

MIC MISSION NEWS

SINCE 1923



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MADAGASCAR

A STEP FORWARD
ON THE
GREAT RED ISLAND

PHILIPPINES

TO THE RHYTHM
OF THE
MANGYAN CULTURE

IN FOCUS

HEROISM
SUNG IN DAILY LIFE



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

April 2007

For priestly and religious vocations:

May these grow in number in North America and the countries of the Pacific Ocean so as to respond adequately to the pastoral and missionary needs of their populations.

May 2007

For Mission territories:

May they never be found lacking in good and enlightened teachers in the major seminaries and institutes of consecrated life.

June 2007

For the Church in North Africa:

Through its presence and action, may it bear witness to God's love for every individual and all people.

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. 34, N° 2 | APRIL • MAY • JUNE 2007

COLUMNS

- 4** **SPIRITUAL LIFE**
Was Jesus a Volunteer?
André Gadbois
- 6** **LAY MISSIONARIES**
Come and See
Kevin Gallagher
- 8** **WOMEN**
Treating the Feet... and the Hearts
Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.
- 10** **YOUTH**
Heroism—Myth or Necessity?
Geneviève Dick
- 12** **MISSION BRIEF**
Quebec City – Eucharistic Congress 2008
Father Charles Picot



IN FOCUS

13–20 **Heroism**
Sung in Daily Life

ABOUT THE MICs

- 22** **A Step Forward in the Great Red Island**
Jeanne-Marthe Razanadrasoa, M.I.C.
- 24** **To the Rhythm of the Mangyan Culture**
Edita Telan, M.I.C.

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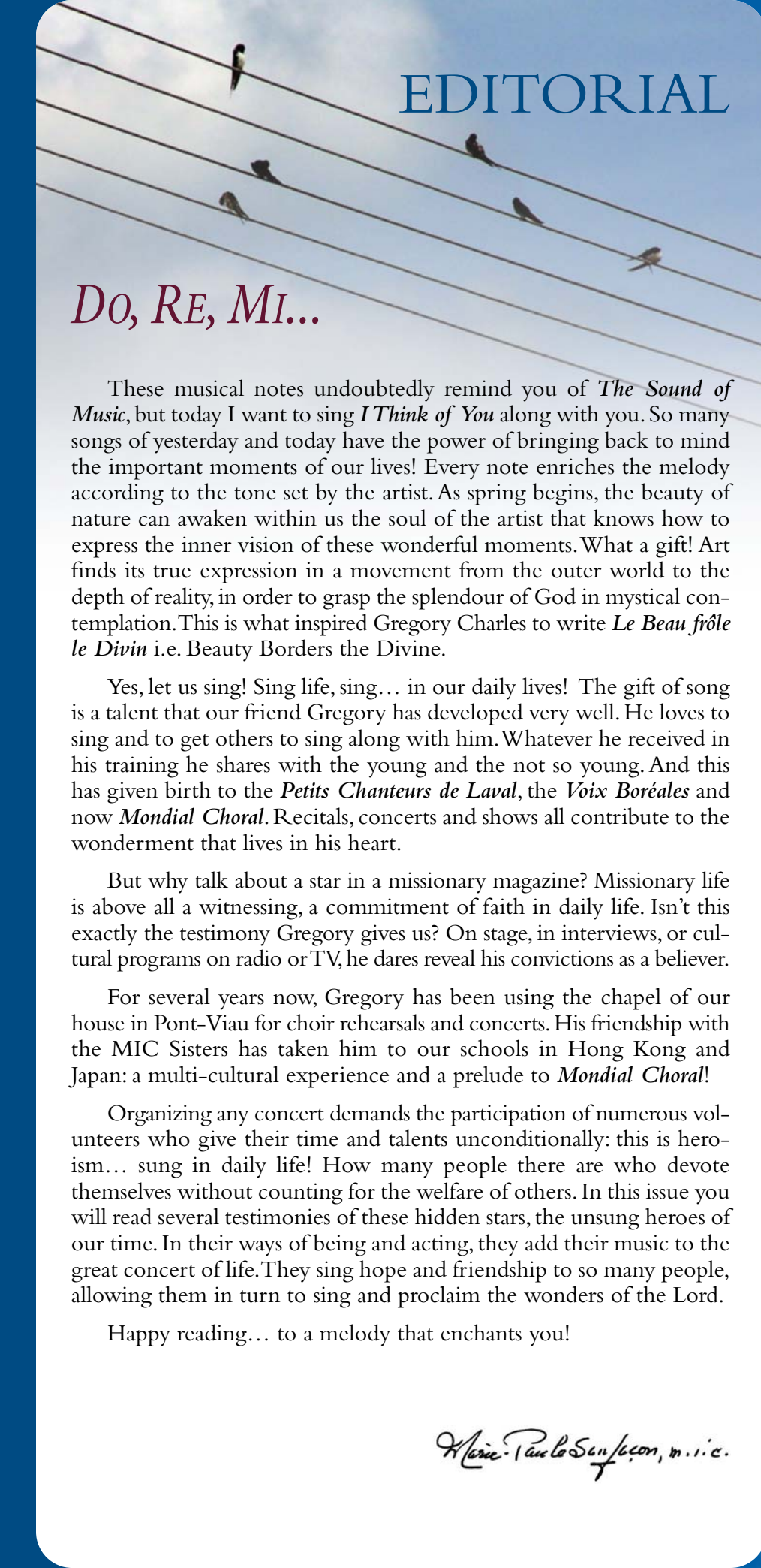
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EDITORIAL

DO, RE, MI...

These musical notes undoubtedly remind you of *The Sound of Music*, but today I want to sing *I Think of You* along with you. So many songs of yesterday and today have the power of bringing back to mind the important moments of our lives! Every note enriches the melody according to the tone set by the artist. As spring begins, the beauty of nature can awaken within us the soul of the artist that knows how to express the inner vision of these wonderful moments. What a gift! Art finds its true expression in a movement from the outer world to the depth of reality, in order to grasp the splendour of God in mystical contemplation. This is what inspired Gregory Charles to write *Le Beau frôle le Divin* i.e. Beauty Borders the Divine.

Yes, let us sing! Sing life, sing... in our daily lives! The gift of song is a talent that our friend Gregory has developed very well. He loves to sing and to get others to sing along with him. Whatever he received in his training he shares with the young and the not so young. And this has given birth to the *Petits Chanteurs de Laval*, the *Voix Boréales* and now *Mondial Choral*. Recitals, concerts and shows all contribute to the wonderment that lives in his heart.

But why talk about a star in a missionary magazine? Missionary life is above all a witnessing, a commitment of faith in daily life. Isn't this exactly the testimony Gregory gives us? On stage, in interviews, or cultural programs on radio or TV, he dares reveal his convictions as a believer.

For several years now, Gregory has been using the chapel of our house in Pont-Viau for choir rehearsals and concerts. His friendship with the MIC Sisters has taken him to our schools in Hong Kong and Japan: a multi-cultural experience and a prelude to *Mondial Choral*!

Organizing any concert demands the participation of numerous volunteers who give their time and talents unconditionally: this is heroism... sung in daily life! How many people there are who devote themselves without counting for the welfare of others. In this issue you will read several testimonies of these hidden stars, the unsung heroes of our time. In their ways of being and acting, they add their music to the great concert of life. They sing hope and friendship to so many people, allowing them in turn to sing and proclaim the wonders of the Lord.

Happy reading... to a melody that enchants you!

Marie-Paule Sanfey, m.i.c.

READERS' CORNER

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.

Yvette Joyal, Saint-François du Lac, Qc

Upon receiving the October-December 2006 issue of your magazine, I quickly gave it a glance. However, last Sunday, having more time, I read it cover to cover – it is magnificent! I greatly admire you and your TALENTS. Délia Tétreault certainly inspires you. André Gadbois, author of *MARY IN THE MIDST OF HER PEOPLE* must have written volumes, I did not know him. Special is the article from the Cameroon, describing the way funerals are celebrated in that part of the world. How interesting it must be in your Community to hear your missionaries relate their experiences – not one the same. I would like to work with Sr. Léontine who describes her apostolate on page 22. Bravo!

Charles Beaulieu, Quebec, Qc ASMIC

The content of the last issue compels us to congratulate the editorial team and to express our appreciation.

The marvellous theme and articles on 'JOY' bring about music to our ears. The content is like balm on the wounds of our world: wars, famine, disorders of all kinds.

Thank you for showing us something other than... reminding us that even during the night without a moon, a starry sky can illuminate our lives as long as we look-up... and this makes us feel good.

Thank you!



WAS JESUS A VOLUNTEER?

Thanks to them, the operation of many organizations is efficiently taken care of. And many events become successful because they graciously devote hours and hours of their time. Who are they? Volunteers!

By André Gadbois

The dictionary defines volunteers as being those who voluntarily do something without being paid. We find such people in the Scout movement, school councils, blood clinics, the Little Brothers of the Poor, *La Maison des Enfants* in Hochelaga, the Christian initiation of parish children, the Montreal Catechumenate, the *Mondial Choral* in Laval, the *Tour de l'Île* bicycle ride, they are in Quebec's primary schools and in political parties! Those volunteers give their sweat and blood; they deserve our recognition and respect. More often than not they work in the wings, in the background and yet they are the ones who give tenderness and comfort in deplorable situations and disasters.



