

MIC MISSION NEWS

SINCE 1923



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BOLIVIA

... AND KATERI

JAPAN

OPENNESS WITH
ITS CHALLENGES

IN FOCUS

IMMIGRATION CLASH OF CULTURES?



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

October 2007

For the World Mission Day:

May this be a propitious occasion for kindling an ever greater missionary awareness in every baptized person.

November 2007

For Korea:

That in the Korean Peninsula the spirit of reconciliation and peace may grow.

December 2007

For the Asian Continent:

That the Incarnation of the Son of God, which the Church celebrates solemnly at Christmas, may help the peoples in Asia to recognize God's Envoy in Jesus, the only Saviour of the world.

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° 4 | OCTOBER • NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 2007

COLUMNS

- 4 SPIRITUAL LIFE**
Lord, Teach Me to Swim
André Gadbois
- 6 LAY MISSIONARIES**
Bolivia... and Kateri
Kateri Diab
- 8 WOMEN**
Dexterous Hand—a Connecting Thread!
Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.
- 10 YOUTH**
A Great Mix
Myriam Foley
- 11 A Second Chance**
Nguyen Thi Minh Tam
- 12 MISSION BRIEF**
Quebec City—Eucharistic Congress 2008
Camille Doucet, M.S.



IN FOCUS

- 13-20 IMMIGRATION**
Clash of Cultures?

ABOUT THE MICs

- 21 Women Without Frontiers**
Lysiane Gagnon
- 22 Two Suitcases and a Roof**
Marie Brassard
- 24 A Mexican Ray of Sunshine in Quebec**
Geneviève Dick

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EDITORIAL

READERS' CORNER

ALL FROM ABRAHAM'S LINEAGE...

According to the book of Genesis, God made a promise to Abraham: *I will give you many descendants, and they will become a great nation... and through you I will bless all the nations* (Gen 12:2.3). Abraham had two sons: Ishmael (born of the servant, Hagar) and Isaac (born of his wife, Sarai). Both had a descendance so numerous that *it would be as easy to count all the specks of dust on earth* (Gen 13:16). Abraham, FATHER OF MULTITUDES, is the model of the faithful who believes in the one God. He is acknowledged as such by the Jews, Christians, and Muslims.

Today, in this globalization era, frontiers are bursting, an influx of immigrants is everywhere. A growing multi-ethnicity is seen in cities and countries. The world is in a process of irreversible change—the origin of a real clash of cultures. Men and women, all are confronted with a multitude of differing opinions, with varied ways of living and acting, unknown to us till recently.

In this country, how can we build a society where it is good to live with all the diverse components: geographic, ethnic, social, historic, religious, political? How to change a Babel into a Pentecost Feast where, guided by the Holy Spirit, openness, understanding, respect, acceptance of the other will transform the sad discord into a harmonious universal masterpiece? This is the challenge... and a major challenge!

On July 6, 2004, the late Pope John Paul II told the Iraqis: *Your noble country, once Abraham's homeland, shelters today a rich variety of faith traditions... It is up to you to create a new society, committed to true freedom of conscience, justice for all and peaceful dialogue.*

This issue presents content for reflection on the subject of immigration, the rights and duties to be respected by those who are welcomed as well as those who do the welcoming.

The articles give some insights in our search of a new society. Testimonies written by new-comers and by people who work to help them integrate will speak to our hearts.

As sons and daughters of Abraham's lineage, we keep the faith and trust in the future. We believe that the Spirit of Love incarnated in Christ Jesus continues to be at work in us and through us in this XXIst century.

Lord, by way of Abraham, we are a tremendous community of believers in a one God. Give us the courage and strength to live this spiritual fraternity capable of engendering lasting peace in our world. This is the wish I formulate for us all as we are about to begin a new year.

Mic-Paul Sanf, m.i.c.

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.

Benoît Voyer, Montreal, Qc

I have been reading your magazine for many months. With interest I perused the articles published in the April-May 2007 issue. I am impressed with the layout and the editing; your creative approach has brought a change worthwhile mentioning. As usual I like reading the editorials of M.P. Sanfaçon; she writes very well. I often take note of her inspiring thoughts and transcribe these into modules of formation and research. André Gadbois, author of many articles, offers us opportunities to reflect seriously on Gospel values. He is well-versed in the new hermeneutics as taught in the faculties of Theology. The article *My Spiderman* was also a delight to read. Your collaborator expresses herself with clarity and enthusiasm; over the telephone I read that article to a friend who in turn responded positively. Shortly, I will be reading *Music—An Essential Pursuit*, I have given it a glance but I am looking forward to giving it all my attention.

P. Ronald Beauline, smm, (Penitentiary of Drummondville, Qc)

As I was doing research work one day, I came across a copy of your magazine and I was seduced. The interesting articles, without being pretentious, have the great quality of serving our social interests while entertaining us on other important issues. Reading *MIC Mission News/Le Précurseur* leads us to new discoveries in line with the world of today and various religious cultures.

500th & 490th PUBLICATIONS

We wholeheartedly thank all our readers who have highlighted our 500th and 490th issues by sending us donations and new subscriptions. We are deeply grateful.

The Direction



LORD, *Teach me to Swim*

On this planet, does my task as a man or woman consist of receiving everyone with open arms without distinction? Can Jesus' teaching show me how I can become everything to all men?



By **André Gadbois**

I can die in my prison, suffocated by my self-centredness, asphyxiated or deprived of oxygen, closed up in my own little world, hemmed in by fear, hate or indifference. Or, I can die torn apart by my superficial and worldly conquests, left breathless, betrayed by my dreams of grandeur, left without an identity in the vast homogenizing world of globalization. My efforts might just as well lead me to shrivel up like a dried fruit as they might cause me to blow up like an overfilled balloon.

Could it be that my task, as a man or woman, consists of opening myself to diversity in order to *unceasingly transform* it into an identity that will be able to welcomingly receive otherness without ever

losing my own selfhood? Isn't it amazing that this identity, this awareness of being me, of having two feet planted firmly in a particular place, is something I build as a result of my openness to all that is otherness: people, languages, cultures, religions and so on. It's a little like when someone eats: what becomes of the food the person has assimilated? Or like the disciple of Jesus who is nourished by the Bread of Life: will he go so far as to wash the feet of others?

The water has risen

In 1955, among the Catholic French-Canadian families in our neighbourhood of Rosemount in Montreal, there was the Chinese man and his launderette, the red-haired Irishman as big as an ox, the Italian who made his own wine, the heavily-

accented Pole, the Jew who sold clothing and biscuits out of his home, and the English boys who always beat us at football (but we got them back at hockey). Our languages both divided us and brought us together; we communicated with our hands. The same was true for the gastronomic aromas on the way to school.

Then, preceded by the council that declared: *This holy Synod offers to humanity the sincere collaboration of the Church for the introduction of a universal fraternity...*, Expo 67 tore the curtain and opened wide the windows; what mouth-watering dishes were proposed to us on those menus! Quebec shook hands with the World and many remained when it was over.

Inspired by Bob Dylan, Hugues Aufray sang: *Wherever you are, come running, dear people. The water is rising; be more clear-sighted. Admit that soon you will be submerged and that if you are worth saving, now is the time to learn to swim, for the world and the times are changing.* Learning how to swim is an image that expresses the need to learn to deal with things that could potentially overwhelm me, to be aware of my strengths and my limits, to breathe calmly, to not allow myself to be carried along by the current to places I may not want to go, to recognize my fears and to dominate them, to change my swimming stroke sometimes, for I hold Life dear, and Life is what really matters.

And so I must become AWARE of what I am, of MY IDENTITY IN NEED OF NOURISHMENT, of the essential things that I hold dear, and of the fact that I am me, largely as a result of my relationships with others. My openness to others confers a duty upon me, that of knowing who I am and what I am made of. Have I learned to swim or am I satisfied to merely be carried along by the current?

The audacity that love demands

The manifestation of the divine in the World is called *avatar* by Hindus, *Jesus* by Christians; Buddhists speak of Buddha as the *Awakened* one par excellence. With them and with all those who seek pleni-

tude, whether believers or unbelievers, I walk... sometimes with difficulty.

My travelling companion is named Jesus of Nazareth; He paid dearly for His level of awareness, and yet He is the one who continues to inspire me and to breathe Life into me. He's the One who reminds me of the role of the law, of the nobility of each human creature, of the priority of justice over the exactitude of liturgical ritual, of the audacity that love demands, of the importance of discretion in prayer, fasting and giving, of the importance of mercy, of the grandeur of the good Samaritan and the centurion, and of the necessity of simplicity and freedom.

