

MIC MISSION NEWS

SINCE 1923



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QUEBEC

ALPHA

CHILE

COUNTER
WINDS AND TIDES

IN FOCUS

OF FAITH
AND HUMANNESS



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

January 2008

For the Church of Africa

May it continue to be a channel of reconciliation and justice amidst war, exploitation and poverty.

February 2008

For Institutes of Consecrated Life

May their members be faithful to Gospel values and generous in proclaiming Christ.

March 2008

For Persecuted Christians

May they be sustained by the Holy Spirit in their witness to the Word of God.

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*



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EDITORIAL

Copyrights!

To respect copyright is a matter of ethics and justice. A sensitive subject to which Jesus clearly pronounces Himself: *Give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God* (Mt 22:21). However, copyright permission is not easily obtained. Once the author is known and located, one must often pay a small fortune for the right to reproduce photos, writings, etc. Why is it so complex?

All great works reveal the inner depth of the author: it is the outward expression of what lies deep within the artist—it reveals the inner self. It's the epiphany, the expression of inner meaning.

If I speak about *copyright*, it's in reference to the 400th anniversary of the founding of Quebec City. Well appreciated by its inhabitants and attractive to numerous tourists, the city's artistic and picturesque beauty along with its friendly atmosphere charm those who come in contact with its history. From its grey stone walls, emanate the spirit of the founders who left an imprint on the identity of the residents, the Quebecers. In a way, those famous personalities, who wrote our History, are the ones who own the copyrights.

In this issue, those valiant pioneers of yesteryears will reveal to us the spirit that animated their feat. Heros and heroines immersed *in faith and humanness*? Samuel de Champlain, the Canadian martyrs, Marie de l'Incarnation, Marie-Catherine de Saint-Augustin, Kateri Tekakwitha or Délia Tétreault—all were missionaries who had the courage to cross the oceans for one purpose: to make known God's Love for all humanity.

Let us discover our historical roots to identify who truly deserves the *copyrights*. Then, let us be aware of our identity as believers, a reality well steeped in the heart of our ancestors. Browsing through our History books, we find illustrious characters who by their audacity, sustained by a living faith in Jesus Christ, were able to valiantly express their commitment in a humanitarian way.

From those heros and heroines emerged a race proud of its origins and ready to defend its deep convictions. When we consider what we have become, can we recognize their *copyrights*?

May reading through these pages bring about a rekindling of pride as we ponder upon our origins.

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.

Jean Godin, Sorel-Tracy, Que.

Congratulations for your 500th publication—aromas and fragrances appear everywhere! The atmosphere of summertime vacation is a success.

Marie-Ange St-André, Quebec City

Long time subscriber and reader of your magazine, I must say that I admire it very much and I congratulate you. Beautiful presentation: glossy, coloured paper and the exceptional photos, all is very impressive. Plus, you make us travel! We are very much invited to multiculturalism. The editorial page is always a delight, a piece of literary art which arouses our curiosity and incites us to read further. The articles are all different yet the focus brings unity. In brief, each edition is a true success.

Louis-Philippe Bourque, Montreal, Que.

I just received your magazine. At first, I always glance through the articles and then proceed reading them attentively. I underline those passages that are important to me and upon which I will deeply reflect during moments of silent meditation. For your 500th publication, congratulations—you have succeeded with flying colours. I believe vacationers will find substantial food for thought, and not at all indigestible. Bravo for the presentation, the colours and warmth we feel as we read your magazine.

Pierrette Petit, s.s.a. - Montreal, Que.

I found your last issue on a table in my community. This morning I cannot resist the temptation to subscribe. Congratulations for the well chosen topics, articles, and beautiful photos. You maintain the subscription at a reasonable price and you offer us a most interesting menu.

STEEPED IN HEAVEN AND EARTH

The faith of the founders of New France was severely put to the test. But it was perhaps in God that they found the security and reassurance to keep on going... a little like the soldiers in the First World War.



By André Gadbois

I didn't know them personally. Neither did you for that matter. When I was attending Saint Jean Berchmans Elementary School in Montreal in the 1950s, they were everywhere: on the classroom walls, in the textbooks of every subject and on the lips of all the teachers. And of course at the church! In a way, the founders of New France, a far-flung little French colony in America, were our heroes. They were part of our lives and we were proud of them; they were held up as models for us. They knew how to fight, to sail, to build sturdy houses and to work the land. We were also told that they had brought faith to America, that they had evangelized and converted the *Savages* (language of that era) to the one true God, in whose name they were willing to do anything. They came as discoverers, intrepid explorers, and in their own way, as real missionaries.