A VOLUNTEER ON TRIAL

Giving one's time, generosity, thinking of others, religion, love, volunteer work, Jesus...: are these terms related? From the same family? Synonyms... or almost? Jesus who says: *But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness* (Mt 6:33), was He a volunteer? Isn't this what a volunteer is preoccupied with, the welfare of others? If so, how is it that the great volunteer of Judea and Galilee found Himself under trial, abandoned by more or less everyone, and then crucified like a vulgar criminal? The powerful, like the most disinherited, didn't see their own interests in Him: for the first, His volunteer action was a serious obstacle to their expansion; for the latter, His volunteer work wasn't a solution to their problems. Could we go so far as to say that He didn't serve their interests as they were hoping He would?

Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar, and to God what belongs to God (Mt 22:21). It took the Spirit of the Resurrected for the apostles and disciples (who were all volunteers) to understand that laws, organizations, structures and powers belonged to Caesar, that they were necessary, but had to be contested whenever they enchained Life, which belongs to God. These men had to undergo a conversion before they could recognize the existence of a reality beyond the designs of this world, the Kingdom of God, and that they had to put it before their individual, corporatist, national, or religious interests. The meaning of Jesus' words, *Happy are the poor in spirit...* (Mt 5:3) shook them up. They were henceforth unencumbered, stripped of all comfort and calculated planning, for they were now the artisans of the Kingdom. The Spirit of Pentecost made them see that sometimes the hidden consequences of a law, the existence of a caregiving organization, the complexity of a structure, the abuses of legal power, can amputate Life, become unjust and hinder the advent of the *Kingdom of God*.

A TROUBLESOME VOLUNTEER

Jesus never sought His own interest: under the movement of the Spirit, He was able to discern what served the interest of His brothers and sisters created in the image of God. He made choices and took positions, whose grave consequences for Himself He was not incapable of foreseeing. His Gospel contains hard and difficult words for us when we decide to serve our brothers and sisters. To do volunteer work means: to not expect compensation—to lose our life—put the Father's Kingdom ahead of our father, mother, our little group, our party—to become a neighbour to others whomever they happen to be—to be persecuted for His sake—to remain watchful and keep our lamp lit in every circumstance. The Spirit of the Lord never ceases to blow, to provoke us and push us out of our comfort zone, our pleasures, our quietude, and the self-righteousness of being a volunteer. Yes, my apron strings are tied, but am I really serving my neighbour, allowing him to fully exercise his autonomy, am I raising him up? Could it be that certain services that I render as a volunteer allow Caesar to neglect justice, or to take advantage of them in order to polish his public image and feed those who are already amply fed? Am I a slave to my volunteer work, blinded by it to the point of avoiding silence, solitude, and those close to me?

Am I blinded by
my volunteer work? 

LORD, RELIGHT MY LAMP!

Was Jesus a volunteer? That's for everyone to answer in his or her own way. But at the end of this text, I, who am myself a volunteer (and retirement is such fertile ground for volunteer work), wonder if I am inhabited by the Spirit of the Resurrected in the choices that I make and the positions I take. Do I allow myself to be bought out or put to sleep when I give my time, or do I accept to have my lamp relit by the One who was victorious over darkness? 

¹ Brothers and sisters created in the image and likeness of God
Photo credit: Chrétiens-Médias, Paris



COME AND SEE

It was on a sunny evening, on his usual motorbike ride home from work, that he realized he just could not go on like this anymore.

By Kevin Gallagher

With a beautiful Honda CX650 turbocharged motorcycle, a well-paid engineering design job, a Mercedes-Benz in the garage, what more could a person ask for? But then, one sunny evening, on my way home from work, I experienced an inner transformation that changed my life. Thirty-one years of wealth seemed like accumulated dust.

That same night, as I arrived home, a letter from Taiwan was in my mailbox. It was from Sr. Monette Ouellette, M.I.C. She was inviting me to come work as a volunteer in far-off rural Taiwan at a centre for mentally retarded children. That meant leaving behind my extravagant life-style; however, with this notion came a liberating release from desiring the lavishness of the rich and powerful.

I took Sr. Monette's invitation seriously and decided to commit myself for three years. The transition from the rich farmland of Southern England to the paddy fields of rural Taiwan was a mixed bag of ups and downs, but it was within these transitions, whether good or bad, easy or difficult, that I was led on the road that would answer two of my questions about life. What is the point of being a Christian? Taking my faith seriously, it seemed to me that there had to be more than just Sunday Mass Catholicism. Then, what is the real meaning of life? The increasingly deep desire for an answer moved me to search and find.

At first my duties at the centre for mentally disabled children were varied: driver, plumber, electrician; in other words I became a jack-of-all trades. Then after an interlude of one year, I had the opportunity

to begin a new work of charity, the first of its kind in Taiwan. It consisted of developing some low cost technical aids and semi-complex electronic devices to help the severely paralysed patients.

Putting my skills to use for the disabled community has been a great experience and has proven beneficial. But that aside, what I personally enjoy the most is the outreach program we have started for those who are housebound with severe physical handicaps. Entering their sacred places and seeing the joy they express as they are brought back into society, sometimes with only a few simple pieces of equipment, brings with it a feeling of satisfaction that no money on earth can buy.

I have been working in Taiwan for 17 years and I have seen so many lives transformed by a few pieces of simple technology. In many cases it might just mean supplying a special wheelchair and a lifting device that makes the difference between a life looking at the ceiling in a dark bedroom, and one of semi-independence in the neighbourhood with friends and relatives. Restoring mobility can, in many cases, bring with it employment opportunities as well as restoring personal freedom to the care-givers at home. In numerous cases, and with the profusion of low cost computers and internet access in Taiwan, being able to design some low cost alternative computer control devices opens a window onto the world to those with high levels of paralysis.

It's hard to imagine being paralysed at the age of 22 and after twenty-six long years in bed, looking at the ceiling, with all

The real invitation of our faith...
is to experience the radical and prophetic call to
be one with the helpless and marginalized. 

¹ Kevin (centre) with
Huguette Chapdelaine, M.I.C.
(left) and Sr. Françoise Larouche,
M.I.C. (right)

² Kevin with a patient
Photos credit: MIC

joints locked-up solid for lack of physiotherapy, finally receiving relief with the help of a mouth operated special computer mouse and an internet connection; in fact, such an invention can literally transform one's existence. This is the story of Mr. Chen, who is now a regular e-mail correspondent, and via his computer, has managed to find some limited employment.

Totally alert mentally but totally immobile physically, with no way to express her physical needs or emotions, Ms Line from Taipei who has a Motor Neurone Disease, requires a ventilator machine for her normal breathing functions. A careful assessment of the patient reveals a one centimetre residual movement in her finger, so with a special light touch switch and what I call a Single Switch Mouse she can now communicate using a personal computer. It is a joy to read her many multi-page published articles, all done with these two pieces of low-cost equipment.

Many are the stories that could be related. Through them all, I have discovered that deep joy in life is not based on the pursuit of that illusive goal of happiness but rather in finding meaning in one's life. The real invitation of our faith seems to be away from the sterility and certainty of the comfortable life to the uncertainties and risks of sharing life with those in need. It is to experience the radical and prophetic call to be one with the helpless and marginalized. With this one-ness, joy comes along naturally as a very real by-product. Words cannot fully explain the experience; rather it is an invitation to 'come and see'.



1



2

Treating the Feet... and the Hearts



Félix Leclerc, a famous Quebec poet, once sang: *My shoes have travelled a lot*. Nowadays, many itinerants could sing of their long daily walks from one street to another, from one metro station to another. Their aching feet, hidden in their badly worn-out shoes, are in dire need of physical treatment, but loving care is also needed for their hurting hearts.

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

The Itinerancy Phenomenon

Itinerancy is a growing problem. It's a social phenomenon which is difficult to decipher because each case is unique. However, there are general criteria that characterize itinerancy: lack of lodging, low revenue, mental illness, alcoholism, drugs, etc. The homeless belong to no specific group. In Montreal, there are more than 30,000 of them, including women and youth. Some are street people by choice, so as to be free, others reject the consumer society, but there are also the unfortunate ones.

The high-cost of living is a factor that contributes to increasing the poverty level of the population. Social services cannot always measure-up to the expansion of itinerancy, particularly in large cities. This is becoming a world-wide problem.

A Question of Trust

In December 1997 a few nurses specializing in 'foot care' decide to come together as a team to be at the service of the itinerants at l'*Accueil Bonneau* in Montreal. They want to provide relief to these indigents and give them the chance to rediscover their profound values. The Directress of the Centre welcomes the initiative with open arms; it is a generous offer which corresponds to a real need. So often, blistering feet reflect sufferings of a greater depth.

At first, the task is not easy. 'Foot care' is not a tradition nor an option for those who habitually come to the Centre. Therefore, trust has to be established. Who will dare come first? Gradually, a few take the risk and line-up, perhaps they are the ones who suffer the most. Somewhat reluctant and ashamed to show their unkempt feet and worn-out shoes, they nevertheless give it a try.