My openness to others confers a duty upon me, that of knowing who I am and what I am made of. 

He is also the One who denounces the danger that religions run, the confusion that can be caused by those who claim to be masters, the deceit of pomp and circumstance to please God, and above all, the scandalous pretension that God endorses the projects of domination that we carry within us.

He is the One who men and women, silence, reading, and reflecting have, over the years, made familiar to me. He has played a part in building me, in constructing my identity by sending me towards others, all others, without ever forgetting to re-focus me on the person that I am... just like He knew when to withdraw from the crowds.

In the spirit of the song, interpreted by Hugues Aufray, I am aware that the water has risen, but I don't want to drown, for I am worth saving. And I don't want my people to be submerged, because they too are worth saving. I know how much I need my companion's Breath in order to keep growing richer by remaining open to others, yet I'm able to refuse whatever would erase my identity. Lord, teach me to swim! 

Photos-credit: National Archives

Montage: Thérèse Lortie, M.I.C.

Kateri Diab, 25,
Orthopedagogue
and working at the
Board of Education
in Sorel-Tracy,
has chosen to leave
all for two years.
Comfort, career,
family, friends and a
soul mate, she bids
farewell to. It is
in Cochabamba,
Bolivia, that she
desires to work
as a lay missionary.



By Kateri Diab, lay missionary

I walk in the streets of Cochabamba. I come across a woman from Potosi sitting on the sidewalk with her little children running around her. One can recognize them by their traditional clothing. She opens her hand begging for money. Each time my heart rips apart. Would giving her what she asks for, truly solve her problem? Would it not be better to teach her how to fish rather than giving her the fish?

I have nothing to give

All those street people, often times young ones, strongly stir questions within me. Where is the root of the problem? We, as strangers, when we arrive, often think that with our money we can solve all difficulties; however, we do not respond to the real needs and we do not deal with the root problem. I have nothing to give and feel powerless, but I smile to each one thinking we are all brothers and sisters in Christ; then I walk-on with the conviction that it

is not 'we strangers' who will save Bolivia but the Bolivians themselves. Our duty is to give them the necessary tools that will boost their self-esteem, which is often diminished before the powerful ones.

I walk to *Consipe* the specialized school where I work. I decided to get involved in the educational system because on the one hand I am specialized in that field, on the other, I believe that educating individuals is enabling them to build a better life for themselves.

When I first began getting involved, the education system perturbed me: values, discipline, teaching methods, materials, teachers' motivation, all was so different. With time, I realized it was 'myself' who had to adapt to the existing context. A habit, how can it be changed if it is not first of all accepted? I decided to embrace the system as it was. Gradually, I searched for ways to improve it, keeping in mind the context, the people and their culture. What a challenge! My two years' commitment now seems too short.

Generating trust

As I arrive at school, a few students greet me. They are my deepest joy! The contact with children has always been for me magical and energizing moments. However, with teachers it is not so easy. Some consider me as a threat; I must slowly generate trust. Others see me as the expert in education; I must help them perceive me as a simple colleague with whom they can dialogue and collaborate.

On Saturdays, I meet with a group of teenagers at *Casa Azul*. These youngsters are at risk of finding themselves in streets, with nowhere to go because of their unstable families. At first we look at preventive ways, an eye-opener for children to keep out of trouble; then we proceed in giving them a formation in the light of positive leadership. Though their troublesome 'teens' behaviour often gets in the way, I believe they have much potential. I sincerely love them and they feel they are loved. Lately, Wilfredo said to me that he considered me as a mother. This touched me deeply. Crazy how Love can be a strength.

Upon my arrival at *Casa Azul*, I see Lucha and Anne, two other educators. We discuss the evening's agenda. Through my activities and work, a good circle of friends surround me. On the affective level, this is a great help; being far from family is sometimes difficult.

A source of growth

I live in a fraternity made up of religious and laity; not always easy, but for me it is a source of personal growth. We must learn to accept and respect the others with their differences, their character, their habits. However, they are a great support for me; they are my family here and I love them dearly. Though they were not born here, the Canadians have a deep and wide knowledge of the culture, traditions, and history of Bolivia. A good reference!

Thanks to my Bolivian friends, I am becoming closer to the heart of the culture and people; with sadness I discover their personal and family problems. Many

of my friends have children, but their own mothers are gone afar; others married very young because of pregnancy and are not happy as couples. Sex education hardly exists. More so, young people from broken families seek affection elsewhere and often end-up in unhealthy love relationships. As I walk back home, I come across young lovers in parks; it is sad to think that the majority of them will end-up in misery.



¹ Orphanage Solomon Klein

² At the Campo (countryside)

Photos-credit: Jacinthe

³ Preventive care group

Photo credit: Kateri Diab

To find out more

Kateri in Bolivia

<http://katerienbolivietest.bloggout.fr>

Crazy how Love
can be a strength! 

At *Mariane Frostig School*, Andrea, 6 years of age, cries every day in class and cannot accept that her teacher be absent for a few minutes. Why is this? Her mother left for Spain and gave the child to an aunt who in turn also abandoned her. Andrea is now living with another aunt, but she keeps in mind the horrible tragedy of having been abandoned. Many children are victims of this massive exodus by Bolivians who hope to find a better land.

Life in Bolivia is difficult, but I am hopeful and keep sowing my little grain of salt with all the love I can give. As Mother Teresa once said: *What I do is but a drop of water in the ocean, but if I didn't do it, that drop would be missing...* 



Dexterous Hands —a Connecting Thread!

Immigrant women, single mothers without an income often stand alone. Dexterous Hands a training centre in industrial sewing has the important mission of helping these women to come out of their isolation. Together, they learn a trade, they share with each other and eventually find a job where they can earn a living with dignity.

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.



A dynamic woman who believes in the impossible launches a project and in 1994 establishes the modest foundation of *Dexterous Hands*. At the age of 78, Sr. Denise Arseneault, C.S.C., is preoccupied with the dire situation of the newly arrived immigrants in Quebec. She decides to act and concretely help them out of their poverty and solitude.

These women from other countries are here, they have found a home with us and they are at home because all the earth belongs to everyone. I want to change the plight of these women, I want to improve their way of life and help them out of their miserable state.

A gift from heaven

An experienced seamstress, Sr. Yolande Laroche, M.I.C., shares the same vision as the foundress of the training centre. From the very beginning, she offers her services, teaching industrial sewing to the women. Sr. Denise welcomes her to the confined area located in the basement of a house in Cote-des-Neiges, a modest Montreal district. She considers Sr. Yolande as a gift from heaven and a sign that the centre *Dexterous Hands* is willed by God.

September 26, 1994 courses begin in French and English. Two groups of four or five women take part. They come from Bangladesh, Ghana, Haiti, Jamaica, Liberia, Morocco and Tunisia. With time, more women join them; some who are more skilful in sewing, quickly acquire enough experience to go find work on the labour market.

During their training, the women learn to make all kinds of garments, touch-ups etc.; with time, the production brings in a bit of money which they share with joy among themselves. Besides the sewing sessions, these women have the advantage of receiving courses in human growth development. They bloom in light of what they acquire, they become skilful, more experienced and eagerly await the day when they will sign a work contract in due form.

Wind in the sails

The unexpected crops up. Sr. Yolande must leave *Dexterous Hands*; her help is needed in Zambia, Africa, as teacher in a sewing centre. After some time there, her health obliges her to come back to Quebec. After her convalescence, she returns to *Dexterous Hands*, a mission she holds dear to her heart. The foundress, Sr. Denise is no longer there; she passed away February 1, 2004. Mrs. Nahid Aboumansour is the lady who holds the torch and courageously continues the work that is growing—the centre has wind in its sails!

Sr. Yolande rejoices in seeing the progress that has been made during her absence. *While I was away, the centre had the opportunity of finding another location in the Cote des Neiges area where more space and better ventilation were provided. The work place is expanding, the training is of six months and the workers receive a modest salary. Once the women master their trade we help them find work. As for*



Happy to encourage seamstresses who desire to excel in their creations.

me, I welcome them when they arrive at the centre; I initiate them to the industrial sewing machines, overcasting and conventional. They first practice on paper, then on cloth. To evaluate their dexterity we use a lab book in which there are various exercises.

When ready, the women work on the production: we receive orders from many companies, the army, etc. Thus, they can put into practice what they have learnt. It's great to see their joy when they succeed. The centre functions on a rotating basis: after their six months of training, most of them find a job that is more professional and better paid; new recruits replace them immediately.

And today?