When I look at the Quebec history textbooks that are used today, I no longer recognize my heroes of yore, even when they are mentioned (more often than not, they're not to be found at all): sometimes

they're denounced, at other times they're brought down to size, and at times they're made to seem shameful. These heroes, with a few exceptions, can stand out in young minds only by their absence: they're certainly not the heroes of any video games! Their "exploits" seem to many to be ridiculous, and their motivations look suspicious. These heroes are having a rough time of it these days. And preparations are underway to celebrate the 400th anniversary of the foundation of Quebec... founded by these very "heroes"!

SIMILAR TO THE TRENCHES

I confess that I too have trouble with the religious motivations that were ascribed to them in 1950, and with the ascetic lifestyle we were told they led. And I have no less trouble with their almost total absence in today's textbooks, or with the shame that some people feel in recognizing their heroism. Since I never knew these founders of New France (farmers, *coureurs des bois*, nurses, sailors, housewives, carpenters, teachers and so on), I can only imagine them!

Inspired by my knowledge, my reading and my experience, I envisage them having to deal with the extreme climate, the mistrust of the indigenous inhabitants, the illnesses they contracted, the discomfort of the housing they had to invent, the land they needed to make productive, their distance from the resource distribution centre (France), and the human baseness that constantly kept real solidarity from flourishing. All this over the long haul, since Quebec, like Paris, wasn't built in a day!

I also see them as sometimes lukewarm, sometimes fervent believers, who were bound to their God like the soldiers in the trenches of the First World War. *When a body is tortured by reality while the soul marvels at the love of God, mortification and ecstasy form a couple of opposites... When life becomes liveable once again, these men rediscover the pleasure of reality, and maintain a thankfulness towards the one who has saved them. And so, in an effort to proclaim it, they paint ex-votos and build cathedrals.* (B. Cyrulnick, neuropsychiatrist).

There are a thousand ways to love God: by clinging to him as to a human being, by thanking him at every occasion for having saved us, by pleading with him to keep the devil away from us or to prevent us from drowning, or by promising to him to be good if only... It is true that some of these ways are questionable or troubling, but it is also true that *the mere representation (of God) calms the neurological markers of stress. Panic is quietened; the distressed subject recovers his emotional control by evoking his desire for protection and his submission to a powerful and reassuring basis of intimate security* (id).

Life must not have been a peaceful cruise or a comfortable stay at a Club Med for the men and women who founded New France around 1608, and their faith was of great help to them in building the necessary basis of intimate security mentioned by Cyrulnick; thanks to it, they were able to overcome hardship and create an extraordinary togetherness. They gave hands to a faith they never restricted

to private life—a real lesson for us today. It seems to me that to have built houses, schools, and dispensaries with such scant resources, and to have invented *L'Ordre de Bon Temps* (The Order of Good Times) *in order to rejoice and do good, and to take pleasure in what one does* (cf. Quohélet), they had more than just a prayerful and liturgical faith: they knew the importance

Neither a peaceful cruise nor a comfortable stay at a Club Med!

of fraternity, an abundant table, and even music in such a discouraging context (think of the movie *Merry Christmas*).

What can be said about these audacious and independent believers, who, spurred on by their faith, took on so many projects and organizations; far from taking refuge in the ethereal space called Heaven, they served their neighbour without expecting anything in return. It would be unjust to separate the cordiality and sharing these colonists experienced with many Native American peoples, and limit ourselves to the well-known conflicts and battles: both peoples exchanged more than just animal skins, mirrors and crucifixes! Maybe this was *Free Trade* before its time!

FINDING THEIR WAY TOGETHER

It seems to me that their faith sustained them in their exhausted, troubled and sometimes desperate humanity, and that their humanity in its turn sustained their faith, which was tempted by selfishness and otherworldliness. Steeped in faith and humanity, broken by failure and then revived by any small victory, they learned day by day to find their way together rather than to grope individually for a way out: and to proclaim it, they would sing the *Te Deum*. 





Alpha...

A new product?

Alpha?

An automobile trademark?

A language

course? A

new book—

falling in love?

Initials of a

new group or

an organiza-

tion? A bit of

mystery? So

many ques-

tions asked by

people who

hear this word

for the first

time.

By Évangéline Plamondon, M.I.C.