A volunteer nurse states: *They arrive without enthusiasm, sad, haggard-looking because of life's hardships.* After some time, the itinerants tell us: *How good this feels, we are lucky to have you.* With expertise and trained hands, the nurses cheerfully use their instruments and gently apply moisturizing cream. Soft corns, calluses, chapped heels, blisters, all are well treated. What a good feeling for these less fortunate! Nail cutting is then followed by a thorough massage; this brings the well appreciated treatment to completion.

An Exceptional Apostolic Work

In a friendly and warm environment, the 'foot care' clinic is open one Saturday morning per month. A well ventilated space is provided for this purpose. Sister Gaétane Perron, M.I.C. is one of the pioneers in this kind of apostolic work. Faithful to her commitment, she has been treating her clients with love and care for the past ten years. Not only does she bring comfort to the feet but she offers a special balm to the hurting hearts, who experience solitude and sadness. She says: *For someone who walks 30 kilometres a day, the feet are just as important as a car.* The task never repels her. Like Jesus, washing the feet of His Apostles, Sister Gaétane experiences deep joy in helping others. Her reward? Reading on the faces all the sincere gratitude one can express.

Approximately sixty itinerants come regularly to the improvised clinic. Sister Gaétane notes: *We could come every week and we would always have clients. We refuse no one.* The number of those who present themselves is increasing; they line up and wait for their turn to come. All are welcomed and treated without any discrimination and without any questioning. One of them, Jean-Marc, said: *All my buddies come here. They told me it helps them feel good, so I decided to try it.* Publicity is free and efficient: it goes by word of mouth.

Uplifting Their Self-Esteem

Above and beyond giving comfort to the feet, the clinic offers its clientele a way

of rediscovering their dignity. After showering, the clients go to the cloakroom to find shoes and clean clothes. Then, they have a good hot meal in a family-like and friendly atmosphere.

We do something for you
because you are worth it. 

For the nurses, these gatherings become a unique source of clinical experiences and an exceptional professional network. This kind of volunteer work is one of the most gratifying, according to the seven nurses involved in this project.

Sister Aurore Larkin, S.G.M., newly appointed Directress of l'Accueil Bonneau affirms: *Such a service contributes in building the self-esteem of the itinerants. The message it carries: "We do something for you because you are worth it".*

Without any doubt, as they tend to the feet, the volunteer nurses touch the hearts that so often need healing. 

¹ Sr. Gaétane Perron, M.I.C.

(1st to the left)

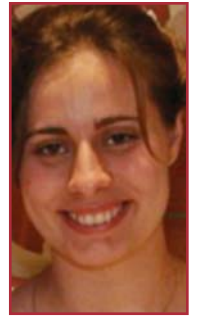
Photo credit:

M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.



HEROISM

—Myth or Necessity?



By Geneviève Dick

Born between 1981 and 2003, the so-called “Y” generation is rising today and Geneviève is in that bracket. Researching this generation, which follows the famous “X Gen”, she came across the works of Strauss and Howe. These two historians have studied approximately 20 generations of the Western world’s history, the latest of which is taken from the American history.

To my surprise, I read that my generation presents characteristics of the “hero”. To explain, the two authors divide the generations into four categories: Idealist, Reactionary, Heroic, and Creative. My generation corresponds to the heroes.

A Hero?

What’s a hero? In the works of Strauss and Howe, it is stated that the characteristics of our generation are those of being realistic, more conservative, cherishing greater values than the last three generations. We will most probably have to face a great crisis, as seen in the past; generations of heroes had to confront challenges such as revolutions and wars. From what I observe of myself and of other people I know, I agree with the historians’ conclusions. The climate and environmental crisis remind us that within our lifetime there will be extreme global disasters and these will leave behind an impact on all of human life.

There are other definitions of heroism that are presented to us. In ancient times, the heroes were mythical. They were models expressing a reality, a morality, such as Hercules who would perform his Labours to obtain immortality. In medieval times, those who embraced knighthood bearing a high honour code were consi-

dered heroes and models to follow. In modern times, a glorious feat of arms, a sense of honour whether in real or imaginary circumstances, or eccentric appearances, all these would bear the label of heroes. In the early modern era, we might think of Sir Frances Drake, the first Englishman to circumnavigate the globe, Artagnan depicted as hero in the story of *The Three Musketeers* or Don Quixote of La Mancha who stands-out as Spain’s famous literary hero. The heroes were especially presented in literature as the main characters or as national figures who fought, defended and built their society. In fact, the word hero has sort of fallen into disuse, to the point that we use the expression “epic hero” with a touch of irony when we refer to past times. Actually, a hero is one who stands fast physically or morally in difficult situations. It is someone who is faithful to an ideal so as to save someone or something: one’s honour, a family, a country, a piece of land, or to uphold convictions and values that represent Goodness.

The “Jackass” Phenomenon

The above notion of hero opposes for example the “Jackass” phenomenon, so popular among the youth of today. The “Jackass” will confront danger, pain, or ridicule, simply for the joy of it, without



In modern times, a glorious feat of arms, a sense of honour whether in real or imaginary circumstances, or eccentric appearances, all these would bear the label of heroes: Sir Frances Drake, Artagnan in *The Three Musketeers*, or Don Quixote of La Mancha.
Photo: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

About the author

Young artist painter and sculptor, Geneviève Dick is a member of the Editorial Team *Le Précurseur/MIC Mission News*.
<http://creincarnation.googlepages.com/>

any other reason. These films have had such success that the second one, which cost eleven million dollars to produce was already paid for after the first showing. This gigantic success was not without a human price; numerous victims succumbed to serious wounds and even death as inexperienced youth tried to imitate the stunts.

The true hero is equally opposed to suicide, which is often a definitive solution to a temporary problem, to a loss of meaning in life. The hero has a strength that comes from an in-depth meaning of life; the opposite is experienced by those who are suicidal.

The crucial question: Who are the heroes in our society?

The dictates of our society strongly suggest that the heroes of today are media stars or people in business who have succeeded. Youthfulness is considered heroic: being slim, active, in good health, physically fit and sexually hyperactive. Included in the list are the people who generally take on few responsibilities preferring instead to delegate them to mercenaries: day-care for children, senior homes for the elderly, etc. There are also those who give the appearance of having reached financial success, they consume and loathe the notion of sacrifice. Unconsciously, our choices are influenced by the pressures of this model. For those who seek to be of service to others, who want to reach out to make the world a better place, this image of the hero is questionable.

Is Jesus a Hero?

As a Christian, I look for something above and beyond what has been mentioned. For me, Jesus is a kind of hero. It is not his courage, his bravery, his feat of arms that led him to save us but his love for humanity. He holds fast to this love even when evil forces display themselves in hatred, anger and death. His heart is the only weapon, and this leaves his opponent exhausted in combat. He draws the weak, the little ones and the oppressed to Him in order to give them hope and strength by

His Resurrection. The true defender of the widow and the orphan, is He!

But is this a hero we imitate and follow? Imitating someone can be a sterile way of acting, because we seek to reproduce what we perceive. On the other hand, if we follow Jesus, it is He who leads us on the proper path to the Father. This gives us incredible possibilities, adapted to our times and to our environment. Following the Way, we risk becoming heroes of love, or maybe what we call being a saint. For my generation, I not only see this as being important but necessary. Moreover, isn't it true that the missionaries of all categories who have been heroes and still are, open the way for us? ☞

The youth thirst to excel, to reach for the sky and find meaning to their life.

Photo credit:

Huguette Chapdelaine, M.I.C.



Quebec City: The Eucharistic Congress in 2008



One of the numerous processions during the International Eucharistic Congress in Montreal, 1910.
Photo credit: Collection — Archives of the Congregation of Notre-Dame



The commemorative medal of the International Eucharistic Congress in Montreal, 1910
Photo credit: Collection — Archives of the Congregation of Notre-Dame

Father Charles Picot, ecclesiastical lawyer at the Archdiocesan regional tribunal of Montreal, is chaplain at the MIC Mother House in Outremont.

By Father Charles Picot

It's not surprising that International Eucharistic Congresses have never been just religious events. The communiqué issued by the Catholic Church of Quebec, announcing that the 49th International Congress would be held from June 15 to 22, 2008, states this very clearly: *In the Congress's program there are different cultural and social activities open to everyone, as well as gatherings of young people and families, processions and grand celebrations.*

The first Eucharistic Congress, held in England in 1908, caused a stir because it was the first time that a papal legate (Mgr Vincenzo Vannutelli) had set foot on English soil since the creation of the Anglican Church. The organizers were forbidden to hold a procession of the Blessed Sacrament for fear that doing so would cause rioting. The Legate had to give the blessing with the monstrance from the balcony of Westminster Cathedral.