What joy to see these women bloom, thanks to their success and the promising future that is before them. They are most grateful. Nowadays, the ladies come from more than sixty countries; forty volunteers give a helping hand at the centre to ensure the quality and continuity of this marvellous project.

Dexterous Hands now offers a variety of activities to its students: kiosks for the sale of their products, presence in schools, radio interviews; they also have cultural outings in Montreal and Quebec, visiting museums, and art galleries. These are ways to initiate the women to their new environment, their new society.

The centre provides the workers with what they need to be proud of their work, to be serene and assured of a better future. Somewhat like a connecting thread, our

ultimate goal is to find them a job where they will be able to find their place in society, and in a spirit of openness participate in the progress of the region where they settle while respecting the local culture.

Already ten years

Since the very beginning of its foundation, *Dexterous Hands* has focused on justice issues in the labour market, fighting against isolation, discrimination, illegal exploitation and violence against women. The centre's sale counter is a project where goods are sold at fair prices and where the quality of work, produced by the students, is exhibited. They experience a profound feeling of pride when they see their creation with a price tag and then bought. The sale counter has increased by 300%. This is a means of publicity for the centre and an encouragement for the participants; it is also a way for *Dexterous Hands* to take a larger place in the field of commerce endorsing honesty, integrity and accountability.

Apart from being equitable, all the goods produced at the centre are of superior quality. The outcome? The clients are proud of their purchase, and happy to encourage seamstresses who desire to excel in their creations. *Dexterous Hands* opens us to a more just, more fraternal world; it's an invitation to take part... The counter and coffee shop are there to welcome you and offer you a 'good break' in a friendly atmosphere. Cordial welcome! 

^{1,2} Sr Yolande and the dressmakers

Photos-credit:

M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

To find out more:

A tour at the centre

Dexterous Hands

(Petites-Mains)

New address:

7585, Saint Laurent Blvd.

Montreal (Quebec) H2R 1W9

Tel: (514) 738-8989

A GREAT MIX!



Plunging head-first into another culture does not happen every day. Nevertheless, for Myriam it is love at first sight. After a short-stay experience in Haiti with other students, Myriam, in love with the Haitian people, returns to teach at the Institute Mother Delia where some MIC Sisters work. Back in Montreal, she decides to serve at Maison d'Haiti; there she responds to the needs of the young Haitians who recently arrived in Quebec. Joyfully, she shares with them her knowledge and love of the culture and language. In a few words, she opens her heart...

Haiti of a thousand fragrances

Haiti of a thousand glances

Haiti of a thousand smiles

Haiti, my heart belongs to you.

I remember...

Montreal of a thousand cultures

Montreal of a thousand faces

Montreal of a thousand loves

*Montreal, a welcoming land,
a land of birth*

With all my heart,

I love you.

By Myriam Foley

There are those countries that marry and will never separate. There are cultures that intermingle, come together and mix very well; an example—the Quebec-Haiti Union. Incarnated in a place where we can share, dialogue, decide, where projects can be achieved, and the quebeco-haitian life can take shape, this is a facility where intercultural life is at its best in Montreal.

The latter part of the sixties and early seventies, many Haitians came to settle in Quebec. Among them are some of the founders of *Maison d'Haiti*. They actively participated in creating a great *mix*. In 1972, they organized a community centre whose goal was to help the new comers in applying for residence at the Immigration.

In existence for more than 30 years, *Maison d'Haiti* has expanded its services to the population living in the area of St. Michel. The organization welcomes people from all origins: Maghreb, Latin America, Africa, Haiti, etc. Here, we meet children, youngsters, adults who come for French courses, or to ask help in their application to the Immigration Office, to seek advice for employment, to look for men-

tors in the line of home-work or simply to participate in celebrations and art workshops. Young women find comfort in counselling sessions during their pregnancy and thereafter. In the area there are patrollers guarding the streets and encouraging youngsters to good behaviour and harmony in public places.

In this very human and enriching context, I teach the French language with passion; I journey with young mothers and have the joy of looking after their toddlers at the day nursery.

Maison d'Haiti is a home for all. Here, people find comfort and friendship. It is a space filled with laughter, passionate social projects, and engaging debates.

Maison d'Haiti, is *your* house, *my* house. Here, we meet our own people and we remember our country. Here, we meet a thousand new faces with whom we build the future. 🌸





A SECOND CHANCE

Nguyen Thi Minh Tam currently works as lab technician at the Montreal General Hospital—a unit of MUHC (McGill University Health Centre).

My family and I have been under God's protection at all times. 

By Nguyen Thi Minh Tam

In 1975 during the Vietnam war, the Communists from the North successfully captured South Vietnam, which was a Democratic state. I was twelve years old at the time and living with my family in Da nang, south of North Vietnam. Because of the invasion, my family hurriedly escaped to Saigon, the capital of South Vietnam.

After the successful capture of the South, my father, my brother-in-law and other officers were forced into concentration camps. My family was tagged with a red flag, and monitored by the now ruling government authorities. Democracy in Vietnam had ended. I lived in Saigon for seven years before escaping with my sister to Malaysia in a fishing boat. This was a dangerous risk. In the open sea, hundreds of boat people were victims of sea piracy and other accidents, but this was our only alternative to escape the communist regime.

The trip from Saigon to Malaysia took four days. We were placed in

Pulau Bidong refugee camp; we were very thankful because we knew that God had spared our lives and gave us a second chance to live freedom again. This camp received one or two boat loads of refugees every day from South Vietnam. The Island was filled with thousands of boat people crammed into temporary houses that were built by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR); some stayed in shacks built by the refugees themselves. Wanting to help others, I volunteered to teach English to other refugees and my sister worked with the children in the camp.

Life was simple and our basic needs were met. The refugees were united and helped each other in many different ways. My sister and I stayed at the camp for two months. It was a time of anxiety and uncertainty concerning our future, but I was anxiously anticipating a new life. It was a relief when our names were published on the list to leave for Canada and to be reunited with our brother who had been living in Montreal for two years. We left with

little possessions but with plenty of optimism. We were warmly received in Canada.

Since then, I have been living in this country and have adapted to the Canadian culture and climate. I now consider Canada as my second homeland; it has welcomed me, has given me the opportunity to rebuild my life and to receive all the benefits of a Canadian citizen, for which I am deeply grateful. After 13 years in Vietnam's concentration camp my father was released; in 1990, he was reunited with the rest of us here in Canada.

Looking back at all the events, I see that my family and I have been under God's protection at all times. My journey in search of freedom ended here in Canada, but I have embarked on a new journey which is to serve others. Through volunteer work, I have found a meaningful way of growing closer to God and of witnessing His Love as I walk with others on the path of life. 



Quebec City: *The Eucharistic Congress in 2008*



49th INTERNATIONAL
EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS
QUEBEC CITY, CANADA 2008

Quebec City at night

Photo credit: Olivier Labalette

About the author

Father Camille Doucet, missionary of Our Lady of La Salette, is currently pastor at Our Lady of La Salette Parish in Montreal, Qc

By Camille Doucet, M.S.

It's in the magnificent city of Quebec, UNESCO's World Heritage Site, that the 49th International Eucharistic Congress will be held from June 15-28, 2008. This Congress will be a faith event celebrated at the heart of the 400th anniversary of Quebec City's foundation.

In October 2004, at the end of the International Eucharistic Congress held in Guadalajara, Mexico, it was late Pope John Paul II who announced that the next congress would take place in Quebec City. It was an exhilarating moment for the Canadian and Quebec delegation who had explored the theme: Eucharist, Light and Life of the New Millennium.

A basic theological document of 70 pages was launched in 2006 to help people prepare and reflect on the theme: Eucharist, Gift of God for the Life of the World. This booklet is greatly in use. Participants from the world over will be welcomed within Quebec's Christian Community and the Christian life will be experienced and lived intensely. Every day, a theme will be proposed around which activities will unfold. Through workshops, cultural activities, signs of solidarity, fraternal meals, prayer, adoration, witnessing the Good News and celebrating the Eucharist, participants will be enriched of a deep spiritual experience, unique in one's life.

Cardinal Marc Ouellet, Archbishop of Quebec and primate of the Canadian Church has launched a warm and heartfelt invitation to all Christians of the world, inviting them to his episcopal city for this great communal and ecclesial event.

