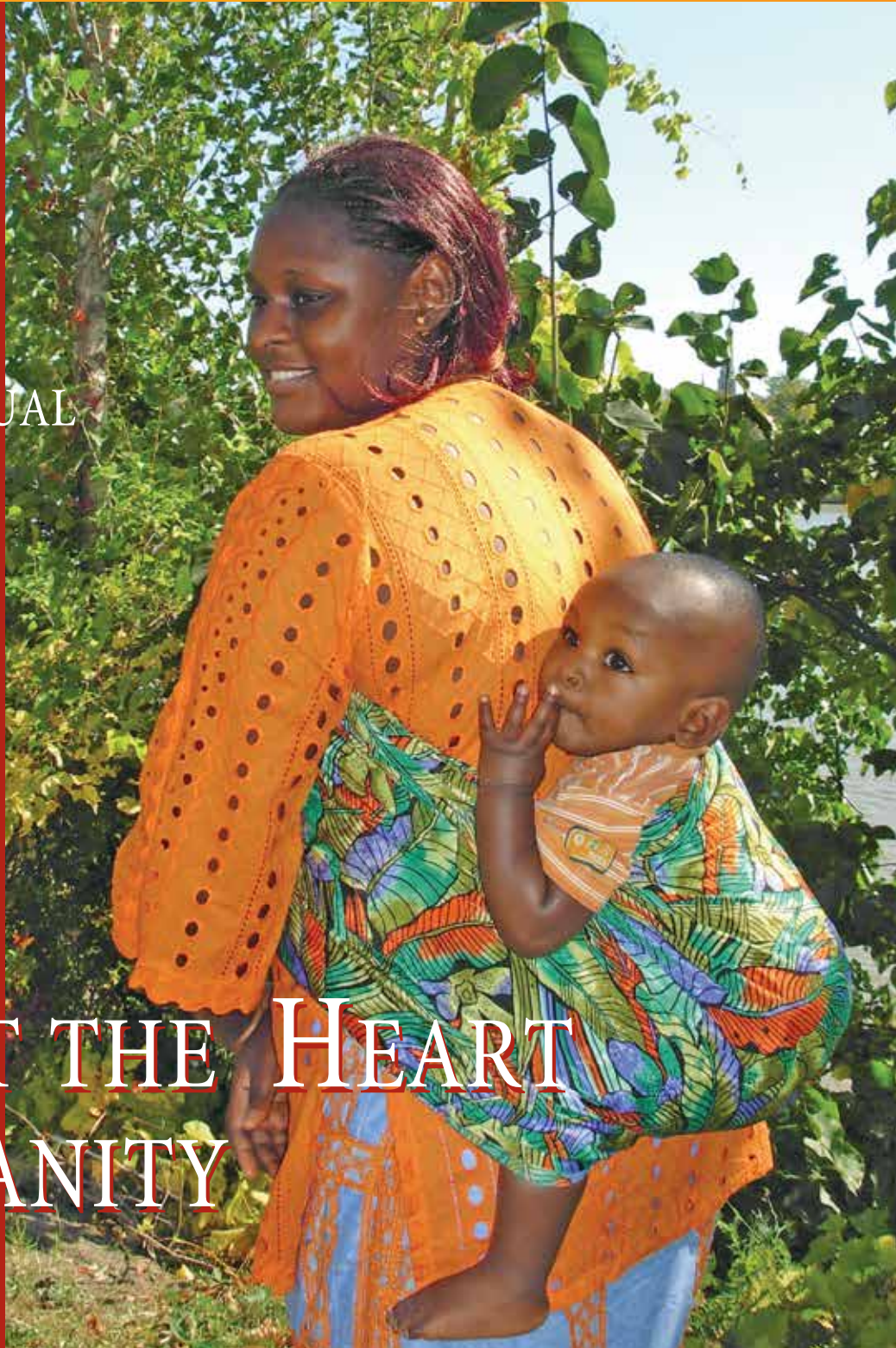
FROM THE VIRTUAL
TO THE REAL

MALAWI

WOMEN
ARE MAKING
THEIR MARK

IN FOCUS

MARY AT THE HEART
OF HUMANITY



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

October 2006

For the Church in the World:

May the celebration of World Mission Day intensify the missionary spirit and missionary cooperation.

November 2006

For believers everywhere:

May they work to remove old and new barriers to Africa's development.

December 2006

For missionaries:

May they live their vocation to follow Jesus with joy and enthusiasm.

MASSES FOR READERS' INTENTIONS OFFERED IN THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES:

January: *Canada*

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*



CONTENTS

VOL. 33, N° 4 | OCTOBER ▪ NOVEMBER ▪ DECEMBER 2006

COLUMNS

4

SPIRITUAL LIFE

A Marian Spirituality A Christian Way of Life

Celia Chua, M.I.C.

6

LAY MISSIONARIES

When Chemistry Becomes Magic and Faith Becomes Commitment

Jean Godin, lay missionary

8

WOMEN

Women Are Making Their Mark

Marie-Theresa Katongo, M.I.C.

10

YOUTH

From the Virtual to the Real

Marie Mona Henry, M.I.C.

12

MISSION BRIEF

You Are My Witnesses

Michelle Payette, M.I.C.



IN FOCUS

Mary at the Heart of Humanity

13-20

ABOUT THE MICs

21

Mission Possible!

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

22

WITNESSING

Just Like God, Sr. Léontine Creates Beauty

Brigitte Bédard

24

Seeds of Yesterday, Blossoms of Today

Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

MIC Mission News

Mission magazine published by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

Offices

Presse missionnaire MIC
120 Place Juge-Desnoyers
Laval, QC Canada H7G 1A4

Phone: (450) 663-6460

Fax: (450) 972-1512

Email: micmissionnews@pressemic.org

Web site: www.soeurs-mic.qc.ca

Directress of Publication

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Editor in Chief

Marie-Eve Homier

Administrative Assistant

Carole Guévin

Translation & Editing

Claudette Bouchard, M.I.C.

Robin Dick

Regina Farrell

Alexis Pearson

Promotion

Antoinette Castonguay, M.I.C.

Elizabeth Relacion, M.I.C.

Circulation

Alma Couture, M.I.C.

Thi Hien Duong

Accounting

Thérèse Déziel, M.I.C.

Layout & Design

5/5 Communication
Marketing

Printing

Solisco

Cover Design

Khousseynatou Haidara and
Mamadou (photo credit:
Thérèse Lortie, m.i.c.)

Editorial Board

Monique Bigras, M.I.C.

Pauline Williams, M.I.C.

Geneviève Dick

André Gadbois

Tax Receipt

Registration Number:
NE 89346 9585 RR0001
Presse missionnaire MIC

Legal Deposits

Bibliothèque nationale du Québec
National Library of Canada
ISSN 0315-9655

Subscription rates (4 issues)

Single issues: \$3 (plus mailing costs)

1 year: \$10, 2 years: \$20, 3 years: \$25

USA: 1 year: US\$15

International: 1 year: \$20

We acknowledge the financial assistance of the government of Canada through the Publications Assistance Program (PAP) for mailing expenses.

Canada

Mail-publications convention

Number: 40064029
Registration Number: 09641

EDITORIAL

An Unexpected Gift!

Receiving a present always causes joy and surprise, and raises the questions: Who sent it? What's in it?

As directress of the magazine since September eight, feast of the Nativity of Mary, I thought I would offer you the gift of an issue devoted to Mary. A Mary, close to us, walking barefoot on the earth to feel life's reality, but also a Mary whom people can call Queen, Our Lady, Ambassador, to show their gratitude for the abundance of her favours and blessings. The Church, artists and writers have unceasingly spoken of Mary in various terms and have portrayed her from all sorts of angles.

The Focus: *Mary at the Heart of Humanity* invites us to reflect upon our Marian devotion by depicting her in daily life, but also as someone who walks among us. She can experience our happy moments with us and help us in the most difficult periods of our lives. As the period of Advent rapidly approaches, this reflection brings to life the expectation of the pregnant woman getting ready for a great event who changes her life by turning towards a future in preparation.

Following the example of courageous Mary, the enthusiastic women of Africa and Haiti have set out to transform their situation into promising projects for the future. They are making their mark and turning the virtual into reality. And what can be said about the testimony of a professor in Africa who still can't get over the wonderful experience he had with his young students in Zaire? Or the Chinese from the Ottawa community who are celebrating a golden jubilee where it's good to reminisce about the beginnings of those who first arrived.

To savour these readings is to discover a precious gift that will speak to you in an unexpected way. Let these words simmer in your heart like the delicious dishes prepared with love for the Christmas and New Year's table.

To all your family and loved ones:

A Blessed Christmas and a Holy 2007 in Harmony and Peace.

Marie-Paule Sanjean, m.i.c.

READERS' CORNER

lmicmissionnews@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.

Marie-Marthe Frigon, Laval

A refreshing content within an attractive new look!