The importance of such religious manifestations for the political and social life of the cities and countries in which they take place should therefore not be underestimated. The 21st International Eucharistic Congress, held in Montreal in September 1910, was the first of its kind to be held outside of Old Europe. According to the



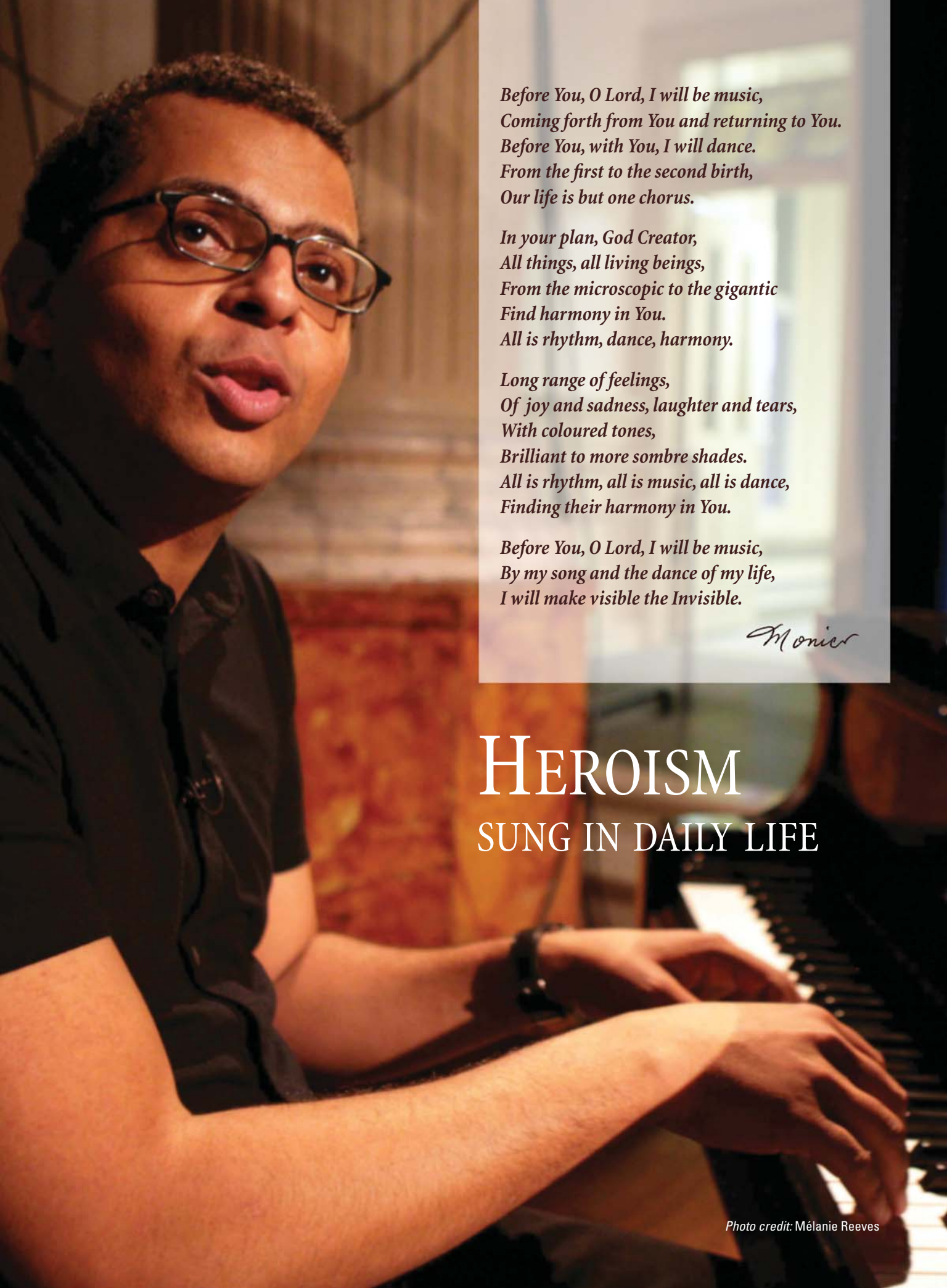
49th INTERNATIONAL
EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS
QUEBEC CITY, CANADA 2008

newspapers of the time, the Congress was a great success.

When the celebrations were over, Henri Bourassa (1868–1952), the founder of the newspaper *Le Devoir*, made an eloquent speech at Notre Dame Basilica in which he declared both his nationalist convictions and his Christian faith: *Let us fight the danger that is threatening us perhaps here more than in Old Europe, whose faith is also under attack; I mean the danger of a double conscience, which often leads men who sincerely worship God at home and at church, to forget that they are sons of God when it comes time to proclaim their faith in public life, in law and in the government of the nation.* (Montreal, *Le Devoir*, 1952, p.215, pp.108–114.)

By holding an International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City, the Church (as Pope Benedict XVI said to the participants at the plenary session of the pontifical committee for International Eucharist Congresses last November 9) wishes these gatherings to be *always a source of spiritual renewal, an opportunity to become better acquainted with the Blessed Eucharist, which is the most precious treasure Christ has bequeathed to us.*

In our next issue, we will touch upon the theme of the 49th International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec City: *The Eucharist, Gift of God for the Life of the World.* ☞

A man with short, curly hair and glasses is seated at a piano, looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression. His hands are positioned over the piano keys. The background is softly blurred, showing a warm, indoor setting with a patterned curtain.

*Before You, O Lord, I will be music,
Coming forth from You and returning to You.
Before You, with You, I will dance.
From the first to the second birth,
Our life is but one chorus.*

*In your plan, God Creator,
All things, all living beings,
From the microscopic to the gigantic
Find harmony in You.
All is rhythm, dance, harmony.*

*Long range of feelings,
Of joy and sadness, laughter and tears,
With coloured tones,
Brilliant to more sombre shades.
All is rhythm, all is music, all is dance,
Finding their harmony in You.*

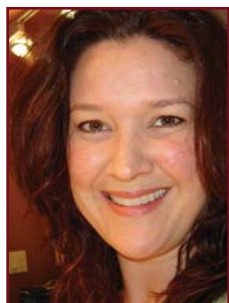
*Before You, O Lord, I will be music,
By my song and the dance of my life,
I will make visible the Invisible.*

Monier

HEROISM

SUNG IN DAILY LIFE

My Own Spiderman...



About the author

Brigitte Bédard, a freelance journalist and researcher for the past 10 years, is especially interested in the great religions, the phenomenon of sects, and in questions pertaining to feminism and homosexuality. She is the mother of four, and soon of five children!

Everyone knows that spiders have eight legs. Something everyone does not know is that they also have eight eyes... yikes! Yes, you are reading *MIC MISSION NEWS*... don't worry! It's just that I would like to tell you about SPIDERMAN—my own SPIDERMAN.

By Brigitte Bédard

Do you know him? Of course you've seen the movie, haven't you? It's about this guy who seems to be ordinary enough. There's nothing extravagant about him. On the contrary, he's rather simple. He wears glasses that make him look like a nerd, as they say. Within him lives a superhero, someone who can do the impossible. And when you see him go by, you can't help but marvel.

That's the way I see Gregory Charles. Does that surprise you? And yet I'm not the first one to compare him to SPIDERMAN; in fact, *Rock & Belles Oreilles* did before me, on the *Bye Bye 2006* show. Do you remember that?

I'll recall the sketch for you. One of the members of *RBO* was sitting at the piano, made up and dressed as Gregory Charles, complete with dark skin coloring. He really did look like him. The false Gregory started playing and suddenly, one of his hands rose into the air and started writing on a piece of paper while he kept on playing piano with his other two hands. He could sing, play the piano, write a song, answer the telephone, open a door... A hilarious sketch! The false eight-armed Gregory could do everything at the same time.

That's the portrayal of my SPIDERMAN, my Gregory. Excuse me for making him mine like that, but I just can't help it. He's my age and he's of my generation. He grew up at the same time I did and I have followed his career right from his beginnings on the TV show *Chambre en ville*. Recently, I bought his latest album,

I Think of You. Every Saturday, I listen to him on Radio-Canada. One time I even danced and sang with him during his show *Noir & Blanc*.

I'm one of his fans and I'm not ashamed to say it. I admire him not only for his talent but also for everything he can do. I admire him especially for what he is which comes from what I know about him, or from what I perceive of him.

On the Sunday night talk show *Tout le monde en parle*, he said in front of more than a million spectators that he was a believer, even worse, that he was Catholic, and even worse than that, that he was a practicing Catholic!

Suddenly, I didn't feel as alone anymore. I could see myself in this Christian, this Catholic, this layperson, with and in the world of today. He doesn't try to impose his ideas, his beliefs or his life-style. He is simply authentic, truly himself, just as he was created, and he tells others about it.

Gregory Charles is a musician, dancer, singer, radio and television show host, and actor. He is also an excellent storyteller. In the first part of his *Noir & Blanc* show, he tells us a bit about the great Story of the Black people through the short story of his grandfather.

On the radio, he once said that he enjoys touching the hearts of his public. At a Celine Dion show, he saw thousands of men and women crying, laughing, singing and just being happy. That's when he discovered the power of song, no matter how *pop* it is.



Maybe it's at that time that Gregory opened a door to popular music in his life. He needed a break, a time to reflect, a time to doubt about himself, others and his career. Maybe he needed to be afraid... afraid to lose the most precious things he had. Without this break, how would he ever have been able to write? His accident gave him the opportunity to write songs and to touch hearts with his *I Think of You* album. A fortunate accident! A lucky fall!

CHORAL MISSION

Gregory was also the founder of *Mondial Choral*. In fact, he has been directing choirs since 1985, as if he had 'fallen into it' when he was little: *I grew up constantly being told that the beautiful gives birth to the good and the good gives birth to the beautiful, and that, in the case of music, the pursuit of beauty is always worthwhile. So when I was asked to direct choirs, I just couldn't refuse!*

For his rehearsals with the *Petits chanteurs de Laval* (Laval Boys Choir), Gregory used the chapel of the MIC Sisters. He has known the MICs, as he calls them, for quite some time. He even says that he's a MICO himself!