At the beginning of this Third Christian Millennium, the Catholic Church, aware of the globalization phenomenon, is interested in all that will promote a civilization of love and peace. It's at the Source of the Holy Eucharist that she finds her inspiration and energy that stimulates commitment from all, in building a more just and fraternal world.¹

This Congress wants to be an occasion to celebrate in joy the faith of our predecessors who lived their oneness with Christ through the Eucharistic celebration. I share with you a thought from Fr. Zoël Saulnier from the Diocese of Bathurst:

Communion with Christ in the Eucharist calls forth communication; by our witnessing, God may become nourishment on the table everywhere in the world. Thus, the Eucharist will not only be the presence of God among us but also our presence to God in faith, that we may not only be walking disillusioned but delivering this BREAD OF LIFE to everyone we meet.²

In the next issue, a reflection will be presented on the original symbol, the Ark of the New Covenant proposed by the youth for the Congress. ✨

¹ *Eucharist, Gift of God for the Life of the World* (a basic study text for the 49th International Eucharistic Congress, Quebec, 2006, P. 6)

² Zoël SAULNIER, *Eucharist—Source of Life or a Habit* La/The Barque May 2007, P. 3

IMMIGRATION CLASH OF CULTURES?



Islamist planet

By Fatima Houda-Pepin

Born in Morocco, where Islam is the state religion, I grew up in a milieu where religion was a part of daily life. It was synonymous with faith, singing, music and joy. Religious festivals were the occasion for family get-togethers, and my Jewish and Christian friends took part in ours as I did in theirs. I could freely go bare-headed to the mosque and pray with a scarf on, out of respect for God, without anyone bothering me if my hair happened to be sticking out.



1



About the author

Deputy of the La Pinière riding in the National Assembly in Quebec City, Madame Fatima Houda-Pepin is the first female vice-president of the National Assembly. She was the driving force behind the resolution adopted unanimously by the National Assembly which opposes the introduction of Islamic tribunals in Quebec and Canada.

Cf. *La Presse*, May 3, 2007

« Planète Islamiste »

Excerpted from a talk delivered on April 18, at the University of Ottawa.

What a shock it was for me to arrive in Canada 35 years ago! Here I discovered circles of indoctrination where women wear veils amongst themselves and inside their own homes. Preaching organizations have networks in the Middle East, Pakistan, Iran, Europe, and in the United States.

Trained in fundamentalist schools, then sent on missions and paid by foreigners, imams were propagating a radical form of Islam aimed at isolating Muslims from their host society. Messages called them to jihad, and to hate for the unfaithful, Jews, democratic Muslims, or Christians.

A second shock was the indifference of public authorities. As long as these problems were lived out within the various communities, why would anyone get involved? A lack of understanding of Islam and of Muslims left the Islamists free to impose their own vision of things.

The Islam of knowledge and tolerance that characterized my youth was changing before my very eyes into a straightjacket in Canada, reduced to a series of prohibitions, imposed most often on women. Furthermore, the perception we have of Muslims has deteriorated in favour of images of violence coming from the Middle East, Africa, Asia, and after 9/11 closer to us, from the United States.

By taking advantage of the overall indifference and ignorance, Islamist groups have refined their strategies. They have managed to pass themselves off as

spokesmen for their communities, to the great disarray of the democratic Muslims who are struggling to integrate, and who seek nothing more than to live in harmony with their fellow citizens. That's why these communities, in which the silent majority doesn't dare confront the Islamists on their own territory, are so vulnerable. A fragmented leadership, weak community structures, and a feeling of exclusion among the youth also contribute to their marginalization. Still, their contribution in terms of human resources, skills, and economic and cultural development remains considerable.

When one observes the rise of religious extremism and the threats that it presents for rights that were so hard won, notably the equality between men and women, one cannot remain silent. When the Declaration of Rights was adopted almost 50 years ago, the then Prime Minister John Diefenbaker declared, "No Canadian will tolerate fanaticism". The Charter of Rights and Freedoms, whose 25th anniversary we are celebrating, aimed to reinforce these rights.

Whether in the form of a Declaration or a Charter, the founding principle of a pluralistic society that seeks to be just and equitable is the protection of minorities against the abuses of the majority. Religious extremism, however, imposes itself first of all within the minorities themselves.

This is true of the *charia*, which fundamentalists tried to impose in Toronto in

1990 before finally backing down under pressure from Muslim women. This battle was won within the communities themselves, before it came back to the surface in the public sphere in 2003, with a more sophisticated panoply of arguments and a better communication strategy. Fortunately, Ontario did not carry out the project.

The American religious right

In a similar way, the American religious right has experienced phenomenal growth. In 1978, 22% of Americans called themselves evangelical Christians. In 1986, that figure rose to 33%. Since then, the movement has continued to grow and transform itself.

The evangelical message, which was originally a message of faith, has been transformed into a powerful instrument in the hands of a lobby that has access to the highest levels of power. This strong and active right wing movement is calling for nothing less than the modification of public order. The conversion of “born again Christians” is no longer enough; it’s all of America that must be saved.

At the heart of its strategy is the struggle against abortion, homosexuality, and the “destruction of the family”. This influence on the national and international policies of the United States is considerable.

The rise of the religious right has spread everywhere. In Canada, various fundamentalist movements are already at work. Everywhere schools, the family, institutions and political power have been targeted.

Different fundamentalists, same fight

At the same time, Islamist movements have spread in several Muslim countries where they are carrying on a struggle against the reigning powers, considered corrupt, and against the “infidel” and morally “decadent” West.

The West, which guarantees them religious freedom, has been targeted at its base in order to destabilize its political regimes and at the same time to weaken democracy. From their viewpoint, Canada seems like the soft underbelly of the West because of its fundamental freedoms, which the extremists themselves enjoy.

The Islamists’ strategy, developed in closed circles, is not to integrate Muslims into Quebec’s and Canada’s society, but rather to integrate them into a community without borders, an Islamist planet in which Muslims must be governed according to charia law, no matter which country they live in.

Such an objective relies on Islamist control over Muslim communities and upon its leaders being recognized by the political authorities, with whom they become the official interlocutors.

The Charter guarantees the freedom of religion; but which freedom is being referred to?

The Charter guarantees freedom of religion. But what freedom is being referred to? Who determines, for example, the norms to be imposed on women in Islam, a religion without a clergy and in which the relationship to God is without any intermediary? Why endorse the ideology of these groups while the religion on which they base themselves gives them no authority to do so?

A real threat

Religions have become instrumentals in order to justify the Inquisition, wars, inter-religious conflicts, or violations of human rights. In our time, the real threat to democracy lies in the rise of forms of extremism under the guise of religion.

Whether it’s the American religious right, radicals who claim to be Muslim, or Hindu fundamentalists, everywhere the strategy is the same: to exploit fundamental freedoms with the aim of subverting them.

In spite of their differences, these groups have two objectives in common: to weaken the foundations of secular society in the name of a certain idea of God, and to exercise an obsessive domination over women, whose reproductive power, as well as their thoughts and movements, must be controlled. 

Photos-credit page 13:

¹ M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

² Benjamin Earwicker

³ Bernadette Taurinya

Photo credit page 14:

¹ Ramzi Hashisho



In order to respond to the difficulties of integrating newly arrived immigrants, Andrée Ménard, M.I.C., created PROMIS in 1987. PROMIS is a non-profit organization that works towards building a society of rights, tolerance and mutual understanding. This solicitude for “life’s displaced people” was dear to Délia Tétreault’s heart right from the beginning. In her footsteps, several MIC sisters and hundreds of volunteers have joined Sister Andrée and become a part of PROMIS’s great mission.

PROMIS IS 20 YEARS OLD!

By Andrée Ménard, M.I.C.

An organization open to everyone

PROMIS, a name that stems from **PROMotion—Integration—New Society** is an intercultural and multi-confessional community organization whose mission is to help the integration of refugees and immigrants. For the past 20 years, PROMIS has been working in Montreal’s multi-ethnic neighbourhood of Cote-des-Neiges, a point of entry for many newly arrived people. Last year, more than 37,000 people from 112 countries received services from PROMIS, always in response to the needs of the beneficiaries.

To become well-integrated in a new country, one must first be welcomed, be suitably housed, become familiar with the public resources and systems, understand the particularities of the job market, and be accompanied by someone. Our ‘welcome and settlement’ division offers these services. Last year, 3047 people took advantage of them.

A wide variety of services

Complementary activities help the new arrivals to integrate as harmoniously as possible through material and moral support, which we provide every year to some 200 families: drop-off daycare, stimulation kindergarten, collective kitchens, informal meeting groups, courses in adaptation to the Quebec culture, training workshops in civic participation, family outings and so on. Communication is also essential for successful integration. Teaching the French language is one of our important sectors, 500 adults participate every year.