After reading the latest issue of your magazine, July 2006, I wish to express my favourable opinion. The MIC Mission News, edited by skilled writers, contains a depth of no comparison in Quebec. This magazine allows us to truly see ahead, to observe spirituality in action and to understand the depth and magnitude of its foundations. May you continue to grow and radiate so as to reach the greatest number of readers among those people who are thirsting for good models and Christian knowledge.

Monique Bédard, Quebec

To the publishing team—thank you for the return of the calendar. The topics in the July-September issue touched me deeply. From the Geographer of the twigs, to the Journey of a family and MIC life experiences, they all led me to the heart of Jesus' disciples in their everyday living both here and abroad. MIC Mission News is truly invigorating; continue your good work.

Louis-Philippe Bourque, Montreal

I am a faithful reader of your magazine. The content of each article is most refreshing! What a wealth on the marketplace! I wish it would be published monthly. In a world troubled by political and interdenominational conflicts it is uplifting to know and be aware that it is possible to bring peace and freedom to nations through good works. It is satisfying also to realize that the Church, who some wish would disappear, is more vibrant than ever; guided by the Spirit, young people take up the missionary challenge here and abroad. Your magazine shows that through the darkness presented to us by the media, the Light of Justice, Peace and Love of Jesus, resurrected and alive, is shining. Long life to your publication!

A MARIAN SPIRITUALITY

A Christian Way of Life

A call to holiness in
contemplation and action }

By Celia Chua, M.I.C.



About the author:

Sr. Celia is a Missionary in Taiwan and China; she holds a doctorate in Mariology.

¹ J. Roten, Christian spirituality, July 10, 2005, p. 2

² Pope John Paul II in *Redemptoris Mater* (1987), No. 5

Photographs :

¹ Sr. Celia at a leprosarium in the Province of Sichuan, China. Photo credit: Lin Kwo-Chang

² *Our Lady of China*, painting located in the small village of Tong Lu, Beijing; it symbolizes the people of China consecrated to Mary by Pope Pius XI.

BEFORE talking about a Marian spirituality, it would be appropriate to agree upon the meaning of spirituality. In general terms it is a *typical way of dealing with the human condition; so Christian spirituality is the experience, reflection and the articulation of our faith as it is lived in a concrete human situation.*¹ In other words, it is a way of life.

A Marian spirituality is Christ-centred. We contemplate how Mary lived throughout her life. Her words, *I am the handmaid of the Lord, Lk 1:38* imply that she readily accepts God's Will in all circumstances. With her authentic YES, she welcomes the action of the Spirit within her. Throughout her life, *she treasured everything in her heart Lk 2:19*. Mary remembered and pondered upon the events that unfolded before her.

A REFLECTION ON SOME MAIN CHARACTERISTICS OF A MARIAN SPIRITUALITY:

One attribute of this spirituality comes from its "rootedness" in the Word of God, the Incarnate Son. As in Mary, the Holy Spirit transforms and fashions us as we contemplate the Word, Jesus. This Christian way of life requires a personal commitment, because God calls a human person not just to follow His Son in action but most of all to enter into communion with the Trinity. This is the ultimate goal of spirituality: contemplation and action leading to holiness.

Marian spirituality is characterized by an attitude of giving of self and transcendence of self. These two dimensions are non-dissociable in Mary's perpetual virginity and maternity. Throughout her life, Mary understood and lived her virginity not only physically, but most of all for, in and with God alone. Mary's motherhood for her Son is extended to the apostles, the Church and to all humanity; she is called by the late John Paul II, *the Mother of humanity*. Mary contemplated the mystery of her Son, treasured and pondered upon the expectation of her people concerning the coming of a Messiah. She followed Jesus on the road of His ministry up to Calvary, to the foot of the Cross.

This spirituality is also about communion. Mary's visitation to her cousin Elizabeth revealed the union and communication between two women. Communion points to a relationship between God and human beings, personal and collective; that is, from the "I" to the "WE". This communion of love and concern flows to the wider cosmic dimension of the whole creation.

In fact, Marian spirituality makes a person's spiritual growth present, real, tangible. Mary's role in the spiritual life of Christians is to form and guide them to be contemplatives, leading them to be more Christ-like. Mary shows us the Way, points us to the road to God's Reign, where there is love, justice and peace.

Mary is not a person of the past; her maternal presence is ever alive today. Our late Pope John Paul II speaks about *the pilgrimage of faith* on which the Blessed Virgin Mary advanced faithfully in her union with Christ in a two-fold bond which unites the Mother with her Son and with the Church.²

Spiritual Mother of all, she continues to accompany the People of God. Her exceptional pilgrimage of faith with us represents a constant point of reference for the Church, for individuals, for communities, for all peoples and nations; in a true sense, for all humanity.

Mary does not cease to be the “Star of the Sea” for all those who are still on the journey of faith. She teaches us that to be a disciple of Jesus is to walk the road of her Son. To love God and others is to be in communion together as daughters and sons of God, as brothers and sisters of humanity. ∞



When Chemistry Becomes Magic & Faith Becomes *Commitment!*

Jean Godin, for many years a missionary in the Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa, taught chemistry, and then theology, but has been especially devoted to the training of future priests.

By Jean Godin, lay missionary



Jean Godin

About the author:

Jean Godin is originally from Sorel-Tracy; he is a promoter of *Le Précurseur* French edition of *Mic Mission News*.

Magic and mystery

My services as a teacher were urgently called upon to fulfill the mandate of a teacher in the Democratic Republic of Congo. I immediately responded to the call. And so here I am all of a sudden giving courses in physics, chemistry and biology, followed by laboratory experiments. The experiments never fail to spark discovery, admiration and hilarity in these young Africans, the Azandes, when they witness these marvels! Everything turns into magic and mystery for my young students.

How amazing to see blue litmus paper turn red upon contact with acidic water or red litmus paper turn blue in alkaline water! How can I describe their wonder before the decomposition of water into hydrogen and oxygen through the process of electrolysis, and the little explosion set off by holding the flame of a candle near an inclined test tube? I was having as much fun teaching as they were learning.

Here, dropping out of school is unheard of; the students are hungry to learn and to discover new things. When an unexpected day off forced us to cancel a lab period, believe it or not, the students unanimously asked us to reschedule the class for Sunday after mass!

Questions of a philosophical nature

These elementary experiments in chemistry raise philosophical questions:

Who am I? Where do I come from? Where am I going? What comes after this life? With these questions about what life consists of and about the meaning of things and their lives, I have observed that this knowledge develops an ever-growing interest in their own lives. I find that amazing. That's why I'm so enthusiastic about teaching the hidden mystery of things and the internal magic that grows out of them.

Spurred on by the desire to always learn more and to discover the truth about the purpose of existence, my students, like the majority of human beings, seek to acquire the universal elements of knowledge. They understand themselves better, and this allows them to advance in their own fulfillment as individuals and Christians.

They are astonished to discover that they are participating elements in the world, engaged in a relationship with others like themselves, all sharing a common destiny. This is a realization that amazes them and commits them to respecting the created world.

From philosophy to theology

These thoughts, along with the joy of seeing my students discover the meaning of life, led me to continue my studies in theology in Canada. And after an absence of several years, I again joyfully set out on

the road to Africa as a teacher of theology engaged in training future priests at the seminaries of Upper Zaire: Philosophat St-Augustin (Kisangani) Tshopo and Theologat St-Cyprien (Bunia) Ituri.

Once again I have adapted to this new reality. The two institutions are favoured with an inter-community and multi-cultural staff, as much within the administration and teaching staff as among the students, who come from various regions and cultures, although they are all united in their desire to learn.

This diversity is now broadening out even further as 15 of these young priests choose specializations that are complementary to their studies. Some will be heading for the Gregorian University in Rome, others will be off to Fribourg in Switzerland; still others to the Belgian Lumen Vitae, and even to St. Paul's University in Ottawa. Several have chosen Eastern African University in Nairobi or Western African University in Abidjan. This diversified training will lead to broad expertise and an ecumenical openness within the African Church.

A fledgling Church moving into the future

Over the past 26 years, the Catholic Church in Africa has grown tremendously. The number of faithful has tripled, the clergy has grown by 80%, religious by 60%, and the number of seminarians has quadrupled.¹

This abundance of vocations is a real gift of God for Africa. The phenomenon is indeed impressive. The Church thus regularly sends young people it has selected to foreign countries in order to study in various disciplines so they in turn will be able to train young seminarians. All this is a gift for which we must never fail to thank the Lord. It should however be added that sound judgement must be exercised. In Africa like anywhere else, there are of course failures within the clergy like there are in religious life generally. But this doesn't discourage us.

What a blessing it is for me to humbly but concretely participate in the construction of this growing Church! What's more, I have the joy of being responsible for preaching spiritual retreats in the communities of consecrated women. In Kisangani I was even the beneficiary of an affectionate accolade by one of the novices in the presence of the Apostolic Nuncio and the metropolitan Archbishop. The visitor from Rome said, "I had to come to Africa to see such appreciation!"