A few years ago, the *Petits chanteurs de Laval* went to Hong Kong in China. There, they met the choir from the Good Hope School run by the MIC Sisters. Later, they went to Japan and met the choristers from the Koriyama School. During their centennial celebrations the MIC Sisters of Canada welcomed the Good Hope Choir;

this was a unique opportunity for the choristers to also participate in the Quebec Summer Festival.

The MIC sisters have always wondered if the meeting of the two choirs was what inspired Gregory to come up with the idea of *Mondial Choral*. *Directing choirs gave me the chance of meeting other cultural choirs including the ones of Hong Kong, China. It*

Photos credit:
Thérèse Lortie, M.I.C.

The beautiful gives birth
to the good and the good
gives birth to the beautiful. ∞

also gave me the opportunity to see the MIC sisters at work in their very large Good Hope School, and to get to know their choir at different levels! Of course being in touch with international choirs gave me the desire to organize even bigger get-togethers. For several years, I travelled but then there was a call to create something that would allow all these choirs to visit each other and share their love for singing. I think it was inevitable..., like the natural pursuit of a mission!

CHORAL SINGING— SUSPENSION OF UNHAPPINESS

I think Gregory is a missionary. What would a super-hero be without a mission? When he was asked if choral singing, for example, was a vehicle for expressing his faith and convictions, he carefully replied:



I don't know. It's not a vehicle for convictions. That's not the goal of these big get-togethers. For me, choral singing is a wonderful musical demonstration because it's community work. In choral singing there are values that are expressed voluntarily and also in an almost unconscious or subconscious way.

Do you mean that each person who makes up the group of singers is not really aware of what the group can ultimately give?

Yes. In choral singing, you have to be more than one to have a choir. The choir is based on the will to form a group, to be led by one person and to never really hear the

result. There is something like being a missionary in choral singing... in a way. People are called to participate in a group, according to their talents and abilities without hearing the final result.

A little like missionaries who go into the field and give everything they can but often don't see the reward of their efforts?

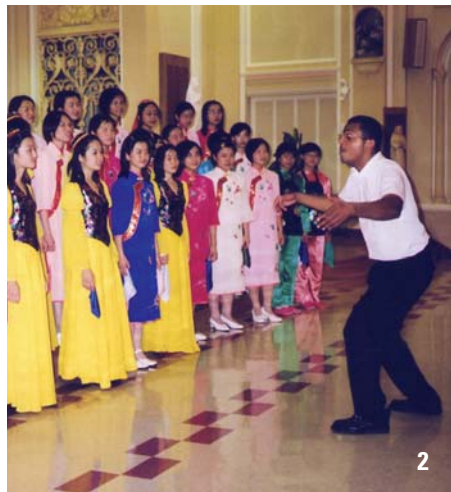
That's it! In choral singing, like in mission work, individuals are called to be people who aren't specifically applauded or congratulated for the work they do.

Like community work then?

Yes, because that's really what is demanded in choral singing. There's something



For me,
choral singing
is a wonderful
musical
demonstration
because it's
community work.



extremely generous about it, because the choristers aren't professionals. They're all amateurs and so they decide to put their hands to the wheel to share their talents so that others can freely hear the outcome. Essentially those are the values I hold on to.

What makes you love choral singing so much?

There's something about it that makes it impossible to sing and be unhappy. There must be a suspension of unhappiness or sadness when you're singing. It's like when you speak to people who are preparing something very special, an event of any kind, a gift; you're moved, you have trouble speaking,

because you're so touched. Choral singing demands that you forget about your troubles. Singing, talking, breathing, all these are directly connected to the emotions!

Giving of oneself without expecting anything in return. Working without counting, by the sweat of one's brow. Having great hopes but no expectations. This is Gregory's mission. Ultimately, I'm not sure that SPIDERMAN could do as much!

¹ Choir: *Les Voix Boréales*, Laval, Qc

Photo credit: Martin Alarie

² Choir: *Good Hope School*, MIC Chapel, Laval

Photo credit: MIC

³ Choirs: *Aizu Wakamatsu Shi*, and *Laval Boys* in Japan

Photo credit: MIC



Good Hope Choir,
Hong Kong
Photos credit: MIC

By Huguette Turcotte, M.I.C.

HONG KONG, JUNE 30, 1997

It was precisely 11:55 p.m.—At the brand-new Congress Centre, the Prime Minister of China was arriving from Beijing. Prince Charles, delegated by Queen Elizabeth II, was coming in from Great Britain on the *Britannia*. They were surrounded by the diplomatic corps and the Hong Kong authorities. The historical moment had arrived: the handover of Hong Kong to China. A few seconds before midnight, as the officials were about to lower the British flag to replace it by the Chinese one, voices of young women were heard singing: *THE LORD BLESS YOU AND KEEP YOU*. Emotions took hold of the onlookers. For us, the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception, who were among the millions witnessing this historical event, we recognized the familiar singing voices and they touched us with a sense of pride. The choir was from Good Hope School, and it was praying for China its new country.

GOOD HOPE SCHOOL CHOIR

It all began in 1974. While Sr. Mary Olga Lam, M.I.C. was Directress of the school, two music teachers, Mrs. Daisy Tai and Mrs. Betty Tham recruited high-school students to start a choir. Outside class hours, the girls were compelled to go to choir practice regularly. Enthusiastic and well disciplined, the choristers quickly reached excellent standards. Competing with other schools of the city, they ‘stood-

A Bond of

out’ and were requested to sing on many occasions. Their reputation for high quality performances spread and the choir was invited for concerts and competitions in Australia, Hawaii, Beijing, Korea, Scotland, Macau and Vienna. The choir has had the honour of singing for the Queen of England when she travelled to Hong Kong. Every year, members of the Bar invite the choristers for an ecumenical celebration at the opening of the tribunals. In January 2007, the ceremony was held at the Anglican Cathedral; no doubt, other faiths will join them in the future.

THE LAVAL BOYS CHOIR IN HONG KONG

February 25, 1998—Good Hope students, their teachers and I were waiting for the Laval Boys Choir at Kai Tak Airport. A long banner bearing the word *WELCOME* was held high. Gregory Charles suddenly appeared followed by a group of 45 young people and adults. Our students waved to them. In spite of their fatigue from the long flight, the Laval Boys Choir reacted with a song of joy; for a few moments the travellers around them froze, amazed by this spontaneous concert. This was the beginning of a great adventure for the young Canadians and their hostesses, the MIC Sisters and the girls from Good Hope Choir of Hong Kong.

A program of activities was all lined-up for them: concerts, cultural and sight-seeing tours, lodging in Chinese families, and eating famous Cantonese meals. Gregory, well known in Quebec as a musician, singer and comedian, had to reveal his talents in China and he did not miss his chance. During the concerts at Délia Hall, he captured the audience with his giftedness, his dynamism, his humour and with the enthusiasm of his young choristers. He took pleasure in recalling his connection with the MIC Sisters since 1980—the time

Friendship—Lavalloise/Chinese

when he began presenting the annual concerts of the Laval Boys Choir in the large chapel of our convent in Pont Viau. Laughing, he exclaimed: *And now I am chasing the Sisters all the way to China!*

The young Quebecers ended their tour with a concert in the City of Shenzhen, located outside the Hong Kong territory. This became a true sharing of international cultures between the Canadian visitors, Hong Kong students and the Chinese youth of Shenzhen. Each group presented its award-winning repertoire; then all three came together to sing: *LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH!*

GOOD HOPE CHOIR IN LAVAL

For a very long time, Sr. Mary Olga Lam had a project in mind. Her desire was to come to Canada with the Hong Kong Choir to express their GRATITUDE in song and dance to the Sisters who established the first missions in China and Hong Kong. Having met Gregory Charles, her dream could now become a reality. June 24, 1998, forty choristers from Good Hope School arrived in Montreal. What joy to see one another again! This time, Canadian families welcomed the young Chinese students and had them discover the life-style and beauty of our country. On June 26th Sr. Mary Olga's dream came true. A concert was held in the chapel of the MIC Sisters in Pont Viau. Many elderly Sisters, retired or sick were present. Among them were the pioneers who worked many years in China and Hong Kong. The Chinese songs, the costumes, the folklore dances awakened in the minds of the Sisters many emotional memories. In store for all of us was a surprise: The Laval Boys Choir had an additional section: female voices now joined the young men's choir. *'Les Voix Boréales'* as they are called, is the product of Gregory's encounter with the Hong Kong female choir group last February.

While in Montreal the choristers had the opportunity of visiting the MICs Mother House in Outremont. They learned that in the early part of the century it was from this house that the Sisters left for China and also for Hong Kong where they established schools. From Montreal the visiting group traveled to Toronto and Vancouver. In those two cities, former students of Good Hope now residing in Canada welcomed the visitors in their homes and they organized a variety of cultural events for them.