For me, Alpha was the first letter of the Greek alphabet; I've come a long way since then. Alpha has courted me—not only has it been a course, yes!... a course, but also a fellowship group which I cherish and hold on to. For a missionary nun who has been a globe-trotter, this is a marvellous way of returning to my local church of origin to find means of insertion and commitment.

Alpha originated in Great Britain within a pastoral team of the Anglican Church, Holy Trinity Brompton. Nicky Gumbel, pastor of that Church is the author of this masterpiece. His writings are numerous; he travels world-wide as an evangelist and his presentations are based on the pedagogy of Alpha. Today, Alpha courses are in 156 countries; they are translated in 87 languages and are also offered in Catholic settings. Once again, the Holy Spirit designs ecumenical ways that go beyond our pastoral plans.

I came to know about Alpha when I arrived in Quebec City. One afternoon, the parish priest, Father Paul Lortie, came to meet me and asked if I would consider being a catechist at the Alpha session. I did not know the priest! I did not know Alpha! Since I was on sabbatical leave, I suggested for him to wait...He came back and I said YES!

I continue believing in this marvellous apostolic journey which helps me grow in my missionary vocation. Many Sisters from my local community have gone through the sessions and those who have returned overseas have benefited from an enriching experience in their own Church of Quebec which they have often lost touch with because of their long absence from the province.

WHAT HAPPENS AT ALPHA?

Alpha consists of a series of 15 talks. Nicky Gumbel in his book *Telling Others* speaks on some of the following themes: *Christianity: boring, untrue, irrelevant? Who is Jesus? How can I be sure of my faith? Why and how should I read the Bible? Why and how do I pray?* etc. Each session is preceded by a fellowship meal. Around the table, the participants get to know each other and gradually deep bonds of friendship unite us. The meal is important because it opens up communication in a discreet, friendly and relaxed atmosphere. It is easier to share when barriers have disappeared; questions and answers become less embarrassing and a spirit of trust and truthfulness emerges. Each person is welcomed and heard with much respect; without any doubt, this is the reason why this pedagogy is so enriching and successful.

A typical format of an evening: Greeting and welcome, fellowship meal, prayer, choral singing and rest, thought-provoking and challenging presentation by a catechist (priest, religious or laity) this is followed by a free-wheeling and engaging small group discussion. Volunteers and former participants assume various tasks, this eases the setting-up of the gatherings and also gives shape to a Christian community.

ALPHA IS FOR WHOM?

Everyone is welcome! All persons wishing to know more about the Christian faith, those who want to re-connect with the Church, or individuals who want to investigate whether God exists and if there is any point to life, or those who wish to contemplate because they think there may be more to life than meets the eye. Seekers as well as those who are unaffiliated with the Church really love this safe opportunity to explore the meaning of life.

Many people! It is interesting to find around the same table, people from different backgrounds, cultures, experiences, of various age groups, and all have but one goal: to seek-out and find answers to their deepest questions about life.

ALPHA'S CENTRAL THEME

The Word of God is at the heart of Alpha's courses; it is of greatest importance. At each gathering, the participants must search the Bible and become acquainted with our great salvation history. Looking over the biblical message, particularly that of Jesus, and being in presence of living-faith witnesses, participants come to discover that the Word of God is a Living Word which nourishes and gently moves us on to in-depth search and knowledge. The Holy Spirit is revealed as the Breath of Life dwelling in the heart of each one; we learn to discover God's touch in our daily life and to share it. Wonderment comes forth and thanksgiving is expressed in very simple words or in a profound silence.

In Quebec, at our parish St. Jean Baptiste, courses are given at the Church of the Holy Canadian Martyrs; to date,

almost 400 persons have participated. Alpha revitalizes our parish, brings about the creation of new groups who dedicate themselves to reflection and commitment such as the *Disciples and Witnesses*. We find Alpha participants serving on various committees: Justice, proclamation of the Good News, fellowship groups, missionary committees, prayer-celebrations, and many others. The parish has extended its frontiers; participants come from other vicinities and they are all welcome.

Above all, this approach heightens our awareness to the fact that we will soon live this intense communion with people who will come, from every corner of the globe, to the International Eucharistic Congress in 2008.

¹ Sr. Évangéline Plamondon, M.I.C.
(1st right)

Photo: Alpha Course, May 2007
Parish of St. Jean-Baptiste

We learn to discover
God's Touch in our daily life
and to share it. 