This panoramic overview of my involvement in the education and training of young seminarians in the African

Dropping out of school is unheard of. }



Church clearly shows how, in different regions of the world, with their different cultures, the fundamental questions about human life come to the fore. These questions have their common source in our quest to find the right direction to give to our life. My commitment in Africa has been a source of joy and wonder for me as I witness the unquenchable thirst for knowledge, and the courage of these young people who are giving their lives to the service of their fledgling Church. I can now say that chemistry is not only magical but that it has led me to a concrete commitment of faith. This has been a constant source of wonder and thanksgiving. ☪

Photograph: A group of seminarians and young sisters

¹ Statistics, Vatican 2004



M Z I M B A , M A L A W I , A F R I C A

Women Are Making Their Mark

From the double reality of poverty and unemployment, the women of Mzimba have learned a lesson, that of the strength that can be found in uniting their efforts to transform their villages into a social milieu where people live in dignity.

By Marie-Theresa Katongo, M.I.C.

When you get to the Kazomba crossroads about 10 kilometres from Mzimba, ask how to get to the village of Chinombatchaya; there, you will meet a group of courageous women.

A guided visit

These women, who have come from different villages, got together to start clubs that today stand proudly as living proof of their administrative abilities. I invite you to take a guided visit of the sites where their projects, products of arduous and conscientious work, are coming to fruition. The fish-farming project here demanded a great deal of effort, since these women dug the pond with their own hands!

We have more than 350 chambos here; we started with 150 fries that multiplied, and of course we have already had two harvests, says Sophirate Chirwa, president of the Tazingwa Women's Group.

The fish-farming project has not only provided the women with financial rev-

enue thanks to the sale of the fish, but it has also become a source of protein for the families of the members.

These women are convinced that their initiative is bearing fruit. They started their projects after taking a training session, *Training For Transformation* (TFT), organized by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (MIC).

Mrs. Chirwa emphasizes that this training tries to make them aware of the problems in their milieu and to suggest possible solutions. They have identified several problems, such as illiteracy, deforestation, the lack of money to buy fertilizer, and poverty, a direct consequence of the lack of jobs for their husbands. This awareness has led to the need to come together and take up the numerous challenges that stand before them.

At Chetemwabo, the *Tipenje Women's Group*, stands out by its dedicated work to save the fish after a serious drought. *We had a lot of water here, says Caroline Phakati, but this year, the sun was too hot and the rain too rare. We had to save the few fish that were still alive.* The women

¹ Women

Photo credit:

M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Strip of photos: credit – MIC

courageously transported well water to keep the water level high enough for the fish in the pond.

Needs are met

Nothing seems to stop these tenacious and determined women from moving forward. Let's stop in the main village where rabbit hutches can be found. Here again, the project required an initiation to rabbit maintenance. The interested women set themselves to the task and now these lovable little animals are providing them with a good source of revenue. The women are now looking for ways to maximize their production and profits. The sales earnings are allowing them to meet the basic needs of their families.

Gogo Lucia Nyirenda, who is 65 years old, is extremely proud of the project. She says that since its beginnings in 2001, it has given birth to a new hope for survival in the villages. Under the hot African sun, the women show us to some surprisingly lush vegetation in this rather desert-like place.

It's the Village Forest, says one of the women, *the result of a reforestation project*. The Tasingwa Women's Group is involved in planting exotic trees as well as trees of local origin over a vast expanse of land. The people, and especially the club members, can currently gain access to it for a small contribution to the group's revenue. This money is deposited in the group account so it can help support other community projects.

These projects are providing the women with the skills to use the available natural resources. For example, the art of composting has generated considerable interest, each group now has its own garden and can cultivate the vegetables it needs.

You can't get something without working for it

At the beginning, the projects concerned one group of women in particular, but with these positive results, several groups have been formed. The MIC collaborate more and more concretely in working with them to solve the problems facing the women of the region and to encourage them to persevere.

On top of the revenues generated by our projects, says Mrs. Phakati, *we have also benefited from the training to develop our talents and our group solidarity. This initiative has taught us to become self-sufficient, and we are using all the resources available to improve our ways of making a living.*

The project has also shown others that perseverance pays off and that the adage, **YOU CAN'T GET SOMETHING WITHOUT WORKING FOR IT**, is indeed true. In 2004, when a dozen women decided to start the Chitemwano Women's Group under the auspices of experienced persons, some believed that it would be very easy. *There are only five of us left, and those that left now regret it*, says the president of the group, Anita Theu. She has every reason to smile, since the Chitemwano project has turned out to be one of the best means of alleviating poverty among its members.

These women are now experts in hog raising. They have to feed the animals, as well as cleaning and maintaining the pig barn. *We foresee that our six big hogs will help us meet our needs once we start selling them*. The project also aims to inculcate a sense of self-sufficiency in the people and to help them discover the means to earn their living by using the resources available in their environment.

A continuous transformation

To allow the children to attend school, the women undertook an awareness campaign in their milieu and, through a broad-based community project, joined together to build a school. They had a vacant lot at their disposal but access to it was difficult because the river often overflowed. So men, women and children all pitched in, some bringing sand, others rocks, water and cement, and now the bridge and the school are up and running to ensure the children's education.

From what Anita Thieu says, *these projects we have undertaken together have had an immense influence in our transformation. We no longer have a mentality of dependence like we had before. Our collaboration, along with the support of the MIC Sisters, has helped us to become self-sufficient and to have hope for the future.* ☺



From the Virtual to the Real



Marie Mona Henry, M.I.C.

With binders underarm, a stout heart and a determined step, Rosenelle Lagredelle and Marie Mona Henry head off for their administration class in Quisqueya, Port-au-Prince, Haiti. They have finished their homework and this morning they'll be making a class presentation about a feasible project that has to be self-financing. The two Haitian MIC Sisters have worked hard to achieve this result.

By Marie Mona Henry, M.I.C.,

The presentation of a virtual project

This project grew out of a community reflection that sought to promote the cause of women through the construction of a secondary school. Some were in favour, while others wanted to work more directly with the Church to help the poor. We wanted to unite our efforts in a new project. The challenge in the management course was to set up a small business; this was not to be a charitable organization. The project had to be profitable. And then we began to wonder: *what if it could actually work?* With the help of our teachers and coached by experts, Rosenelle and I got to work. Bank loans were out of the question since interest rates are too high, and in any case banks are not interested in investing in schools. So what were we to do? Microsoft is a wonderful example! Bill Gates sold shares to his employees so they would feel like co-owners and work more efficiently. The result was that the company became more profitable. So we said to ourselves: *Let's sell people shares at 50 gourdes (\$10) each; 60% of the shares will go to the MIC and then we can ask for funds from various organizations.* When our professors heard about our project, they said, *If your community doesn't support this project, come see us.* Deep down, I thought, *This project will be feasible and will meet the needs of the milieu and of the community, which is looking for a way to become self-sufficient.*

Virtual yet feasible

This was a dream I had, and I would talk about it to anyone who would listen. So much so that the idea finally worked its way into other heads, and together, the MIC Sisters of Haiti presented it to the Superior General and her Board. Once they had examined the project, and in the middle of the centennial anniversary of the foundation of our Institute (2002), we received a favourable response. We already had the land and the necessary funds to begin the foundations for this secondary school and we had confidence in divine Providence.

The objective of our project was to accompany girls so that they would become responsible citizens participating in their own cultural development while becoming aware of world problems. We also wanted to give a high level of education that would allow them to integrate and adapt to the demands of globalization. Inviting young women from nearby areas to take advantage of the services offered by this educational complex was also important. Evening and vacation courses could be added to give adults access to professional training.

The Haitian Institute of Statistics and Information reports that, in the population of those 6 years old and older, 31.8% of the women and 22.8% of the men have never been to school. Considering the importance of educating women in the socio-economic development of a society, and wishing to respond to the demands of their mission, the MIC Sisters constructed this



educational complex, which was named Institution Mother Delia (IMD). This school meets the objective of the MIC Sisters in Haiti, who are working concretely toward the promotion of women and in the area of family pastoral services. They are making significant contributions to the recognition and the respect of the rights of women and of the poor.

Building the secondary school

We have raised interest among the neighbourhood's residents so the establishment will become their school. The government built us a good road that leads to the school and we did the landscaping ourselves. With only a few classrooms, the beginnings were modest, but we were soon encouraged by the efficiency and the joy of the parents. We needed financial resources to continue the building so we wrote more than a thousand letters to our friends and relatives, to business leaders and organizations. Many of them joined together and helped us: the Japanese embassy, the Apostolic Nunciature, the ASMIC (Associates of the MIC) of Canada and so many other benefactors! Local businesses gave us good prices on cement and steel, and many fund-raising activities allowed us to keep the worksite busy so that today, even though construction is not yet complete, we have more than 750 students in 17 classes.