Job seeking*

It is obvious that people will not feel integrated as long as they don’t have a job corresponding to their professional qualifications. The immigrant population constitutes an essential pool of manpower in which experienced, highly qualified and motivated people can be found.

* Job-seeking at PROMIS (2006)

- 1440 interventions (individual meetings, referrals to job offers or training sessions, interventions with local employment office agents).
- 4500 telephone calls to contact businesses, and responses to about 6800 calls from our candidates, employers or partner institutions.
- 160 participants found jobs.

We manage a program of immigrant regionalization, in collaboration with partners in a dozen other regions of Quebec. In order to facilitate the integration of immigrants in outlying regions, activities are offered within the program's framework: awareness excursions and professional exploration, participation in job fairs, and so on.

Saturday school

In the Cote-des-Neiges area, there are but four or five children from French Canadian origin in the elementary schools. In conjunction with these establishments, we offer a program of individual tutoring to help bring the allophone children up to par and give them experiences of success.

We also offer introductory workshops in French language for the three to five-year-olds. Interactive workshops, given to parents, help them develop the skills necessary to support their children in school.

A common vision

These services and activities are given in about 15 languages by 35 employees, assisted by a few interns and 300 volunteers. It's a dynamic, passionate team, whose members share a common vision and carry out their stated mission with great intensity: *With people from every horizon—to build a society in which all children, all women and all men feel accepted, loved and respected in their rights.*

Twenty years of PROMIS

Everything started in 1987, during a six month sabbatical. I was fortunate to have been a missionary in Japan for 25 wonderful years! When I came back to Montreal, I discovered a completely different province and city. Quebec's Quiet Revolution had taken place... and a cultural mosaic had developed—visible minorities could be seen everywhere. It was obvious that a major social transformation was underway. What were the consequences, the problems, and the challenges going to be?

Several encounters made me aware of the great difficulties immigrant women were confronted with in their process

of integration. A little later on, I realized that the men and children were experiencing similar situations. That's when I felt a very strong call—these people needed help to integrate harmoniously. I understood that by helping them, everyone was being helped; however, if the new arrivals were unable to integrate, we were going to undergo a heartrending social transformation, rife with serious social and economic problems. I understood that a society of tolerance, openness and mutual understanding had to be constructed together. And I responded to the call with an emphatic YES!

Together with a few collaborators, I founded PROMIS. And from then on, that's the way I would fulfill my mission—a mission that is rooted in, is energized by, and has its reason for being, in the message of Jesus: Love one another as I have loved you (John 15:12). On October 1, 1988, we rented a very modest one-bedroom apartment on Barclay Street, in Montreal's Cote-des-Neiges district, an area with a high density of multi-ethnic residents. In 1991, we moved to 5770, Cote Saint Catherine Road, in a three storey house which belonged to the Holy Cross Sisters. Now, our quarters are established in a more spacious building on the corner of Decelles and Cote Saint Catherine still in the same district.

In collaboration with numerous governmental, institutional and community partners, we are working towards the advent of a society built on justice, peace, openness to others and mutual respect that we all dream of. And so, for twenty years, I have been a missionary here in Quebec. In the wake of our Foundress, Délia, it is with passion that I live this mission because I profoundly believe in the globalization of solidarity! 🌱

With passion I live this mission,
because I profoundly believe in the
globalization of solidarity! 

For more information
or to support the mission
of PROMIS:
www.promis.qc.ca

¹ Sr Andrée and
her collaborators

² A French class

³ The team at PROMIS

Photos-credit:

M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.





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With the phenomenon of globalization, a good number of countries experience a rise in migration due to wars or a search for better life. Japan is no exception. Once known for being politically isolated, Japan is opening-up and is among those countries who receive immigrants. Two MIC Sisters are preoccupied of their fate; they give us their testimony.

OPENNESS WITH ITS CHALLENGES

In collaboration:

Mgr. Tani Daiji and

Mr. Yabuki Sadato, Deacon

Diocese of Saitama, Japan

Ref: Human Mobility in Asia

2007

Written in collaboration

A Brief Survey of Japan's History

Among the countries of Asia, Japan is positioned furthest to the east; thus, for centuries it was self-sufficient and had little contact with the outside world. From the early 17th century, Christianity was forbidden in Japan and the door was completely shut to contact with any foreign country. Toward the end of the 19th century, Japan began to be somewhat more open.

In order to understand what kind of problems Japan is now facing as a “host country”, one must remember that not so long ago, it was in the exact opposite position than it is today. Japan itself sent out many emigrants to foreign countries who welcomed them well.

Japan Becomes a Host Country

The Japanese economy riding a wave of technological innovations, from around 1966, accomplished a sudden high rate of growth. This resulted in the deterioration of the large family system in Japanese society which changed very rapidly into nuclear families and digressed to the point where people were having very few children. This phenomenon continues unabated to the present time; with this reality comes the serious worry about an eventual shortage of youth for the work force.

The Japanese government and business world are interested in cheap labour: the immigrant workers. Since the '80s

their number keeps increasing rapidly. Unfortunately, the government has been dealing with the immigrants without any laws in place to protect and guarantee their rights. Everything is done very haphazardly; as a result, immigrant workers are faced with very difficult working conditions and a precarious living environment. At the government level, “Refugees Recognition Law” and the “Emigration, Immigration Management Law” are joined together as one unit and managed by the same Bureau; this brings about misunderstanding for the refugees who are often ill treated. According to the 2006 statistics, there are 8,107,963 foreigners living in Japan. In this migration context, two MIC Sisters: Keiko Hasegawa (Japanese) and Ana Alvarado (Peruvian) work with the new-comers to alleviate some of their anxieties. The following are their testimonies.

Sr. Keiko: A Precious Help in Tokyo

In 2006 I began working at the Catholic Tokyo International Centre (CTIC). This is a Centre founded by the Archdiocese of Tokyo to help immigrants. Those who come here are from Peru, Brazil, Philippines and Colombia. They seek consultation for various problems they are confronted with in daily life, including the school system, non-paid salaries, divorce, immigration papers, etc.

With the help of the director of the Centre, I am acquiring greater know-

ledge of the laws and the way of analysing problems so as to respond adequately to the needs. My many years of experience working at the Embassy of the Philippines serves me well, as I am often called to be the intermediary between the Regional Immigration Bureau and the Embassy of the Philippines, requesting the necessary documents for certain immigrants.

Here in Japan, immigrants experience multiple problems. Being in a foreign country, the difficulties are often complex and lived with much anxiety. Children are frequently victims of the system: those who adapt more or less to the culture drift into misbehaviour; youngsters whose parents have expired visas, have no hope of receiving a Japanese compulsory education. The complexity is even greater when children are from international marriages. Being in charge of *Sampaguita*, a care group specifically dedicated to the Filipinos/Filipinas in Japan, I come across many family problems. Recently, a family from this group asked a special permission from the Government requesting that their two children study in a Japanese school. To support this request, I wrote a report to the Ministry of Justice and I personally delivered the document to the General Director of the Immigration Bureau in Tokyo. What is left for me to do now is pray that this request, so deeply desired, be granted. For all these families who live with so many fears, may prayers be said for them and also for those who work on their behalf.

An Enriching Experience for Sr. Ana

As Peruvian, I help the new comers at the legal and pastoral level. Every day I visit Latin-Americans who are at the police detention centres. They are arrested because their permit has expired and will soon be deported to their country of origin. I contact their families here in Japan or in their homeland. I accompany them spiritually and morally until all judicial procedures have ended. It's sad for them... and for me, as I know their situation, particularly when they come from Peru.

The immigrants often ask me to be their interpreter in court especially

in case of divorce and also in hospitals. I therefore had to improve my Japanese language and even my Spanish; medical and judicial terminology is very specific. Many situations deeply touch my emotions. One day I accompanied a Peruvian lady to the hospital; the Japanese doctor gave me the results of all her medical exams and I translated. She was victim of a cancer that left her little time to live... how to communicate such sad news without shedding tears?

Since most immigrant parents do not understand Japanese, I am also an interpreter at school reunions. I translate the information concerning the children. A major problem is developing in Japan; parents no longer understand their youngsters who now speak Japanese and they ask themselves: *How can we pass-on our values, our culture, our faith?* Parents rely on the Church to accomplish this task. They ask me to speak to their children about God, about Peru and all this in the Japanese language.

They ask me to speak
to their children about God, about Peru,
all this in the Japanese language... 