In June 2002, when the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception celebrated their centennial, the Good Hope Choir from Hong Kong came to take part in the *Gospel Night* which was held on the church grounds of Saint-Viateur in Outremont. The Laval Youth Choir and the Hong-Kong Choristers, directed by Gregory Charles, artistically performed song and dance for this special event. As for Gregory, in love with Asia, he continued to 'pursue' the MIC Sisters and decided to travel with his choir to Koriyama and Wakamatsu in Japan. Once again, their performance was a brilliant success.

INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGES LEAVE AN IMPACT

A singing tour exchange between the youth of America and Asia creates a unique opportunity to observe another culture, appreciate the differences and learn from the experience. Now, when the words Hong Kong and Canada are spoken, faces, names, friendly voices are seen and heard. Each in turn, guests and hosts have expressed that music has a universal language and they will long remember these intercultural encounters. ♪

¹ Gregory in Japan

² Posing with two young Chinese

³ Left to right: Daisy Tai, Fenecia Dapitanon, M.I.C., Betty Tham, Mary Olga Lam, M.I.C., Gregory Charles in Montreal
Photos credit: MIC





Music: An Essential Pursuit?

Is there such a thing as a spirituality of music? Could music be a spiritual path? Could it express, support, and enrich spirituality and make it progress? Yes, without a doubt!

By Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C.

Spirituality: The life of the spirit; life according to the Spirit; the quest for outer and inner harmony; the quest for life's meaning; the pursuit of the essential and of the Essential.

Think for a moment about primitive music, made of rhythmic sounds, repeated percussions, or sonorous vibrations. The aim seems to have been to set oneself in harmony with a still mysterious nature by imitating the blowing wind, the falling rain and the rustling leaves, but also the bolt of lightning and the rumbling thunder. This imitation of nature grew out of a desire to draw closer, or to appease the elements that one didn't quite know how to control. Could it have been an invitation to the Author of this nature to engage in an encounter? Perhaps! A Biblical text admirably describes the encounter between Elijah and God: *Then the LORD passed by and sent a furious wind...—but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake there was fire—but the LORD was not in the fire. After the fire there was a tiny whispering sound... A voice said to him, "Elijah, why are you here?"* (1 Kgs 19: 11.13)

One can recall the Middle Ages and its musical masterpieces, intertwined with mystical experiences. While the celebrated painters decorated their canvases with musician angels, while the builders of cathedrals raised vaults to vertiginous heights approaching the heavenly deity, the chants of male and female in monasteries and the compositions of an Abbess Hildegard, for example, also rose to God and carried their listeners to an encounter with the Absolute.

From times past until the modern era, inspired composers have been able to sustain the liturgy, from simple plain-song to powerful choral works. We need just think of Johann Sebastian Bach who added the letters SDG (Soli Deo Gloria) to his signature in order to indicate that his compositions were devoted solely to the Glory of God. Shakespeare considered music to be the food of love: *If music be the food of love, play on, give me excess of it...* Why would the love of God not find similar support?

Moving to the contemporary era, we have a vast selection of music created to pacify the rhythm of an exceedingly fast-paced lifestyle, to bring peace down upon feverish spirits, even to favour contemplation. Or only just to express wonder at the beauty of a universe whose limits can scarcely be imagined. And one learns with this music to *hurry along slowly*, to meditate, to rejoice, to find peace before the Grandeur, the Serenity, the Tenderness of a God who is Father and total Love.

The psalmist invites us to do just this: *Let us come before Him with thanksgiving and sing joyful songs of praise.* (Ps 95:2)

The Venerable Délia Tétreault, whose spirituality of thanksgiving breathes life into the missionary life of her daughters and that of many others, said one day to them: *Who could imagine a world without music and singing... In heaven, we'll have them continuously...; but here below, we can prelude the eternal celebrations by singing praises to God.*

Is music a quest for the essential? As if it weren't rather the Essential, God Himself, who reaches out to us through this music He after all invented, and of which He is, within each one of us, the Inspiration... 

Let us
come before
Him with
thanksgiving
and sing
joyful songs
of praise.

(Ps 95:2)

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.

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Does Our World Still Need a SAVIOUR?

We offer you a reflection taken from a meditation given at Saint Peter's Square by Pope **Benedict XVI** last December. The crucial question: Does our world still need a Saviour? Is Christ not the spiritual leader, the hero needed by a world seeking great pursuits?

Does a "Saviour" still have any value for the men and women of the third millennium? Is a "Saviour" still needed by a humanity which has reached the moon and Mars and is prepared to conquer the universe; for a humanity which knows no limits in its pursuit of nature's secrets and which has succeeded even in deciphering the marvellous codes of the human genome? Is a "Saviour" needed by a humanity which has invented interactive communication, which navigates in the virtual ocean of the internet and, thanks to the most advanced modern communication technologies, has now made the Earth, our great common home, a global village? This humanity of the twenty-first century appears as a sure and self-sufficient master of its own destiny, the avid proponent of uncontested triumphs.

Man: craftsman of his destiny?

So it would seem, yet this is not the case. People continue to die of hunger and thirst, disease and poverty, in this age of plenty and of unbridled consumerism. Some people remain enslaved, exploited and stripped of their dignity; others are victims of racial and religious hatred, hampered by intolerance and discrimination, and by political interference and physical or moral coercion with regard to the free profession of their faith. Others see their own bodies and those of their dear ones, particularly their children maimed by weaponry, by terrorism and by all sorts of violence, at a time when everyone invokes and acclaims progress, solidarity and peace for all. And what of those who, bereft of hope, are forced to leave their homes and countries in order to find human living conditions elsewhere? How can we help those who are misled by facile prophets of happiness, those who struggle with relationship and are incapable of accepting responsibility for their present and future, those who are

trapped in the tunnel of loneliness and who often end up enslaved to alcohol or drugs? What are we to think of those who choose death in the belief that they are celebrating life?

From despair to hope

How can we not hear, from the very depths of this humanity, at once joyful and anguished, a heart-rending cry for help? In this 21st century, Christ is still the "Saviour". Who will make this message of hope resound, in a credible way, in every corner of the earth? Who will work to ensure the recognition, protection and promotion of the integral good of the human person as the condition for peace, respecting each man and every woman and their proper dignity? Who will help us to realize that with good will, reasonableness and moderation it is possible to avoid aggravating conflicts and instead to find fair solutions?

Love and Peace: a Legacy...

Only by rediscovering the gift she has received can the Church bear witness to Christ the Saviour before all people. She does this with passionate enthusiasm, with full respect for all cultural and religious traditions; she does so joyfully, knowing that the One she proclaims takes away nothing that is authentically human, but instead brings it to fulfilment. In truth, Christ comes to destroy only evil, only sin; everything else, all the rest, he elevates and perfects. Christ does not save us from our humanity, but through it; he does not save us from the world, but came into the world, so that through him the world might be saved (Jn 3:17). He brings to all the love of the Father in heaven. He is the Saviour of the world! Open your hearts to him and receive him, so that his Kingdom of love and peace may become the common legacy of each man and woman. 

A STEP FORWARD ON THE GREAT RED ISLAND

WORKING WITH THE LESS FORTUNATE, ENHANCING THEIR SELF-ESTEEM THROUGH AN OVERALL EDUCATION, TRAINING FUTURE LEADERS, BRIEFLY, THIS HAS BEEN THE MIC MISSION IN MADAGASCAR FOR THE PAST 54 YEARS. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE 50 MADAGASCAN SISTERS OF WHICH 25 ARE IN THEIR FORMATION YEARS. THE FORTH-COMING RELIGIOUS BRING ABOUT HOPE FOR THE FUTURE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH AND THE MIC COMMUNITY.



By Jeanne-Marthe Razanadrasoa, M.I.C.

In response to a need in the Antsirabe area, the construction of a Centre for Human and Christian Development has recently come to birth. This project arouses much interest as it will touch the lives of many. Our priority at the Centre will be: preparing women to their role in local development. The plot of land we have acquired will allow us to teach forms of agriculture. Cultivation will be a source of revenue, as of now, little is the income of the Sisters in this area. For security purposes a wall has just been completed around the field. The Centre will also offer retreats, sessions and leadership training programs; young women will be educated for their future. Here, the initial formation to religious life will be given and it will be a meeting place for all the Sisters.

SR. ERIKA'S TESTIMONY

As an echo of the above mentioned project, a young Madagascan MIC, Sr. Érika Hanitrarinina gives us an overview of her professional and religious formation.



*I am studying at the National Institute of Pedagogical Formation (INFP) in Mahamasina, in order to become an elementary school guidance counsellor in Antananarivo. This year, I will be completing my studies with a presentation of teaching materials for an evaluation of the discipline. I am also finishing my thesis on Teaching Strategies and School Inequalities. I treat this theme within the framework of: sociology and education, psychosociology of education, as well as training analysis. I chose this theme as it relates to the thinking of our Foundress, Délia Tétreault, who said: **May they in turn sing the Magnificat.** Confronted with all forms of inequalities which exist in our schools and faced with so many injustices, how can young people sing the Magnificat? This is the reason why I have oriented my studies towards the teaching field.*

*I thank my community in allowing me to pursue my studies. I have only one objective—to accomplish the word of Délia: **Do everything for the greater Glory of God.** Studying gives me the opportunity to serve with joy, the Institute, the Church and the Madagascan people.*

IN THE MIDST OF AN INTERCULTURAL REALITY

During my training at INFP in Mahamasina, I have had many experiences. My graduating class is composed of many different ethnic groups from six provinces of Madagascar. They are also from various religious backgrounds (Catholic, Protestant, Anglican, Adventist, Muslim) and several sects. This situation allows me to be a witness to my faith in the resurrected Christ who chose me to follow Him in the religious missionary life. The dialogues that take place confirm me in my choice and determination to continue my path, in offering my life to God and for His Kingdom. My colleagues are interested in my way-of-life and ask about religious life. I use this opportunity to tell them more about my Institute of which I am very proud.