We don't offer student bursaries, but after having checked in the area, I can say that our school provides the highest value of any private school, both in terms of affordable fees and the quality of its structures. We provide desks and a square metre of space for each student in the classroom, which is very rare in Haiti. The parents are happy and the school meets a great need in the area.

A real community project

The neighbourhood residents feel responsible for their school. Our neighbour Mr. Chou-

Chou keeps track of the students who arrive late; he's always in front of his house when school starts. He came one day to tell us, *You must not put up with IMD students staying in the street after 7:30 a.m.* A major awareness campaign was undertaken to make people realize the importance of a clean environment. The neighbours said, *The Sisters want to raise the value of the neighbourhood, and look at you, you just throw your garbage all over the place... no way!*

I think what is important in all this is the spirit in which everything has happened: a spirit of brotherly solidarity, and of sharing on the part of our generous donors. It has been a blessed occasion touching the best in all those who have participated in it. I tell them, *Investing in a school means building a country.* Every time I have a chance, I show the workers the greatness of the work they're doing. *Whenever you dig, shovel, or move earth, you can choose to do your task well to earn a better life for your family; that's very noble, but when you build a school, you are investing in the education of the people. That's the greatness of the work you're doing here!*

We have other great projects for our school. We have started the chemistry and physics laboratory, we have good teachers, and we hope to acquire instruments! We have put our trust in Providence like Délia Tétreault, our Foundress, did. I give thanks to God for the wonders that He continues to work before our eyes, and my heart is full of gratitude. ☺



¹ A young student at IMD

²⁻³ The school under construction

Photo credits: Lucie Gagné, M.I.C.



Investing
in a school
means
building a
country



YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

The notion of witnessing is at the heart of the Church's missionary activity and can be lived throughout a lifetime, no matter the age.

By Michelle Payette, M.I.C.

Recalling the theme of World Mission Sunday, October 22, 2006: "You Are My Witnesses".

About the author:

Sr. Michelle is in charge of animating mission projects in parishes and schools.

¹ Isabel Sanchez's peaceful smile inspires confidence.
Photo credit: MIC

Suffering, in the light of faith, becomes a source of hope and peace. }

Who can be better witnesses to the above fact, if not you, the elderly and the sick. Your life experience, through the years, has instilled within you a gentle wisdom. You have stored-up a wealth of spiritual insight that is waiting to be shared with others. Your presence among us speaks of the precious values of time and life. Also, your capacity to realistically review your life experiences places you in line with those who bear the Good News.

Having worked in Lima, Peru, I often came across sick and elderly people who lived in extreme poverty, and inhumane conditions. Courageously, they struggled for survival while reaching out to others. Here, I think of Isabel, a young woman of 40 who, at the age of 18, suffered an accident. Her legs amputated, she managed to go around within her vicinity thanks to a wheel chair, bringing a helping hand wherever needed. Full of life, Isabel never gave up in the face of suffering. She was a witness to hope, that virtue dwelling within her. Her courage revitalized my own faith and my missionary commitment. But how can someone witness to God's love when physical illness or age has taken over?

Suffering—in union with the suffering Christ

Trials and hardships are unique experiences that can lead us to a deep communion with Jesus. It was *He who said: Father, if you*

will, take this cup of suffering away from me. However, not my will but your will be done. Lk 22:42 This 'letting-go' brings about peace in one's heart; self-pity is transformed into a Source of Love. Faith does not eliminate pain, but it links us to Christ's redeeming sufferings.

Faith assures us that it is in God's power to draw good out of evil; to trust gives meaning to life. Among those who have suffered great hardships, many can say that their faith has brought them hope and serenity in times of trial. Notwithstanding our physical limitations, the Lord calls each one of us to be active, to reach-out with whatever strength and talents we still possess. Each individual is a precious collaborator in Christ's redeeming work.

Is this not your mission to become a witness to God's Presence and Love in your life; a Presence that has penetrated all the fibres of your being. Through prayer you can enter into dialogue with God. Speak to the Lord of your sorrows, your hopes, your concerns for your loved ones; thank the Divine Physician and offer Him all your being—this is prayer and it is a way of witnessing to your faith, since it reveals your secret relationship with the God of Love.

Without fear, tell your story. Yes, your faith-filled history might awaken the source of faith in others. Someone might be waiting for your message. ☺

MARY AT THE HEART OF HUMANITY

Magnificat!
My soul exalts
the Lord...

Lk 1:46

Mary's song of thanksgiving contains a force that goes far beyond it. She humbly reuses the words of the Jewish prayers of her people, upon which she meditates and which express her joy, her faith, her gratitude and her God's great preference for the humble. Far from being closed upon itself, this is rather a prayer that turns to God and remains open to the realities of the world.

In Mary's prayer of praise and in her prayer of mission, we can read the prayer of hope for our humanity. She who bears life, bears hope; she who gives life knows the state of our humanity and its great need for renewal and confidence.

Father Pierre-Yves Pecqueux
Esprit et Vie, N° 131



MARY IN THE MIDST OF HER PEOPLE

Could it be that the wooden beauty we see in so many of the artistic and textual portrayals of Mary has cast a shadow over the hard reality of her ordinary daily life, in fact the only place God can be encountered?

By André Gadbois

I imagine Mary, of the Magnificat and Passion fame, more and more often as being very different from the image we see depicted by numerous painters, sculptors, theologians and preachers. She is also rather different from the Mary I prayed to on the Scout's rosary I used to carry in my pants pocket on the way to school in the 60s. Have I strayed and become pretentious, now that I dare to entertain the idea that, too often and unconsciously Mary has been portrayed more as being beautiful than as being real. So beautiful in fact that her daily toil, hurts and sleepless nights never even slightly wrinkled her face; the hard reality of her life was conjured away in favour of her exalted role as Mother of the Saviour. But by overemphasizing her special status, aren't we in danger of turning her into an angel and disincarnating her, even when God took pains to become flesh in her womb in order to enlighten us?

I'll say something even more shocking: it was Mary I thought of while listening to Monique Lépine, the mother of Marc Lépine, recently on TV as she revealed what she had kept in her heart since those terrible events that occurred at the Polytechnic! I think that both women, involved in totally different events, suffered because of their sons and that neither had an easy task of it: the mother of Jesus of Nazareth wasn't spared any suffering even if the Word lived within her, and her grandeur is to be found in her daily consent to the heart-wrenching adventures that grew out

of her initial choice, which we call the Annunciation.

MARY'S ORDINARY EXISTENCE

This isn't a novel. Mary was a daughter of Palestine with a face toughened by the sun, wind and sand, a woman who had to pull the cable to draw water up from the well, a woman with hands reddened and scarred from scrubbing and weaving, an ordinary woman of her people. Mary was a girl who had both a sense of God and ordinary common sense: *How will it be possible?* she asked the Lord's messenger Lk 1:34. She was a woman who didn't blindly resort to magical thinking, but who meditated and thought, a woman who knew the history of her people and the Scriptures Lk 1:53-55, a woman inhabited by God long before the Annunciation. Mary was a mother before whom her son dared to declare: *My mother and my brothers are those who listen to the Word of God and obey it* Lk 8:21, a mother who was powerless and in turmoil as, without shame, she witnessed the cruel death of the boy she had carried Jn 19:25-26 even while almost all his supporters trembled in fear, doubt and despair. Mary was familiar with the suffering generated by her clear-sighted faithfulness... so far removed from submission.

RECONCILING FAITH AND TRAGEDY

In Palestine, there must have been a lot of gossip, both good and bad, about Jesus. He wasn't universally liked; his



trial is proof of that. There are words that warm the heart and others that kill like the stones thrown at the woman caught in the act of adultery. There are hypocritical words, hateful words, words that ridicule everything, humiliating words, discouraging words, words that lie and words that betray. We know how mothers react when their child's reputation has been damaged or whose grand projects have been thwarted. In the midst of her people, Mary listened and kept many memories, as well as much suffering, in her heart. Soon after the birth of her beloved little one, Mary started to realize what kind of heart-rending experiences she would have to undergo, and to glimpse the kind of events she would become involved in.

We must gather up all our things and flee to Egypt because of a tyrant Mt : 2 :13. This is a much more traumatic event for Mary and her husband than for the child bundled up in her arms. *Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?* Lk 3 :49. How quickly her heart must have been beating when she saw her son dragged from tribunal to tribunal and crucified like a criminal? Just how was she able to reconcile this tragic end with the angel of the Annunciation's words: *He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of His ancestor David; He will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and His reign will have no end.* Lk 1:32-33

Mary's faith was put to the test, but so was her hope! Like a traveller walking in a storm, she was able to constantly shelter herself so she could keep alive the consent she had uttered in sunnier days. Having unceasing recourse to the Scriptures, prayer, personal reflection and friends sustained her hopefulness to such an extent that, although not spared any suffering, she became a living example of the Word, of the one she had carried: *No one can have greater love than to lay down his life for his friends.* Jn 15:13 ∞



Mary, a daughter of Palestine
Photo credit : Erick Bonnier

MARY'S PRESENCE

Yes, from now on all peoples will call

Mary, mother of Jesus, unique woman in the history of humanity, is a sign of hope and consolation for the people of God on its journey. She is the most exalted and praised, in all cultures and in all languages. Apparition sites and devotions to Mary are spread-out over all the five continents. Every nation has a history of Mary. All peoples have received unprecedented graces and astounding favors through Mary's intercession.