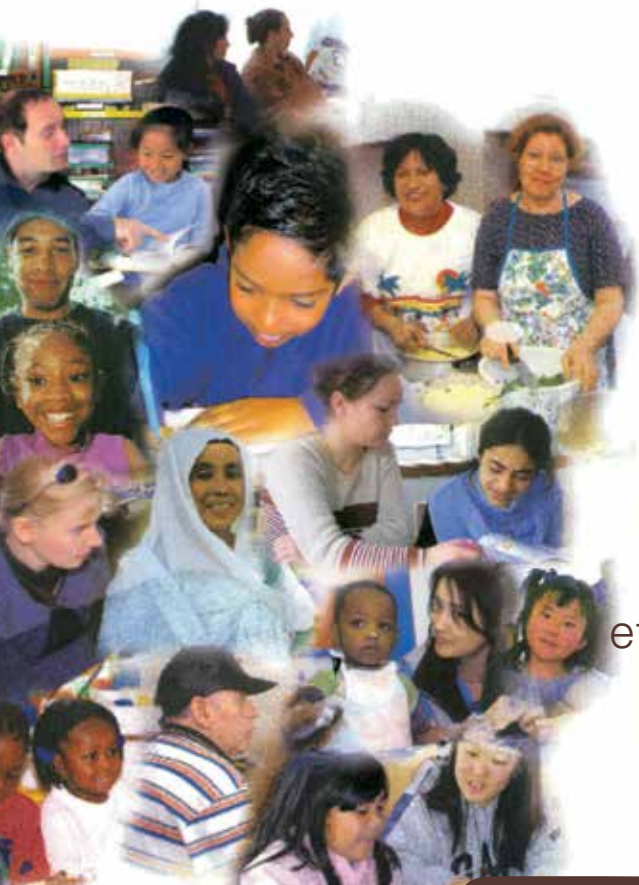
On week-ends I work in different parishes where Masses are celebrated in Spanish. I prepare the people to the sacraments and I train future leaders. The plight of foreigners in Japan is dreadful; nevertheless, many immigrant families decide to stay. Parents take that decision after scrutinizing the Japanese way of life, the culture and values; gradually they begin to feel at home. As Catholics they are not considered as new-comers, they participate fully in all the pastoral activities; in a parish setting, an immigrant can well be the president of the Pastoral Council.

I am very content with my work here in Japan. To accomplish this mission, I carry in my heart the Word of God taken from Scripture (Rm 12:15) *Be happy with those who are happy, weep with those who weep.* 



¹ Sr. Keiko (centre)
and the CTIC team

² Sr. Ana with some youngsters
Photos-credit: MIC



Today's
Quebec
is a mosaic
made up of
ethnic colours
and a variety
of cultures.



WHEN FICTION BECOMES REALITY

By Marie Brassard

For a long period of time, the Quebec society lived isolated. However, the arrival of millions of immigrants is an invitation to openness, to mutually welcome the other, thus assuring the harmonious development of the society and benefiting all citizens.

The Quebecers' attitude toward immigrants is a question that has interested me for a long time. Coming from a rural area and a culturally homogeneous neighbourhood, I grew up with the impression that I lived very far. World geography taught me that there are other places besides my village, my region, my province, my country, my religion, my language. What a revelation! I am not at the centre stage of it all. Luckily!

Intrigued

For many years, the world was for me a striking sequence of statistics and accumulated facts. Cultural differences did not yet appear to me clearly except in mathematical terms. As I came in contact with people from other regions of the world, questions set in my mind and I wanted to know more.

Fiction was transformed into reality. Universal brotherhood/sisterhood took on a concrete dimension and was developed by way of choral singing, taking Spanish courses, learning Hispanic dances, working as a volunteer at a women's centre, going on trips farther away from home and for a longer period of time, always in the pursuit of knowing better the "other".

Having returned to my homeland "my Quebec", I now see the social movement *in colours*, as would say Nelson Mandela referring to South Africa. Today's Quebec is a mosaic made up of ethnic colours, with a variety of cultures and a wealth of human resources.

Plunge into the fray

Are Quebecers indifferent to this social change? They cannot be, unless they close their eyes to a reality and live in seclusion. I truly

believe that certain persons ignore the new arrivals and their identities. Culture differences are apprehended. Some observe from a distance, without getting involved. However, it is time to become acquainted with a new reality that surrounds us with its multiculturalism.

The majority of people are willing to tend a helping hand to the immigrant and often try to meet the new neighbour. At times, a pretext has to be found or an occasion be provoked to begin a dialogue in all honesty. Quebec needs immigrants to assure her future. All persons, no matter where they are from, can greatly contribute in building a just and more fraternal world. 🌿

WOMEN WITHOUT FRONTIERS

HISTORY OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

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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We are pleased to announce that the book of the MIC History is in its final stage. To speak about the MIC Sisters is to recall their life in mission and their accomplishments in the service of evangelization in the fields of education, health care, social work. More than 1500 MICs have been involved and joined forces in 16 countries located on 4 continents.

Lysiane Gagnon, Journalist, speaks to us about the MIC Sisters.

With pleasure, I am one with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in asking the public authorities, the foundations and all potential donors to encourage the final stage of the written history of this missionary community.

It is with gratitude and affection that I remember my years as a kindergarten and primary grade student at the M.I.C. convent on Darlington Street in Montreal. "My" Sisters were outstanding educators and I owe them so much like so many others who benefited of their pedagogical talents. With the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception we would go through our primary education in six years instead of seven. Then, when we were in a private high-school, it often happened that teachers would have us skip a year; it goes to say how well prepared we were for higher education.

Even at that time, I knew that their true vocation was not one of teaching the children of Montreal, as privileged as we were. All had the burning desire to leave for the missions or to return. With passion, they spoke to us about the children less fortunate than we were and where their services were needed.

In Asia, Africa, Latin America or Haiti, these women religious did not only teach. Before their departure, they learned the local language and the customs of the people where they were destined to work. Once on the field they constructed schools, dispensaries, they were engineers, architects, administrators, social workers, nurses, teachers.

These determined and independent women incarnated the most beautiful values of international sharing and solidarity. Decades before this became a popular cause, they were among the very rare who were interested in the fate of the immigrants; they were the first to give medical help to the Montreal Chinese people when an epidemic broke out in 1918.

It's in the footsteps of countless missionaries who worked discreetly and selflessly that well-subsidized organizations now work in the field of international human and aid development.

The story of these "women without frontiers" merits to be told and published. The least we can do is for our country to pay homage to these women who consecrated their lives for their neighbour —the "neighbour" being for them all the children, all the women and men of the earth. It is a duty to respond, in memory of, and as a way to say thank you.



*Lysiane Gagnon,
Journalist*

**Your contribution to this project would be greatly appreciated.
You may send your donations to:**

MISSION PROCURE, c/o Women Without Frontiers
121, Maplewood Avenue, Outremont (Quebec) Canada H2V 2M2

For more information, visit our Web site at: www.soeurs-mic.qc.ca
or contact Sr. Mireille Morin at: TEL (514) 279-0514 | FAX (514) 279-3321 | m.morinmic@sympatico.ca

TWO SUITCASES AND A ROOF

I have a meeting at Maria-Goretti Residence located on Cote Saint-Catherine Road, one of Montreal's most multicultural areas. The building constructed in the 1950s was initially meant as a refuge for young adults who came from the villages to work in Montreal. Far from home and relatives, these women would find in this house a haven that would welcome them and would facilitate their insertion on the market place. The walls have not changed; but today more than half of the residents are immigrants. Respecting the different cultures of their origin, at least twenty languages are spoken at the residence.

Interview — By Marie Brassard

I come across Sr. Rita Ostiguy, a Missionary of the Immaculate Conception on home leave after 25 years of mission work in Bolivia. Within this micro-society of the residence, Sr. Rita listens to stories, journeys with new immigrants, offers help and friendship to 220 women who live there for a few days or a few years. Sister Rita welcomes me with simplicity and has me tour the house, now property of the organization PROMIS whose goal is to assist the immigrants. Times have changed, other priorities have taken place.

Sr. Rita and Sr. Diane Gariépy, Servant of the Sacred Heart of Mary, endorse the mission which keeps developing under the auspice of Sr. Andrée Ménard, M.I.C., maestro of the orchestra who plans, coordinates, pleads in favour of a Quebec opened to "others" and adapted to globalization.

Maria, an immigrant speaks to us

Kitchen and common living room are modestly furnished, but the atmosphere is warm and welcoming. Some residents timidly greet me. One of them, Maria, accepts to speak with me in this interview. Born in Latin America, and from a Catholic family, she had a stable childhood surrounded with love, this made up for the lack of financial means. Her answers are open and serene.