MAINTAINING A WELL-BALANCED LIFE

The student situation I find myself in also allows me to balance my personal life with my community and apostolic life. I am convinced that my reason for living is my communion with the Trinity. Everything flows from my deep relationship with God, a relationship that gives me joy and boldness in my daily life. Community services, studies and apostolic work in the parish are all important ingredients for a young missionary who is in her training years.

At the parish, I am the spiritual advisor of the Children of Mary or Snak'i Masina Maria. On Saturday mornings they pray the Marian Service together. Every time I am with them, I feel great joy in my heart. Their sharing of faith experiences consolidates my own faith and my attachment to Christ. Through our dialogues, I also discover their joy and their hope. These encounters are an unforgettable gift for me, because they make me aware of my active participation in their spiritual life.

I help them to deepen their relationship with the Lord and the Blessed Virgin. It touches my heart and sparks the apostolic and missionary zeal in me.

I am also happy to do my part in the kitchen on Sundays and help in the community chores. In all these activities, no matter how small, I express my gratitude and my belonging to the MIC Community and to the Church.

The spiritual accompaniment with my superior helps me to take charge of my life with a greater awareness of my deep inner self as well as my relationship with God and others.

My final word consists in thanking the Lord who led me to the MIC Institute in order to help me follow Him in a spirit of thanksgiving. No matter where I am, may I always love Him and His Mother Mary.

Sr. Erika's testimony tells us of the importance of religious and professional training for our young Madagascan Sisters. The *Centre for Human and Christian Development* in Antsirabe is a necessity for the MIC Community and for Madagascar.

Your help would be precious in turning this project into a reality and allowing us to continue our Mission with a hopeful outlook into the future.

THE MADAGASCAR PROJECT

Pay to the order of:

MISSION PROCURE

121 Maplewood Avenue
Montreal, QC
Canada H2V 2M2

¹ Wall in construction

² Young Madagascan Sisters

Photos credit: Lucie Gagné, M.I.C.





TO THE RHYTHM OF THE MANGYAN CULTURE

THE TOURIST'S WAY OF LOOKING AT THINGS DIFFERS FROM THAT OF THE MISSIONARY. ONE ADMIRES THE EXOTIC PACE OF THE DANCES AND CUSTOMS WHEREAS THE OTHER ACTUALLY PARTICIPATES IN IT. SISTER LILIA FRONDOZA, M.I.C. HAS BEEN LIVING FOR THE PAST TWENTY YEARS IN THE HEART OF THE INDIGENOUS POPULATIONS OF THE PHILIPPINES. SHE SHARES THEIR JOYS, THEIR SORROWS, THEIR HOPES, BUT ABOVE ALL, EMPOWERS THEM TO DEFEND THEIR RIGHTS, EVEN AT THE RISK OF HER OWN LIFE.

By Edita Telan, M.I.C.

WHO ARE THE MANGYANS?

'Mangyan' is a generic name; it refers to eight indigenous groups who occupy the mountainous region of the Island of Eastern and Western Mindoro, Philippines.

A brief history of these ethnic groups will lead us to the apostolic mission of Sr. Lilia, M.I.C and it will give us a new awareness prompting us to respect and protect these peoples.

National Minorities: At the height of the Spanish domination, Mangyans were

referred to as National Minorities. However, history tells us that they were the original inhabitants of Mindoro; they witnessed the waves of conquests which swept through the Philippines. The majority adopted the life-style of the conquerors, alienating themselves from their original culture. Their population, however, increased.

Cultural Communities (indigenous people-I.P.): This is the term now used when speaking of the small ethnic groups who from the very beginning resisted outside domination. Over the centuries, they have maintained their original culture, passing it on from generation to generation.

DEFENDING THEIR RIGHTS

In solidarity with these minority groups, Sr. Lilia wishes to draw the government's attention, particularly the Office of Cultural Communities (I.P.), to incite them to work directly and in a unified manner for the progress of the Mangyans.

Their education and economic development must be pursued, not according to our rhythm but to theirs. The Mangyans' social structure, traditions, patterns of living must be safeguarded; otherwise the Filipino heritage will suffer a fatal blow and up-coming generations could blame us for our carelessness.

A CLAIMED RIGHT GRANTED

The Mangyans had been longing to have an official guarantee of their ancestral domain in Western Mindoro; their wish was finally fulfilled. Last August they received the long-awaited acknowledgment from the government. On that occasion Sr. Lilia and Sr. Jocelyn Guieb, M.I.C. shared the excitement by climbing a steep mountain to be with the people in celebrating this accomplishment. One Mangyan expressed his gratitude to the Sisters for their solidarity: *Thank you, Sisters, for joining us. Indeed, you are one with us in difficulty and in happiness.* With great emotions, Sr. Jocelyn recalls the day when, with a team of Mangyans, she climbed another high mountain known to be a sacred place for them: *Before leaving the area, we spent some time in prayer, thanking God for his*

many graces, for having had the chance and the strength to reach this magnificent sacred place and for his constant protection.

In thanksgiving, the Mangyans performed a ritual called the PAMAGO to thank God for the granted rights to their ancestral domain despite the many obstacles.

One of these was the resistance of the lowlanders who also claimed the land, but eventually a peaceful settlement was reached.

REFORESTATION IN SANTA CRUZ

Within certain conditions, the Development Bank of the Philippines (DBP) accepted to assist the reforestation in the ancestral domain. However, the Mangyans were divided on this issue, resulting in two factions. One was in favour while the other group who wanted to keep its traditional way of life rejected the project. To deal with the issue, a meeting was held and fifty Mangyan leaders attended. Sister Lilia explained to the participants the advantages that would come with reforestation; at the end of the day, the leaders unanimously approved the project. Together, the DBP Reforestation personnel, the provincial government as well as the Mangyans agreed upon a schedule for planting, organizational set-up, etc.

Advocacy work for the Mangyans keeps Sr. Lilia on the move as she needs to travel by air, land and sea. Recently, she stayed in Baguio to attend a Seminar on Strengthening Strategies, Action for Peace and Development in Indigenous Peoples' Communities. With her were 15 Mangyans; they acquired some knowledge on how to defend themselves against human rights violations by land grabbers and illegal loggers. They learned to develop their skill to negotiate with the government agencies wanting to exploit the resources of their ancestral domain as well as giving them inner security to freely participate in social and political affairs. It is significant to note that most of the Mangyans are illiterate.

Defending the rights of the Mangyans, working with them, and living in their villages is not an easy task. Many times, Sr. Lilia has been threatened. In February 2002,

thieves stole the equipment and documents pertaining to the ancestral domain. The school was burned by people who do not want indigenous people to rise and take their place in society. Strongly convinced, and committed to this noble cause, Sr. Lilia states: *Our people need to find their self-esteem and be affirmed. It is the government's*

It is worthwhile sacrificing urban comfort in exchange for the breeze and streams of the mountains.

duty to consider as a priority those projects that are conceived from the needs of the Mangyans and think in terms of their indigenous life-style.

It is worthwhile sacrificing urban comfort in exchange for the breeze and streams of the mountains, in order to serve the Mangyans, who are part of our social fabric, which is so rich and colourful.

¹ In the rice fields

² A daily life scene

³ PAMAGO Celebration

—Sr. Lilia Frondoza, M.I.C.

Photos: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.



2



3

Letters from here and abroad

A Hope that Keeps Growing Lilongwe, Malawi

Warm greetings to all,

With a heart full of joy and hope, I come to you today to express some 'good news' that is most encouraging. Though our personnel and resources are limited, some young girls from all parts of the country have been coming and knocking at our door. They have heard the Call of Jesus and wish to follow him. They want to know more about religious life and the MIC Community. The presence of our Sisters in various apostolic fields and their participation in youth activities seem to have proven beneficial. With joy we welcome each one.

These youngsters demonstrate a mature faith. The Evangelical message is better understood and is profoundly rooted in the hearts. A new dynamism is rising within youth movements and Christian communities. Yes, the Seed, the Word of God, is bearing fruit in Malawi. It is germinating in the hearts of young people and adults. It is most encouraging.

Being attentive to the voice and life of the African people nourishes our joy and faith. The encounters reveal God's Love within us and around us. We are in awe before God's loving touch in the hearts of those youngsters, who respond so willingly to the Call.

With gratitude and joy,
Doris Twyman, M.I.C.



Sr. Doris dialogues with the youth.

Photo credit: MIC



Dominique (centre) with three young Bolivians

Photo credit: Anne Morais

Dominique Leman, lay missionary in link with the MIC Sisters relates an event that took place in Bolivia.