Mary inspired artists, in all countries and in all times: Icons, statues, sculptures, paintings, mosaics, stained glass windows, cathedrals, etc. Here is a chance to discover images of the Virgin presented at two international assemblies of consecrated women, each considered by the participants to be the most venerated or significant Marian image of their respective countries. Among the many representations, we have chosen:



PHILIPPINES



CANADA



SPAIN



JAPAN

MADAGASCAR

IN THE WORLD

all me blessed Lk 1:48



MALAYSIA



KOREA



MYANMAR



SRI LANKA



VIETNAM



HAITI

The devotion to Mary spread throughout the Church as of the first Council of Nicea (325) and then at the Council of Ephesus (430) when the Virgin was recognized as the Mother of God. Vatican Council II acknowledged the devotion to Mary as a central element of the Christian life. *As the most holy Mother of God, she was, after her Son, exalted by divine grace above all angels and men. Hence the Church appropriately honors her with special reverence.* L.G. # 66

Three elements constitute the Marian cult:

veneration: Its origin is found in biblical texts. The words of the Angel Gabriel: *Peace be with you! The Lord is with you and has greatly blessed you!* Lk 1:28 And those of Elizabeth: *You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear!* Lk 1:42

invocation: The most ancient tradition of the Church acknowledges Mary's powerful role as intercessor.

imitation: Saint Ambrose taught: the Mother of God is a type of the Church in the order of faith, charity and perfect union with Christ. L.G. # 63



Monique Bigras, M.I.C.

Women on the road

Like Mary and Elizabeth, like our Foundress Délia Tétreault, and the MICs of yesterday, of today and of tomorrow, we are conscious of being bearers of a mission that impels us to burst into a song of blessing and praise.

By Monique Bigras, M.I.C..

She was barely fifteen. Her name was Mary. Fascinated by the Infinite, she had dreams for the present and the future, preparing for marriage and for childbearing. Then, a major shift happened. A visit and an invitation suddenly transformed everything, blasted her dreams, giving them unsuspected magnitude, the very magnitude of Yahweh.

And the angel left her... Lk 1:38

In the solitude of her mystery, her heart filled to the brim, still beset by ques-

tions, she turned to Elizabeth. *Mary arose and hurried off to a town in the hill country of Judah.* Lk 1:39 She paid no attention to distances, annoyances or eventual risks; she kept no record of her time or fatigue. Sheathed with the Holy Spirit, Mary set out on her journey. Swiftly and cheerfully she went, riding on a donkey, on a tortuous and perilous road, risking danger at every turn. The fullness of her heart gave wings to her feet.

From Nazareth to Ain Karim, from the Fiat to the Magnificat, a pilgrim of faith and of an unreserved YES to God's plan, she set out. The love she bore, shaped as thanksgiving, became in the silence of her heart the wellspring of a Magnificat. A song, a prayer, a dance woven into the fabric of her people's history intertwined with the desires of her heart and with those of her God. Silence fosters the maturing of the Word. The fruitfulness and the beauty of the Magnificat are the product of her deep prayerful reflection on the way into the hills. Mary's joy was overflowing, contagious, startling. The God who dwelt in her was a God of happiness and serenity. A tireless pilgrim, she carried in her knapsack the roadmap of thanksgiving which gave meaning to her journey.

Your paths overflow with a rich harvest (...); they shout and sing for joy. Ps. 65: 12.14

They were barely twenty. Their names were Délia, Joséphine, Germaine, Blanche and Rachel. They were fascinated, sent on a mission by a dream beyond their reach which gave zest to their daily activities, by dreams full of joy, sharing and solidarity, dreams of love and liberty.

About the author:

Sr. Monique, poet, artist, and missionary in Bolivia; she is currently in-charge of the MIC Web site

¹ Today's young MICs in Madagascar prepare themselves for tomorrow.

² Mary greets Elizabeth at Ain Karim, Israel, before the wall of the Magnificat written in many languages.

Photo credits: MIC



They arose and took their leave forever, with no other baggage but their YES, not knowing, like Mary, where it would lead them. Filled with daring confidence and all the fervour of their youth, in the name of the Love that had come to seal a Covenant, they travelled the roads of their homeland and of the earth. China was the first land of the first mission. Joyfully, they watered fields of which they did not always see the harvest. They were not discouraged by the many obstacles along their way. They faced them patiently, courageously and even with song, so firm was their trust in Him for whose sake they had ventured their whole lives. Mary lovingly guided their hand in planting a few flowers in the great garden of humanity.

Day after day, year adding on to years, the fields spread beyond borderlines and many other peoples welcomed them into their homes and into their hearts. In joy or in sorrow, in happiness or in suffering, in war or in peace, one note calling for another, a symphony was born and got every heart singing. With Mary as their companion, they wrote the melody of their daily lives on a staff of praise. Like a prism that captures light, there they were, with open hearts and hands, receiving and welcoming their God and the cries of their brothers and sisters, allowing it all to flow in a colourful Magnificat. Unbeknown to them, they were writing history and preparing the way for so many others who would, in the appropriate time, join their efforts and their love to those of their predecessors. As they walked together to the beat of a hymn of thanksgiving, these women staked out the course for us, and today, they are inviting us to take over from them.

Mary and Elizabeth, two women in the expectancy of their future as mothers, two women who carried in their womb an ineffable mystery, an astounding miracle! Like Mary and Elizabeth, like our Mother Délia and our sisters of the past, the present and the future, we realize that we bear a common mission and cooperate in a

grandiose and exciting plan that impels us to burst into a song of blessing and praise. As women, we are, with Mary, the place where newness is generated, the womb of the future, the venue of the advent of God.

The past moves through the present on its way to the future. It is up to us, as it was up to our M.I.C. sisters of the past, to dare take the risk. The strength of life, of His life, can still spring out of the cry of a new birth. Like Mary, we can ask: *How will this be done?* Lk 1:34 But also like Mary, we can hurry off with the assurance of His presence, and even more so, of His love. Even if age makes the walk a little heavier for some of us, the heart has lost none of the audacity of its dreams. No one better than Mary of the Magnificat can incite us to reveal the wonders of God to the world of our times. Faced with the many paths open to our fledgling steps, we pray to you, O Mary:

Instil in our lives the appeal of the deep and the joy that accompanies the Good News. When we tarry inside our houses, where the cries of humanity fail to reach us, give us the courage to get out and relinquish our securities.

Is the One who started this excellent work not opening for us new horizons? How can we doubt that he will be by our side as we strive to attain them?

When Sarah laughed, the angel responded: *Is there any wonder beyond the Lord's doing?* Gn 18:14

When Mary questioned, the angel responded: *Nothing is impossible with God.* Lk 1:37

These words were written for you and for me. Let us dare believe them and...



MARY'S MEMORY

Throughout the Bible, and especially in the life of Mary, REMEMBERING plays an important, even an essential role. And the Stranger on the road to Emmaus sparked the memory of the two disciples so their eyes would open. Could it be that memory is a source of hope?

I'll
never
forget
your
face. }

By André Gadbois

Do this in memory of me Lk 22 :19, he asked. And Luke observes in the episode about Jesus at the temple at 12 years old: *Mary kept the memory of all these events in her heart* Lk 2:51. And in his description of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, Luke says: *Then their eyes opened and they recognized him* Lk 24:31. It seems to me that memory often comes into play here. Events occur; we are invited to remember them and to consider them in the light of the Scriptures. To what end? That of recognizing in these experiences the One who was crucified and rose again, and to open our eyes about our daily life so our hope can draw sustenance.

We are invited to remember what happens in our LITTLE LIFE, trying our best to conserve it and regularly take the time to examine, meditate upon, or

question it, for it is here and not elsewhere that God comes to us and opens our eyes. To break it open with the help of the Gospel, like we gently and slowly break bread in order to nourish ourselves in complete confidence. Wasn't it like this that Mary found hope whenever suffering and misunderstanding took hold of her? Since her heart was *full of joy because of God* Lk 1:47, she accepted to carry his Word within her as in a fragile vase, with all the surprises, pain and abandon that this accep-

tance entailed. With her body, she sang what her heart was already singing. And she never denied the Magnificat, even if she must have sometimes wondered how such things would come about: how indeed would he *scatter the proud* when it turned out that they were the ones who killed her son? How would he *exalt those of low degree*, who continued to slowly waste away in everyday reality?