I had the chance of studying in two areas: teaching at the primary level and acquiring knowledge in veterinary techniques. At the end of my training, I received a brochure from Quebec: The Government of Quebec was recruiting people who had studied and could fill-in needs on the labour market. Since there was work in Quebec for young people like us, an immigration campaign began. For me, the challenge seemed interesting. There were many requirements to fill in, especially the will to





learn French. Responding to the criteria, I took the first two French sessions and after two and half years I obtained my entrance visa.

Maria arrived in Montreal in 2005 with two small suitcases, her immigrant visa, a few words in French, a residential address and some money to survive three months.

So stressed, I could hardly say a few words in French. I was in the unknown. In my mind the pressure was almost unbearable, I was very prudent. Every decision I had to make was minutely weighed. Here, the code of conduct is so different and the language so fragile... At first, I never knew if I had well understood what the other person said and whether or not I had made my message clear. I therefore decided to take up French lessons once again.

A link with PROMIS

In Quebec, Maria hears about PROMIS and its Residence Maria-Goretti, a shelter for women. She asks to come and live there and hopes to find some work that would facilitate her integration.

I was offered a job as laundress, but after a few days, I realized I was physically not strong enough to hold on. After speaking with Sr. Rita I opted to perfect my French. I started getting involved in the centre's activities: I learned to help, to listen, to share; the interaction with people brought sunshine in my life and gradually comforted my choice, though it remained very difficult. Every day, I needed to be strong and convince myself that I was doing the right thing. Much courage was needed to conquer barriers. I am a courageous woman.

Now, Maria expresses herself well in French and is determined to find in Quebec her sense of belonging and endorse the land as her new country. Journeying with these new immigrants helps them find their way in all circumstances. The organization

PROMIS orients the newcomers, encourages them to socialize and this without any pressure. Friendship does not impose itself: slowly it builds its nest in those hearts suffering from family separation and lonely of one's native land.

Facing the challenge

My perseverance has been rewarded. I have just signed my first contract to teach religion in a primary school nearby. At first, I doubted my capacity, but my friends Sr. Rita and Sr. Diane affirmed me. I took up the challenge, and without regrets I have been teaching for the past two months. I talk from morning till night; I come back mentally exhausted. Impossible to ask more from my bilingual mind! However, my contact with the students is for me a true vocation. I love to speak with them about God. I am astonished to hear myself; I have become a kind of missionary in the Quebec society. More and more I am becoming integrated in my new culture.

The friendship which slowly develops between the persons who welcome and the new arrivals is key to the progress and achievement of those who so desire to become integrated. For some women, language is the pillar to stabilize, for others it is their schooling and for a certain number of them it's socializing. Often there is a need to work on those three levels at the same time while keeping in mind the personality of each individual, sometimes fragmented and hurting. Surrounded by a caring team who reaches-out to all, Maria took hold of the helping hand which led her to worthwhile dialogues. But is it sufficient? Newcomers though willing to integrate, and PROMIS being a beacon for them, likewise Quebecers have their share of responsibility in welcoming them in their midst. 🌸

¹ A young resident

² Sr Rita Ostiguy

³ Sharing and intermingling

⁴ Preparing the meal together

Photos-credit:

M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

About the author

Marie Brassard, a freelance journalist, is a member of AJIQ (Association of the Independent Journalists of Quebec).

Her career as a communicator has followed three paths: writing on a contract basis, coaching in writing skills and developing a deep passion for other peoples and their cultures.

Feedbacks are welcome; please E-mail them to: mariebrassard@gmail.com

PROMIS

Maria-Goretti Residence
3333, Cote-Saint-Catherine Road,
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A Mexican Ray of SUNSHINE in QUEBEC

Her conviction being “Christ’s love is for all”
leads her to take an active role in several fields. 



The author, *Geneviève Dick*, came across Marcela in a Montreal house where young people gather to live in fraternity. Co-responsible of the group, that year, Geneviève gradually came to know her... and her great concern about other people’s well-being.

A new star is born on January 24, 1979 in the city of Querétaro, Mexico. Her name is Marcela. Why speak about her today? Because this energetic star, wearing a radiant smile, landed here on snow-covered grounds in March 2003 and she is still here.

At an early age, Marcela Villalobos Cid studied law and worked with the Marist Brothers who cared for the less fortunate ones of society. Quickly she became aware of the realities in her country especially the great disparity in living conditions between the rich and the poor, the natives, folks of European ancestry, men and women: all, a source of misunderstanding and discrimination!

Studying Law to Help Others

Marcela chose to study law; she perceived this as the most efficient means to change society, to correct inequalities *because law is made for man and not man for the law*. According to her experience, it is of utmost importance to educate populations and awaken their consciousness to their rights and duties. Well versed in the knowledge of laws, Marcela can enlighten people and offer them tools with which they can build for themselves a better life. But why would Marcela who is a licensed lawyer, coming from a well-to-do family, take the road all the way to Quebec?

A Sabbatical Year, the Least Restful

Life within the fraternity allows her to meet many other Latin-Americans who came here with the hope of a better life. A good number of professionals who were earning their life on the black-market were exploited and needed to have two jobs for survival. Many have gone back to their countries disappointed. Others, have had the chance of obtaining a work visa or their permanent residence status which has allowed them to find adequate jobs. Marcela has just discovered another facet of Canada. Financially helped by the Religious Hospitallers of Saint Joseph, she decides to take a Master's Degree in Economic and Community Development at Concordia University. She also finds a part-time job at J.E.C. (Jeunesse Étudiante Chrétienne/

Christian Youth Students). Here she discovers all sorts of realities, meets many immigrants from diverse origins; this is a place where she can share her daily life.

At the Service of the Poorest

Next, Marcela is hired as social pastoral agent in the South-Centre Region of the Diocese of Montreal. With others of various origins she serves the most rejected of our society, immigrants or not. Her conviction being "*Christ's love is for all*" leads her to be active in several fields. Her presence is seen with the seasonal farm workers, often without instruction. They have left their families behind in Mexico and often work in unhealthy conditions. Marcela participates in the pastoral care offered to all workers, she accompanies them, visits them. She tries to sensitize the population of their hardships and difficult living conditions. Marcela perceives our use of money as idolatrous; we sacrifice the most vulnerable ones for the dollar sign. Of utmost importance to her: having solid convictions to resist the temptation of profits and to struggle in favour of those who are treated unjustly.

Give and... Receive

Upon her arrival here, Marcela was welcomed wholeheartedly; for her this was a springboard towards new friendships. Her social conscience shaped and honed in Mexico is now blossoming and expressing itself in Quebec because of her deep faith and the support she receives from the Christian community. Henceforth, she has been able to integrate in our society while retaining her Mexican sunshine colour.

Marcela appreciates Quebec, particularly because of its multiple commitments to social justice and due to the fact that one, who is a stranger, can integrate with Quebecers without being assimilated. She thinks of returning to Mexico some day but before she still has much to receive here and much to give. All radiant, she expresses herself in French; with her beautiful Mexican accent she reminds us: *When we are immigrants we must take the best of the two cultures, thus we can offer and receive a great deal.* 🌿

¹ Marcela Villalobos Cid

To find out more

Movie *El Contrato*

Depicts the life

of workers hired in the

exploitation of tomatoes.

Letters from here and abroad

Pucallpa, Peru

July 2006 — I arrived in Pucallpa, Peru and my adaptation is now behind me. This place is in the middle of the Amazonian jungle; the climate becomes very hot and sometimes the heat is almost unbearable. Gradually, I am becoming more familiar with the environment and I speak Spanish more fluently. Though there is a shortage of priests, dedicated faithful Catholics animate the Church, the parish communities.

Currently, I am working with a team of young adults representing parishes of the diocese. For the first time, we've had a special Mass rallying all the youth from the area. A concert "Musica Catolica" has been organized by the young people, it is a way of evangelizing their peers.

Youth Priority comprises many groups, two of which are dedicated to formation and vocational pastoral work. I direct the latter with three priests and three religious. For Vocation Sunday a special flyer was prepared and handed out; we met with vocational groups active in certain parishes. In September, young people will meet at a retreat specifically designed for them. An exhibition highlighting "VOCATIONS" is also in the making. Projects abound!

I also coordinate vocational projects for the MIC Community. At our last meeting, six young ladies responded to the invitation. We hope they will remain faithful to the calling of Jesus and follow Him. At gatherings, I take the opportunity of offering pertinent power-point audio visuals and also call upon the participants to prepare Eucharistic celebrations for the youth. Their participation is most rewarding.

I thank you for the prayers said for me and for all the wonderful people I meet here.