In a referendum, July 2, 2006—60% of the population voted against the autonomy of the department of Cochabamba. However, the Prefect (regional governor) maintained his struggle for the autonomy of the department. This provoked hundreds of peasants, producers of the coca leaf from which cocaine is extracted, and workers to protest against the Prefect and demand his resignation. Partisans of Evo Morales' Government did not accept the Prefect to re-question the autonomy of the Cochabamba department.

Since January 4, 2007 the demonstrators have been growing in numbers and continue demanding the resignation of the Prefect. The police force has been ordered to use teargas to disperse the crowd, but this aggravates the situation. Barricades block the roads, common transportation has been re-routed.

One morning, as I was walking toward the main square where protesters were gathered, I did not dare look at people in the eyes. I suddenly felt I was a vulnerable stranger...

Today, January 11, there is a general strike. As I need to go out to buy bread and milk, I witness the chaos, people are everywhere, shouting and running in the streets. At one point a taxi driver comes to our house and rings the door bell: he fears for his car! Quickly we have him enter the house. We can hear the dynamite and bombshells. A lady runs, her head injured by a rock. Sr. Rosa, a nurse, tends to her wound. Other persons find refuge on our grounds. There are people from the two sides, for and against: the opponents are right under our eyes. However, they all feel at home, for them it is like a political asylum. As for us, we want to provide security for everyone.

At 8:00 p.m. all seems calmer, at least apparently. The army patrols the streets. Our 'refugees' gradually leave the house. We learn that in the city, more than 250 have been injured and a few others have died.

Three hours later, I retire for the night but cannot sleep as I am still very perturbed and tense about these events. I feel the need to be in touch with the Source of Life and unite myself to the suffering of the people.

Will write again,
Dominique

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES — Lk 24:48

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!



**ROSSINA F. BAUTISTA, M.I.C.
ANGONO, RIZAL, PHILIPPINES**

Sister is a musician and liturgist. She worked with the native community of Guanhsi, Taiwan. Just recently, Sr. Rossina arrived in Canada to join the formation team at our International Scolasticate in Longueuil, Qc.

Photo: Sr. Rossina (1st left) and a group of young natives in Taiwan



**FLORENTINE RAZANAMHASOA, M.I.C.
ANKADIVORY, ANTIRABE, MADAGASCAR**

Sister Florentine is now in Cuba. She is currently studying Spanish and the Cuban culture. Her field of work will be in social service.

Photo: Sr. Florentine (centre) and a few MIC Madagascan Sisters on the day of her departure



**LOUISE LABERGE, M.I.C.
SAINT-LOUIS-DE-GONZAGUE, QC**

A missionary in Bolivia and Peru, for many years, Sr. Louise has expressed joy in leaving for Cajabamba, Peru, where she will work with women in the rural areas.

Photo: Sr. Louise (right) with Peruvian children

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Dawn of a New Life



Hélène Labelle, M.I.C.
(Sister Anne-Hélène)
1924-2006

Marlboro, Mass., United States

Sister Hélène worked in Malawi and Zambia for more than twenty years. She specialized in the field of Science and taught high-school students. Her goal was to prepare an elite class of young girls who could take-on responsibilities.

When she returned to Quebec she became a member of the editorial team for the magazine *MIC Mission News* (1991-2004). Woman of faith and gratitude, Sr. Hélène remained confident until the end of her life.



Janet Delisle, M.I.C.
(Sister Joseph-de-la Ste-Famille)
1907-2007

Worcester, Mass., United States

Wrapped in affection, Sr. Janet became acquainted with Jesus at a very early age, and He became her great lover. At 19 she entered religious life and 51 of her missionary years were lived in the Orient; she worked in Japan, China, Philippines.

During her many apostolic years in Canton, Sister witnessed and lived under the Japanese occupation. With loving care, she provided shelter and protection to hundreds of orphan girls. She lived her life to the fullest up to the very end.



Marie-Claire Adam, M.I.C.
(Sister Marie-Éva)
1924-2007
Montreal, Quebec

Her commercial course completed, Sr. Marie-Claire worked for the Internal Revenue Service. During five years she led a happy, independent life until the time she became perplexed about her future.

She prayed and asked for Mary's protection. Leaving behind what she had acquired, she entered religious life. As a missionary, she reached-out to the poor, the sick, the elderly. She worked in Haiti and Quebec, serving with joy and offering the multiple talents she was blessed with.



Rita Legrand, M.I.C.
(Sister Sainte Rita)
1914-2007
Saint-Philippe, Quebec

At seven years of age, Sister Rita met with the MIC Sisters who were visiting schools to speak about the Holy Childhood Association. She told her mother:

"When I will be older, I will be a Sister like them." And so it was; she became a religious missionary and worked in Haiti for 35 years. While there, she taught elementary school children and also worked in promoting the status of women. She tried to sow the seed of hope in the suffering hearts of the Haitian people. All her life, Sr. Rita responded to the call of the Lord, sharing her faith and being of service to those in need.

Partings here
on earth are a
promise of
meeting again
for all eternity.

Délia Tétrault

PROMIS *Receives the Nelson Mandela Prize*

February 6, 2007—The second month of the year highlights the History of the Black people. It is within this context that the Organization PROMIS received the Nelson-Mandela Prize at the Museum of Civilization in Quebec City. This award granted by the Cultural Communities' Association & Artists of Quebec (ACCA), is an acknowledgement of the work achieved by the Organization PROMIS particularly in the field of 'regionalisation'. The goal of this sector is to welcome, inform and accompany the immigrants while establishing themselves in the different regions of Quebec.

This important prize takes on a special character, particularly this year, as a public debate is currently going-on around the issues: 'immigrants in regions' and 'reasonable accommodations'. Most official talks of the evening echoed these points.

From her viewpoint, Sr. Andrée Ménard, M.I.C., Directress General of the Organization, explained: *Integrating the minorities everywhere in our beautiful Province is a priority of our Organization. With our partners and people coming from all horizons, we are working to build a society where all children, all women and all men will feel accepted, loved and respected in their rights.* Sr. Andrée also thanked the ACCA for the award emphasizing the invaluable work and notoriety of the Association.



Left to right: Mrs. Lise Thériault, Minister of Immigration and Cultural Communities in Quebec; Mr. Moussa Guene, Project Coordinator of the Regionalization of Immigration at PROMIS; Sr. Andrée Ménard, M.I.C., Foundress and Directress General of PROMIS; Mr. Gabriel Coly, President of the Cultural Communities' Association & Artists of Quebec (ACCA)

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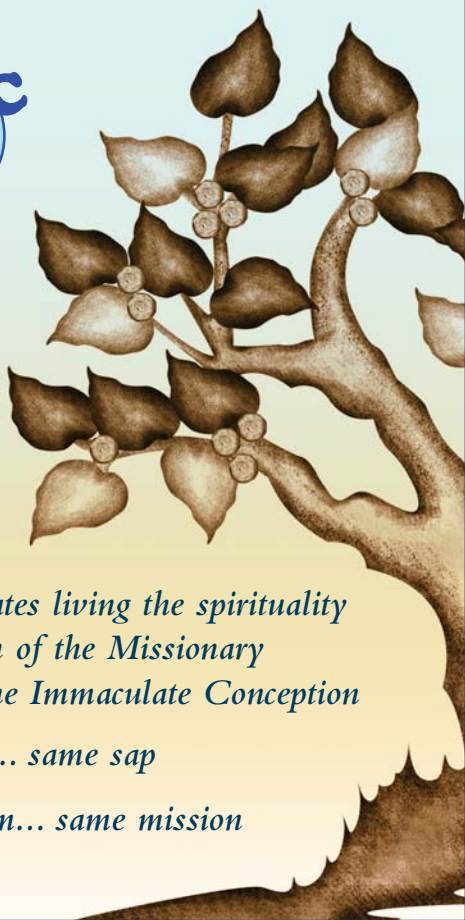
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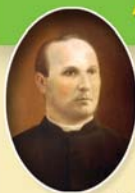
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The following year, in 1907, he had a house built there and with it, a small chapel dedicated to Saint Anthony of Padua. He was

particularly devoted to this saint and gave his chapel the charming name of "San'Antonio hermitage".

A few years later, in 1912, he discovered a cave on the site, which reminded him of the grotto at Lourdes. He immediately installed a statue of the Virgin so that she could bestow favours on those who prayed there.

For Abbé Delamarre, the hermitage was first a place for rest and prayer but it quickly became a sanctuary dedicated not only to Saint Anthony but also to Our Lady of Lourdes. Just as on the shores of Lake Tiber in Galilee where our church had its modest beginnings, so it was with St. Anthony's Hermitage. On the shores of Lake Ouïatchouan, it has become, in its tranquil landscape, the perfect place for prayer, meditation and repose.

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*We should give thanks
for so many favours.
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A warm welcome to all!



Father Michel Gagné
Chairman of the centenary celebrations



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**— Statement of Pope Benedict XVI
on the occasion of a concert given
in his honour at the Vatican.
(October 21, 2005)**

Pope Benedict XVI at the summer cottage of the Salesian Fathers in Combes, d'Introd, Valley of Aoste. Playing the piano relaxes the Pope.

The Salesian Fathers open their summer cottage located in the mountains where the Holy Father is able to have some time away from the heat of Rome. The eldest brother of Benedict XVI, Mgr. Georg Ratzinger is also a musician and a composer of choral music.
Photo © L'Osservatore Romano - 2006