I'LL NEVER FORGET YOU

One of my favourite songs, LAISSEZ-MOI PASSER, tells the story of a girl who, one Friday, walks past Golgotha to meet her beloved; she ends with: *I want to go back home and wonder why they crucified the guy who had an unforgettable look in his eyes... His name? I don't remember!* Mary remembered, the Stranger on the road to Emmaus shook up the memory of the two disciples so they would remember, and we, his disciples, must do our best to remember, with the fire of the Scriptures, what is going on in our lives (our own and in those of our people) in order to grasp how the Lord *does not forget to manifest his bounty*.

In our culture, sometimes we can't help but mutter, *You've got a face I'm never gonna forget*, a way of remembering a bad experience. Might it be that Mary, in a very different vein, full of grace and love, formulated in the depths of her heart a phrase like this:

My son, I'll never forget your face. And my God, I'll never forget the greatness of your bounty. ∞

Disciples of Emmaus
Painting by Sieger Köder



MISSION POSSIBLE!



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

Their Foundress, Délia Tétreault, has marked her time and left an imprint from which pathways have been drawn. Her vision was broad and far-reaching. Her influence contributed to the marvellous development of the missionary awakening in Canada. A mystic and a woman of action imbued of a Spirit of Thanksgiving, her apostolic perspective went beyond all boundaries and cultures.

Provincial House
10,710 Grande-Allee Blvd.
Montreal (Quebec)
Canada H3L 2M7
Telephone: (514) 384-4624
Email: provmic@videotron.ca

Mission Animation Centre
314, Cote Ste-Catherine Rd.
Montreal (Quebec)
Canada H2V 2B4
Telephone: (514) 495-1551
Email: animamic@yahoo.ca

www.soeurs-mic.qc.ca

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Today, who is a messenger? No one else but you and me. How can this be? What is the meaning of the word 'Mission' in our world today? Are we like John the Baptist, the Precursor who cried out in the wilderness: *Turn away from your sins because the Kingdom of heaven is near.* Mt. 3:2 In his encyclical, *Redemptoris Missio*, the late Pope John Paul II speaks about the 'urgency' regarding missionary activity in the world. Mission is pressing! To be messengers of the Christian values in our world today is an unequalled challenge: it demands daring and conviction.

You will be my witnesses. Acts 1:8 There is a link between the messenger and the witness. The witness is the one who has seen and heard. In faith, the person has experienced the presence of the Lord. Having witnessed this, he can become a messenger, communicating this experience of faith because the Lord is a real person. If the message is deeply rooted in the heart, the messenger is capable of arousing interest for God, of reawakening a thirst for the Divine. Like John the Baptist, the voice of the one sent calls out: *There is the Lamb of God* Jn 1:29 and like the Samaritan, the messenger invites people: *Come and see the man who told me everything I have done, could he be the Messiah?* Jn 4:29

Each one of us is asked to be a witness. How? By living our faith consistently, and being faithful to the Father's Will. In welcoming and accepting others respectfully and unconditionally, though different from us. By reaching out, with love, to our families, relatives and to the whole world—for is there not a shortage

of love in all of humanity?

You will be my witnesses. The Lord calls us to intimacy with Him. Our response is to give Him time, to listen to His voice within our being; to incorporate the Word in order to proclaim and communicate the Good News. *Go tell what you have seen and heard.* Lk 7:22 To see and hear, one must find space and time alone, leave behind the noise and turbulence of this world; stop and reflect on the meaning of life.

To accomplish His Mission, Christ still needs us. We are His eyes, His arms, His feet, but above all His heart.

To accomplish His mission, Christ still needs us. We are His eyes, His arms, His feet, but above all His heart—to love as He did. Our society is in need of love: for the elderly, so often sad in their solitude; for marriages that are falling apart; for young people at a loss with themselves, who find refuge in drugs and violence; for the many people who are neglected and ask for but a small amount of love. Yes, our world longs to love and be loved.

Being a witness, a messenger of Christ, requires a listening heart and authentic love. *Love one another as I have loved you.* Jn 13:34 There are no other means to prepare the way of the Lord: LOVE... a Mission possible! ☺



Just Like God, Sr. Léontine Creates Beauty

Hidden deep within every person we meet, lies a great mystery. It will take an eternity to fully reveal this truth. It's wonderful, however, just to become aware of it and to make the most out of the spark that points to this mystery.

About Léontine Lang, m.i.c.

Born in New Brunswick, Sr. Léontine has been a missionary in Africa for many years; her creative talents lie in the fields of art and liturgy.

¹ Sr. Léontine encourages the youth.

² A door made with material provided by nature.

Photo credits:

M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

By Brigitte Bédard

SISTER LÉONTINE has become aware of this truth through her experiences in Mzuzu, Malawi, a country located in central-east Africa. There she works diligently with a specific goal in mind: to create beauty with whatever the Creator offers her in the natural world.

Of herself, she says: *When I was young, I had a dream—that of marrying a farmer like my father. But finally, I entered the M.I.C. Community. My father left me a great gift which I have treasured and developed throughout my life: to create beauty out of nothing, like God the Creator. My artistic nature has followed me all the way to Africa.*

In 1970 Sr. Léontine was sent to Malawi, to open and organize a Book Centre. Though her space is limited, she has found a way to do some art work. While responding to the pastoral needs of the people in the area, she has discovered hidden talents in the young people who come her way: *Deep in my heart, my goal is to help the younger generation realize how they can best help their country, their society.*

My Capital? Myself!

The young people have neither the means, the money, the studio, nor the materials to work. How can you create when the bare essentials are lacking? Sister Léontine knows! When young people say to her: *We have no capital to begin a project; how do you expect us to work?* a comment she has heard time and time again, Sister's reply is simple: *You have yourself, and this 'self' needs to be developed and worked on.*

Nature is the great provider. There is everything we need to develop our talents right here on this land. I had a good pretext to awaken their interest, to show them what could be done, using what nature provides. We have no glue? No problem! We can produce some with manioc flour; this type of glue is perfect for visual arts and binding books. For a more consistent, solid glue, we add sap from the frangipane tree or juice from the banana tree.

Jesus is Black!

Our artist tells us about a young boy who had failed grade eight and considered himself without any talent. *Christopher did*

have some hidden talents; I had observed him drawing in the sand all the toys he would see. I gave him my paint and some money to buy art materials. During the early stage of learning, St. John's Hospital hired him to paint the walls of the institution. In his paintings, Jesus is black. Be it on the front side of the hospital, depicting Jesus healing the sick, or on the side walls, where Jesus is in dialogue with the Samaritan woman, or the Resurrected Christ—Jesus is always black.

Passers-by are scandalized by these drawings. However, Sister Léontine understands Christopher's concept of Jesus. *In his painting, Jesus must be Black. He is accused and put to death by Black people. If Jesus is White, it means He is condemned by White people and Blacks are not present. Jesus would thus have come only to redeem the White race from its sins. According to Christopher, that is absurd! In his mind, he knows that Jesus said: the one who sees Me in his/her brother, sees Me. One day he asked his entourage what color their neighbour was? The response: Black. Well then, remarks Christopher, if your neighbour is Black and Jesus is in your neighbour, it means that Jesus is Black.*

'Black Jesus' is genuine enculturation. Missionaries, though well-intentioned, have always imposed a Western Jesus. Sister Léontine believes Jesus is for all peoples, whatever the color. As for the passers-by, when they look at Christopher's paintings, they ponder upon this Jesus who, like them, is... Black!

Christopher has become an autonomous artist. He is a perfect example that with a talent, one can earn a living. All that was needed was a helping hand to get him started... and Sister Léontine was that instrument for him.

The torch is passed on

Those with disabilities are also welcome to learn. Mike, unable to see, is now capable of designing greeting cards out of recycled paper or banana leaves. Hasting, who first introduced himself as having no education but wanting to help, was taught by Sister how to build shelves and recycle

the paper that was being thrown out by a printing shop next door. One year later, Hasting, having returned to his village, built a small shack where he now teaches others how to recycle paper. With the newly-made product, he fashions lampshades which sell like hotcakes.

My goal is to prompt young people to find ways to be helpful to their society.

Many Centres have been opened and organized. Sr. Léontine now has a well equipped team: in agreement with a local printer, a volunteer teacher translates French literature into the native language, Tumbuka; volunteers, along with a team that promotes preventive measures against AIDS and drug abuse, also teach the art of celebrating a funeral. Amazing! All this is happening within the walls of a small Book Centre. Our artist wishes to implement her dream in all of the fourteen surrounding parishes. Paradoxically, she asserts that her goal will have been reached when the Centres close their doors. How is this? *Because the purpose of these Centres is to give the young people what they need to return to their villages and share with others what they have learned and acquired. When this happens, it will have been a success!*

To produce beauty with what God offers her. The Creator has provided her with brothers and sisters. With them, she knows how to unveil the beauty that lies within. In turn, they must do the same.



SEEDS OF YESTERDAY, BLOSSOMS OF TODAY

Dear MIC Sisters,

A heartfelt thank you for your warm welcome at your Mother House. We have been deeply touched by the Missionary Exhibition and Art Gallery, which depict so beautifully your mission work, your history and the spirituality of your Foundress, Délia Tétreault. All in all, the day's pilgrimage was a most wonderful experience for us, and we will always treasure the pleasure of meeting you all. May God bless and keep you in your good work, and please also remember us in your prayers!