ALPHA, A NEW PRODUCT?

Not at all! This is a marvellous Church experience for our time. The journey begun gives rise to a joyful apostolic mission prompted by the Spirit of the Gospel. As we live through the experience we discover similarities with the first Christian communities when the Church was in its early stage. Thus history is written...the Acts of the Apostles year 2000! 



SHARE THE GIFT RECEIVED:

Délia Tétreault

All along the history of our origins, the lineage of founders have proven to be people of faith, audacity, and fruitful creativity. Among these amazing personalities appears Délia Tétreault (1865-1941) foundress of the first Missionary Institute in America and a truly outstanding instigator of the missionary movement for generations to come.

By Agathe Durand, M.I.C.

At a young age, Délia realized she had received everything freely and she was amazed. Later in life, she wrote: *When I stop to think how divinely God loves me, I feel I am the happiest creature in the world.* Although a happy child, Délia at a very early age was haunted by the fact that in so many countries the God she believed in was not known. For her, to know God was the most desirable thing in life. Identifying His unlimited Love was source of such great happiness that she wished all human beings under the sun would experience it.

As a child, she read avidly stories about missionaries who left family and country in order to be present to the PAGANS, (as expressed in those days) to live according to the values of the Gospel, to tell about God as did Jesus with His disciples in His own milieu and also farther away from His region.

THE DREAM TAKES SHAPE, BROADENS, AND IS FRUITFUL

From intuition to realization, Délia's journey was a long road which she discovered in the midst of momentum and doubts, insights and obstacles, above all with



a determination to seek the will of God. When in 1902 the project of a foundation took shape, the unexpected came about for Canada: an apostolic school to prepare girls for missions abroad—life in a small community solidly united in prayer, studies, work, good relationships, and for those who were called, orientation towards existing missionary communities in Europe.

However, in Montreal, the religious institute was already in its embryonic state. In 1909 the first missionaries were sent to China; the Quebec population, well rooted in its Catholic faith, was sensitized to this event, to its mission orientation. Diverse groups participated in various capacities and brought their support. Free from the colonizing ambitions, it was beyond our frontiers that our most precious heritage—faith of our ancestors, was to be shared freely. Guided by Mother Délia, young women were fascinated and ready to commit one's self in the midst of the unknown: adapting to new ways of doing, learning languages, risking dangers of long journeys and unfamiliar climates; but also experiencing a radical and magnificent lifelong mission project. They reached-out to the poor populations as they performed works of love, concretely radiating God's love; their presence was seen in schools, dispensaries, leprosariums, craft centres, mobile clinics, etc.

Délia Tétreault's foundation was above all from God and entrusted to Mary. Délia nourished the hope, courage, and inevitable calling of so many men and women who wished to live a humanitarian and faith-filled mission spread out in the world. In the last hundred years, priests of the Society of Foreign Missions from Pont-Viau, volunteers for the missions, various asso-

ciations, such as the Propagation of the Faith and the Holy Childhood, families and others all speak of the prolific vitality of such a vocation.

**A SPIRITUALITY
—MISSIONARY
THANKSGIVING—
FOR TODAY**

We believe that the continuity of this foundation lies on the same basis as the Foundress' vision: an inexhaustible gratitude expressed in thanksgiving for God's freely given love for all humanity; to bring to people's consciousness this incredible blessing—by way of Gospel proclamation. Daughters and sons of Mother Délia hold at heart that very special mission, with all the challenges and risks that it entails.

The contextual reality of the mission as well as its language offers us today a complex tableau always in the process of being transformed: knowledge of nations and their cultures, access to communications, widespread international aid at all levels, important migration phenomenon, inter-religious dialogues, official speeches and new signs of Church, an awakening to spirituality even at the heart of globalization and research for a universal well-being. Amazingly, even the most isolated areas on the globe are touched by post-modernity, wars, foreign ways of doing, upsurges of new diseases. Human distress spares no social class or any country. The poorest ones, as always, are still the victims of abuses coming from the influential wealthy minority. A thirst for transcendence and a need for God bring about a market of countless religions and beliefs which come forth from all horizons.



The mission as envisioned by Mother Délia, without ignoring the manifestation of contemporary history, focuses on the Gospel and the living faith received through Jesus Christ. We believe there is no magic or scientific capsule that can replace a necessary passage to the faith in Jesus, expressed in a mode of presence, rootedness in a culture, demonstrating multi-ways of loving the little and forgotten ones, sharing our goods and respecting our differences.