Sr. Emmanuela Vincent, M.I.C.



Photo : MIC



Photo : MIC

Pastoral Work with the Immigrants in Joliette, Qc

My encounters with immigrants always leave me in wonder. For some time now, many have been oriented toward Joliette. Upon their arrival, members of the organization CREDIL (Comité Régional d'Éducation pour le Développement International de Lanaudière) provide the new comers with warm clothes and food. Then we accompany them to the hotel Chateau Joliette where they lodge until we find them a place to live. What emotions for these people who come from so far and how difficult for them to forget the many sufferings they've endured in their respective countries.

As I visit these families, I become aware of the great necessity for them to be guided psychologically so as to adapt to Quebec, their new environment. Their greatest handicap is the language. Though they take courses to learn French in a specialized school "Envol", communication remains difficult.

As I journey with the immigrants I hear many heart-rending stories. One among many, a 66-year-old lady told me about how her husband and 3 children were tortured and killed by terrorists. In her country, she lived on a large farm. With sadness, she recalls her recent past: *I was so happy there. I loved looking over the plantations and hear the little river gurgling along our field. With my family it was our joy of life.*

One day, I met a 16-year-old girl whose mother was killed. She now lives in Quebec with her aunt. In her country, Columbia, she was a brilliant student, first in class. Perturbed by the many incidents she has come across, she has difficulty concentrating and adapting. When she calls her father, who did not leave his native land, she hears his voice and realizes he is often drunk. With sorrow, she states: *He is my father, I love him. But I feel incapable of helping him.*

Fortunately, CREDIL responds to the material, moral and psychological needs of these immigrants. Offering help to all those suffering people and facilitating their integration in the Quebec society is a mission of highest interest to me.

Sr. Jeannine Boily, M.I.C.

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!



JOSSELAINE AUDATE, M.I.C. (left)
Terrier-Rouge, Haiti

Sr. Josseleine is returning to Peru for a second mandate. With her experience, knowing the Peruvian people and their way of life, she will put forth her talents wherever needed, serving the population and taking part in community services.



JACQUELINE VACHET, M.I.C.
Nominique, Quebec

An experienced missionary in the health care field, Sr. Jacqueline will resume her responsibility as directress of the hospital in Kanayanga, Zambia. Countless people come to this facility with serious illnesses hoping for a cure and healing.



CECILIA HONG, M.I.C.
Shanghai, China

Having been a missionary in Canada for some twenty years, Sr. Cecilia is returning to Vancouver, B.C. As counsellor, she will work at the Diocesan Office for Catholic Family Services.



MADELEINE PATENAUE, M.I.C. (center)
Saint-Alexandre, Quebec

Haiti is her country of adoption. With joy, Sr. Madeleine is returning for the seventh time to the people she knows well. She will resume her mission wherever she will be most needed. In her heart she carries HOPE AND LOVE for those people who are in distress.

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Dawn of a New Life



Cyprienne Miller, M.I.C.
(Sister Saint-Cyprien)
1907-2007
Montreal, Quebec

Surrounded with affection and respect, Sr. Cyprienne received a fine education. At an early age, she exhibited her artistic talent. Some years later, she opted for religious life and joined the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception; she was then nineteen. During the time she worked in Cuba, in Quebec and Perth, (N.B), Sister taught many students the love of art. She celebrated her centennial with joy and gratitude. Being faithful to herself, she continued to the very end of her life having a special love for the Sacred Heart of Jesus—a devotion that was hers as a youngster.



Berthe Paradis, M.I.C.
(Sister Marie-Xavier)
1910-2007
Tingwick, Quebec

Notwithstanding her fragile health, Berthe always hoped to become a religious some day. In 1927, her eldest sister, Lucie, entered the MIC Novitiate at Pont-Viau, Qc. As for Berthe, she hesitated; she prayed, consulted, and then decided to enter in 1929. Forty years of her missionary life were spent in China and Taiwan. She treated the sick in the midst of wars, internment, typhoons, earthquakes, nothing could stop this dedicated missionary; her strength came from her very deep faith.



Marie-Claire Audy, M.I.C.
(Sister Marie-Claire)
1921-2007
Grand-Mere, Quebec

Marie-Claire had a happy childhood. Her faith-filled family radiated love in concrete ways for the most vulnerable. She, in turn, also reached out to others as a missionary in Madagascar and in Quebec. With her many talents as animator, teacher, secretary, but above all as an artist, she created beauty everywhere she went and touched people's hearts with her passion for Life.



Marie-Simonne St-Amant, M.I.C.
(Sister Sainte-Elodie)
1921-2007
Saint Aimee, Quebec

The youngest of a sound Christian family, Marie-Simonne was somewhat spoiled particularly by her father. The day she made her solemn first communion, she asked for the grace to become a religious. Her wish came true. After her profession and some years of service in Quebec, she was assigned to Japan. Forty-five years of her life were dedicated to the Japanese; mastering the language she shared the Good News with joy, goodness and generosity which characterized her personality.

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

Délia Tétrault

A Tribute to Sr. Madeleine

Madeleine Payette, M.I.C.

(Sr. Madeleine-du-Sacré-Cœur)

March 1908 - July 2007

Sr. Madeleine was a woman of prayer imbued of the missionary spirituality of Thanksgiving, bequeathed to us by our Foundress, Délia Tétreault. She had an extraordinary zeal for the mission.

Third superior general, Sr. Madeleine was a key person in the history of our Institute. After the dark moments, when our missions of China were closed, together with the disastrous impact of the Second World War on many of our missions in Asia, Sr. Madeleine was appointed Superior General. She was able to discern the priorities of the time and to meet the challenges with courage and audacity. She was a woman of duty, capable of making decisions; she was a unifier who steered the course, focused on the *common mission* of the Institute in a spirit of fraternal communion and unity. She overcame the difficulties thanks to her spirit of faith and hope and also thanks to her great love of the Community.

From 1950 to 1960, our Institute experienced an era of expansion. Sr. Madeleine developed an overall VISION. Vocations were numerous, several new missions were opened, houses of initial formation were established in other countries. The Institute became international; *women of different nationalities, having the same calling, came together to live the charism of Délia Tétreault in a common project of evangelization.*

The religious and professional formation of future missionaries took on a new dimension. Sister Madeleine knew how to read the signs of the times and prepared her missionaries to live insertions that were meaningful and adjusted to the new needs of the mission and of the Church. With wisdom and creativity she managed the changes of those years as well as the evolution in the way of living the religious life.

In the services of authority which she exercised for several years at various levels of the Institute, she demonstrated great openness and a clear judgment in the decisions she had to make. She was a woman of amazing vitality. Hers was a spirit of generous service, in a simple and humble attitude.

A few years ago, in an interview, Sister Madeleine briefly revealed to us the way she lived the final stage of her life:

My days are filled as never before; I am getting a deeper insight of the Lord's action in my life and in the life of our Community. I have a feeling of solidarity with the sisters of the Institute, with the young ones who are beginning their religious life, as well as with those who live the mission in various commitments, here and abroad.

This prayerful woman transformed the difficulties linked to ageing into a spiritual source of graces for the people who needed it the most. At all times, she thanked the Lord for His countless blessings. Her great lucidity, up to the very end of her life, was a grace of God; a gift that allowed her to probably live consciously every moment of her final days as a *hymn of thanksgiving*.

Today, with admiration and affection, our eyes are turned to you, Sister Madeleine. You have left us as a legacy: the witness of a woman who lived her life and faith to the fullest and this, in a process of human and spiritual growth, at every stage of her life, constantly on the alert to the calls of the Spirit and submitted to the will of God.

Through our contact with you, our lives have been enriched. We give thanks to the Lord for all that you were for each one of us and for all that you have left us as a personal and community heritage.

Louise Denis, M.I.C.

Superior General

Eulogy - Funeral Mass

Pont-Viau, July 21, 2007





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One in faith

*Lord, God of all believers,
many men and women
are seeking you
and praying you.*

*Through the centuries
they have built temples
and presented offerings.*

*In Mecca or on the Ganges
in Jerusalem or on a mountain
they journey as pilgrims.*

*In the depth of their being
you are the one who calls them
and touch them with your
Holy Spirit.*

*We are all brothers and sisters
friends in faith and in prayer.*

*May the Spirit of the Lord
enlighten our search for the Truth.
Hand in hand, may we work for a
world of peace, justice and love,
where harmony will be
the rainbow sign of a new era.*

Amen.

(Author unknown)

Christmas at PROMIS

Photo credit: PROMIS

A Grace-filled Christmas and a Holy New Year to all!