Raymond Au and Angelina Lo
Past and Present Chairman of OCCC

City. Sr. Marie Thérèse Beaudette, one of the pioneers, relates a special experience:

It was a cold winter day before Christmas and I was going around the campus of Ottawa University in search of Chinese students who had nowhere to go for Christmas. I was so happy to have extended invitations to fifteen students to come and join the Sisters for our Christmas celebrations. One of the Sisters, an experienced missionary from China who saw me preparing enough sumptuous refreshments to welcome a crowd of twenty, wisely told me not to keep my hopes up too high: they might not all come. She was right, only four turned up. I learnt so much from those experienced missionaries from China; they prepared me for my thirty-eight years of service to the Chinese in Hong Kong, China and the Philippines.

This was the beginning of the Chinese Catholic Community in Ottawa. It was not the number of students that mattered the most, but their sense of belonging and bonding with the Sisters.

Seedlings of Spring Time: A Youthful Community

Under the loving care and guidance of the MICs, the Chinese Centre became for many 'a home away from home'. There was a warm family atmosphere that generated a sense of belonging; it was there that the seeds of faith and love were sown deep in the hearts of those young adults. Many women students of Chinese origin were taken in as boarders for a long period of time. Several happy events took place at the Chinese Centre—from celebrating birthdays to welcoming new members into the Catholic faith, to witnessing the love of young couples on their wedding day; all these brought great joy and life to the growing community.

A Golden Jubilee Pilgrimage in honour of the MIC Sisters: Founders of the Ottawa Chinese Catholic Community.

By Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

Sowers of the Seeds: The Beginning of a New Mission in Ottawa

In 1955, with the permission of Mgr. J.N. Gelineau of Ottawa, President of the Association for the Neo-Canadians, a few MIC missionaries from China were sent to Ottawa to reach out to Chinese immigrants and students living in the Capital

In view of further expansion, the community slowly moved to Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish. However, the bonding with the MIC Sisters continued throughout the following years. Today, gratitude and love are still overflowing from the Ottawa Chinese Catholic Community onto the pioneer Sisters of the Chinese Centre.

In 2005, upon celebrating their Golden Jubilee, the Chinese Community invited the MIC Sisters who had worked at the Centre to come to Ottawa. After 50 years, the reunion with our former students, brought forth fond memories for all those who came to the celebration. This is especially so for Sr. Marie-Thérèse Beaudette who said:

It was so wonderful to be reunited with Dr. Edward Ng and his wife Mrs. Laura Shum, after forty some years. They had been trying to locate where I was and they were so happy to have finally reached me by mail. Our reunion in Ottawa during the Golden Jubilee celebration was a nostalgic moment to be treasured and remembered; the gratitude in the hearts of these people has never ceased after fifty years!

Blossoms of Today: A Vibrant and Growing Community

Yesterday's youth became today's fervent and dedicated Catholics. As parents, many are now sharing the responsibility of educating their children in the faith and rendering different services to the Chinese Community. Others are taking responsible roles in parish ministries and in their local communities; they extend their services not only in Ottawa, but also in other parts of Canada, USA and Hong Kong.

Unlike the big cities of Vancouver, Montreal and Toronto where family immigration or investment immigration take place, the Ottawa Chinese Catholic Community consists mainly of university students who settle after their studies. The youthfulness of this group keeps the Community ever energetic and dynamic.

Today, with the increase in immigrants from mainland China, the Ottawa Chinese Catholic Community is trying



its best to give special attention to those who are Mandarin speakers as well as to its Cantonese-speaking members. Wherever there is life there are challenges, and the growth of any Christian Community revolves around the Paschal Mystery of death and new life in Christ. This fact is well stated in their 2005 Golden Jubilee souvenir book.

The Catholic Chinese Community of Ottawa

Photo credit:

Huguette Turcotte, M.I.C.

Wherever there is life
there are challenges. }

The current chairwoman, Miss Angela Lo and the co-editor Mrs. Fatima Lau, wrote:

In retrospect, we have witnessed the growth and development of the Community through joy and crisis: from olden days of student-centered approach, to today's catering to the various needs of families and new immigrants; from a small cradled Chinese Centre under the loving care of the MIC Sisters, to gradually expanding to form the present congregation; from member mobility due to family and environmental factors, to a more settled big family that welcomes the newly baptized members. We owe our gratitude to the MIC Sisters for their pioneering work and all the priests for their ministry and support in the past. With mutual care and support, and working together in unity, we will build a brighter and more promising Community. ∞

You've Got Mail!

Learning From Another Culture

Greetings from Cameroon!

Here I am, at the cutting edge of enculturation. A neighbour, a noteworthy person committed to the parish, died September 3rd of a cardiovascular arrest; he was left in the morgue until the 15th of the same month. During this period of time, the Eucharist was celebrated every evening in his home. The funeral Mass which began at 10:15 a.m. lasted until 1:30 p.m. Under a makeshift tent, a sumptuous meal then followed and was served by caterers. We were at least 1,000 people attending the event.

An automatic vending machine, full of beer, had been placed on our veranda. Non-stop the beer flowed out of the huge container; people talked loudly and laughed heartily- fortunately the organizer watched for our security. It was a happy event, music was continuous with intermittent shots being fired.

Then the 'victory over death' dance began. Very war-like, the men positioned themselves in the center, and the women, especially widows dressed in white and with shaved heads formed a circle around the men. They were carrying gourds or bundles of wood on their heads and chanting wordless sounds. This symbolism stands for: *We stand in solidarity, where is your sting oh death? See, we are alive, we dance, we eat, we drink. You are not victorious! The Father has given us life and we rejoice in it.*

What we saw and heard was not perceived by the local people as being extraordinary.

Wishing you the very best, Francine Ravaoarilala, M.I.C.



Sr. Francine with members of her family
Photo graph: MIC

Big changes in Tsaramasa!

Our President, Mr. Marc Ravalomanana, has made a commitment toward the poor with a policy to improve standards of living in underprivileged neighborhoods. As a result, we have gained a new boulevard with the sanitation of the gully and, most of all, a new school.

A school for the Malagasy children where they can grow and study more cheerfully. Approximately 950 students are split up into primary and secondary-level classes.

Education remains the most effective tool to fight against poverty. It secures a brighter future. The school's inauguration was attended by the President, local citizen leaders, and the MIC Sisters who direct the school. The students promised to *work, work well, work hard.*

These changes encourage us in our efforts to train and educate worthy citizens for the Church and for the State.

The Church, the State, our Partners – that is, the European Union – all worked together to achieve these results.

We thank the Lord who helped make our task of educators that much easier.

Sr. Pierrette Rasoamampianina, M.I.C.
Principal of the "Fo masin'i Jesoa" School



Sr. Pierrette with students

Photo credit: MIC

DISCOVERING NEW HORIZONS

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

May He inspire
you to bring the
light of Christ to
the world with
the apostles'
eagerness!



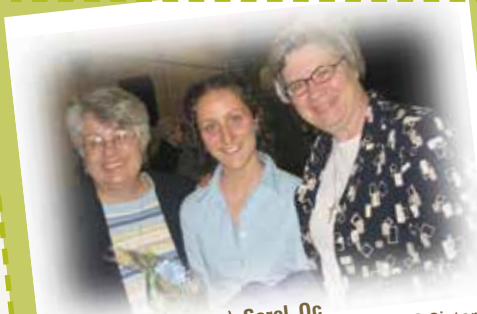
NOËLLA FRÉCHETTE, M.I.C.—St-Apollinaire, Qc
After 22 years of service at our school in Chipata, Zambia, Sr. Noëlla is leaving for a new land—Mzimba, Malawi. Her extensive experience on the African continent will enable her to respond effectively to the needs of those who will cross her path. For the Community there, the service she has been assigned to will be well received and appreciated.

Photo credit: MIC



NOËLLA BERNARD, M.I.C. (centre)—Ste-Madeleine, Qc
A missionary in Madagascar, Sr. Noëlla has been a teacher for many years at our college in Morondava. A fine educator and accountant she will resume her service in administration and accomplish secretarial work within the MIC Provincial team located at Antananarivo, the capital city.

Photo credit: MIC



KATERI DIAB (centre), Sorel, Qc
A lay missionary in partnership with the MIC Sisters, Kateri is leaving for Cochabamba, Bolivia. Many apostolic tasks are awaiting her. She will work for Amanecer an organization for street children; she will also be helping the young rural women who attend the Institut d'éducation rurale, which is under the leadership of the MIC Sisters. This mission meets Kateri's aspirations.

Photo credit: MIC



NICOLE JOLY, M.I.C. (centre)—Notre-Dame de Lourdes, Qc
With her experience in catechesis as liaison person between the religious education department, at the Diocese of Montreal and various parishes in Laval, Qc Sr. Nicole will bring her contribution as animator and mentor in the field of education and social services in Port-au-Prince, Haïti.

Photo credit: MIC

Your departure gifts help our missionaries

Enclosed, the amount of \$ _____

Name: _____

Address: _____ Apt.: _____

City: _____ Province/Country: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: () _____

Do you want a tax receipt? YES ☐ NO ☐

Send to:

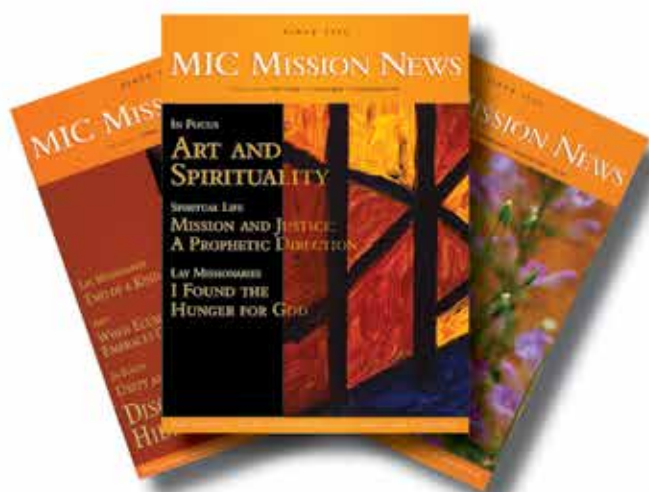
MISSION PROCURE

Missionary Sisters
of the Immaculate Conception
121 Maplewood Avenue
Montreal, QC Canada H2V 2M2
Phone: (514) 274-5691

**Thank you
for your solidarity!**

For Christmas

Offer a unique gift...



Create bonds with brothers and sisters from other countries.

Keep in touch with witnesses and stories that promote hope.

Allow your heart to rejoice with the gift of sharing.

MIC MISSION NEWS *Bread to be shared.*

Subscribe yourself and your loved ones to MIC Mission News. Complete and return the attached coupon (page 29).

Each week, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception offer 2 Masses for you, your loved ones and for the deceased members of your family.



Dear Collaborators,

For years, the MIC Mission News has thrived because of the many people like you who help us promote our magazine. With our missionaries you walk the streets to spread the Word of God by means of our mission publication. It is a noble task which we are happy to highlight.

Since 1923, homes in cities and villages have opened their doors to welcome the Good News. Today, our unique magazine remains the only feminine, religious, missionary periodical and we hope its mission will continue for many more years. Faithful in conveying the Christian values, this missionary publication is also concerned in presenting situations that have an international and intercultural impact.

To you, dear collaborators, we are most grateful for the dedication you bring to our mission magazine so dear to our Foundress, Délia Tétreault. With the Virgin Mary, she no doubt blesses you from above.

Receive this homage of our gratitude for your many years of commitment to the Mission; your work is deeply appreciated. Our prayers are with you as you carry-on your volunteer work for Jesus' Mission. May you be Blessed a hundredfold.

We wish you a Happy Christmas and a Blessed Year 2007!

*The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception
and the MIC Missionary Press Team*

Visit our Web site

www.soeurs-mic.qc.ca



GIFT-SUBSCRIPTION to the MIC MISSION NEWS magazine

☐ ***Please send a subscription to:*** (please write in print letters)

Name: _____

Address: _____ Apt.: _____

City: _____ Province/Country: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: () _____

☐ ***On behalf of:*** (please write in print letters)

Name: _____

Address: _____ Apt.: _____

City: _____ Province/Country: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: () _____

☐ ***Subscription in Canada:*** ☐ 1 year: \$10

☐ ***In the USA:*** ☐ 1 year: US\$15 ☐ ***Other countries:*** 1 year: \$20

☐ ***Enclosed, a mission offering: \$*** _____

Tax receipts are authorized only for donations and not for subscriptions.

Tax receipt: YES ☐ NO ☐



***Please address your
cheque to the order of:***

**MIC MISSION NEWS
120 Place Juge-Desnoyers
Laval, QC
Canada H7G 1A4**

Phone:
(450) 663-6460

Email:
micmissionnews@pressemic.org

Web site:
www.soeurs-mic.qc.ca




**Development
and Peace**

BUILDING A WORLD OF JUSTICE

DEVELOPMENT AND PEACE supports long-term and emergency aid programs in 43 countries, improving the quality of life of millions of people. It helps partners in the Global South pursue alternatives to unjust social, political and economic structures.

1-800-494-1401 www.devp.org

DESTI CONSULTANTS GROUP

IMMIGRATION & INVESTMENT SERVICES

Gilles Deschênes, M.Sc.
President

SCCI # : M041084

651 Notre Dame Ouest, Suite 540
Montréal, Québec H3C 1H9 Canada
www.desti.ca • Email: info@desti.ca

Tél.: (514) 982-9582
(514) 982-9583
Fax: (514) 289-9919

*MIC Mission News thanks its sponsors and its donating membership
for their generous contributions.*

♦ TO PURCHASE ADVERTISING SPACE ♦

Carole Guévin : (450) 663-6460 #5303 ♦ micmissionnews@pressemic.org

MISSION PROCURE
Missionary Sisters of the
Immaculate Conception
121 Maplewood Avenue
Montreal, QC
Canada H2V 2M2

Phone:
(514) 274-5691

Fax:
(514) 274-3298

Email:
generalat.mic@bellnet.ca

*Thank you
for your generosity!*

Three Ways to Help Our Missionaries

BEQUESTS IN YOUR WILL

LIFE ANNUITIES

✓ Provide you with a life long income. Enable you to reduce your taxes.
Provide you with a way to help our missionaries effectively.

LIFE INSURANCE

It is a capital paid after your death by your insurance company.

✓ Allows you to help generously without prejudice to the interests of your family. Your contribution, in the form of insurance premiums, is deductible from your taxable revenue as a charitable donation.

Name: _____

Address: _____ Apt.: _____

City: _____ Province/Country: _____

Postal Code: _____ Phone: () _____



KENYA
"Spiritual Safari"
January 15 to 30, 2007

SOUTH INDIA
"Inner Liberation"
January 26 to February 15, 2007

COSTA RICA
"Learn to love authentically"
February 16 to 23, 2007

ARIZONA
"The Red Path"
March 2 to 10, 2007

HOLY LAND
"The Living Word on the
Footsteps of Jesus"
(with Jean-Yves Leloup)
March 12 to 23, 2007

**TUNISIA AND
THE SAHARA**
"Return to the Essential"
March 23 to April 2, 2007

**SANTIAGO DE
COMPOSTELA**
"Follow your Star"
Mai 2007

CONTACT US TO RECEIVE OUR FREE BROCHURE!

PERSONALIZED GROUP TOURS:
Pilgrimages, retreats overseas, seminars and more
Free proposals on request

(514) 374-7965, (866) 331-7965 (toll free)
www.spiritours.net

Holder of a Quebec licence

TAKE ADVANTAGE
of our expertise



clubvoyages^{MC}
PLM

SPECIALIZING IN TRAVEL FOR MISSIONARIES
FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS

(514) 388-9241 | cvplm@videotron.ca
1216 East Fleury St., Montreal, QC H2C 1R1

Serge Beaudin, B.Ph., D.P.H.
Pharmacien

7, avenue Vincent d'Indy
Outremont, Qc H2V 4N7

Tél.: (514) 738-4791

 **Guy
Hubert**
et associés inc.

Philippe Hubert
Vice-président, opérations

Gestion de services
alimentaires

4150, boul. St-Martin Ouest
Laval, Qué. H7T 1C1
Téléphone : (450) 688-3252
Télécopieur : (450) 688-0752

 We
read you
5/5!

Strategy/Consulting
Graphic Design
Public Relations
Multimedia (Web)
Organization of Events

www.5by5.ca

 **5 by 5** COMMUNICATION
MARKETING



PRÉSENCE
magazine

propose une réflexion critique, ouverte
et éclairée sur les questions sociales,
culturelles et spirituelles de notre monde.

Abonnez-vous maintenant!

1 an (8 numéros) pour 35 \$

2 ans (16 numéros) pour 65 \$

(Envoi d'un numéro gratuit sur demande)

2715, ch. de la Côte-Ste-Catherine, Montréal QC H3T 1B6
Téléphone: (514) 739-9797 • Télécopieur: (514) 739-1664
presence@presencemag.qc.ca • www.presencemag.qc.ca

The Beauty of Mary

*Mary was a crystal for the Lord,
she was the prism of His Light.*

*Mary was a woodwind for the Lord,
she was a pure and tranquil tone.*

*Mary was the perfect key,
her Son was the song.*

*Jesus is the melody,
for all to sing along.*

*Mary makes our love a perfect tone,
for our heart to sing for God alone.*

*Excerpt from More Mary Songs
by Bill Teffley*

*Wishing you a
Blessed Christmas!*