**PASSIONATE DREAMS
FOR GOD AND HUMANITY**

Those who have inherited this charisma are now of various nationalities: Chinese, Filipinas, Madagascans, South Americans, Canadians, Japanese, Africans, Americans, and Haitians. Jesus' instruction to go make disciples produced such an effect. Today's missionaries, laity, priests, religious, strive to be knowledgeable in world religions and use a language promoting respect and unity. Like Mother Délia, searching for God's ways often leads them on an unpredictable course, directing them to openness and reaching-out to all without frontiers.

Those who consecrate themselves to the proclamation of the Gospel continue to astonish us; they are a precious gift to humanity as they bring about the joyful Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ. ☺

¹ *Dream of Délia*. Canvas painted by a Filipino artist in Davao, from two paintings of Sr. Marie Bilodeau, M.I.C.

Photo-credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

² Délia Tétreault



Lily of the Mohawk*: Brightness of Heaven

In the United States and Canada, Catholic Native Americans insistently demand Kateri Tekakwitha be canonized. Beatified by late Pope John Paul II on June 22nd, 1980, Kateri is the first Blessed native on the North American Continent. The Pope also proclaimed her to be in the universal Church, the second patron of the missions. Who is this young woman so far from our memory?

By Carole Guévin

In 1656, Kateri Tekakwitha was born in Ossernenon (Modern day Auriesville), New York. Her mother, Kahenta (Flower of the Prairie) was Algonquin and a Catholic, her father was a Mohawk chief, Ken-Ho-Ron-Kuo (Great Chief of the Prairies).

SPIRITUAL BAPTISM

From this marriage two children were born; a boy and 24 moons later, on a beautiful sunny day, a little girl. Flower of the Prairie desired to have her infant baptized. In praise to the Great Spirit, she walked to find a spot in nature; there, she raised the new born toward heaven, then cuddling the child to her heart, she named her: *Brightness of Heaven* meaning *beautiful sunny day*. This spiritual baptism was done in a most discreet way.

At the age of four, Brightness of Heaven lost both her parents and brother who were victims of smallpox that attacked the village. The outbreak did not spare her either, the illness left the girl with unsightly scars and poor eyesight; the brightness of the sun blinded her and she would have to feel her way around as she walked. Her uncle adopted her; noticing how she stumbled along, he extended his arms to help and one day spontaneously called her *Tekakwitha* (The One Who Walks Groping for Her Way).

Still young, she demonstrated extraordinary virtues, she seemed to be naturally Christian. The Jesuits who met her were surprised by her faith-filled life and in-depth understanding. Intelligent, loving, skilful, Tekakwitha actively took part in all the community chores: working in the fields where she tended to the corn, beans, and squash; collecting firewood in the forest and water from a stream; going to the forest to pick the roots needed to prepare medicines and dye. Despite her poor vision, she was also very skilled at beadwork, decorating moccasins and skin garments.

JOYS AND STRUGGLES AT THE AGE OF 20

At 20, Tekakwitha was finally Baptized. It took place in New York and administered by Father Lamberville, S.J. During this ceremony, she received the name Kateri (Mohawk pronunciation for Catherine). What great joy for her to become a child

She was as faithful as the stars in the sky. ~

of God! But, her uncle disagreed with this decision and disliked this strange new religion. As customary, an adolescent had to take husband; therefore, the family began looking for a suitable mate. Insisting that she marry, Kateri categorically refused and decided to remain united to the Great Creator, living out her life as a model Christian of that era.

Kateri had to struggle greatly to protect her faith. She became the village outcast. She was threatened with torture or death if she did not renounce her religion. Children would taunt her and throw stones. To avoid persecution, she escaped... She came to Canada, to the Catholic mission of St. Francis Xavier at Sault Saint-Louis, (today's Kahnawake reserve) on the south shore of the Saint Lawrence River.

Kateri's heart was jubilant, full of joy and peace; she was happy in her new environment. Straight away, after her daily chores, she would go to the forest and pray. A small cross carved on a tree became her inseparable symbol of devotion. For hours she contemplated the Blessed Sacrament and every morning, Kateri went to Mass; she was as faithful as the stars in the sky.

A visit to the Hospitallers of St. Joseph at the Hotel-Dieu Hospital inspired Kateri to found a religious community for the Native Americans. However, her project did not materialize; on April 17, 1680 at the age of 24, Lily of the Mohawks died. According to eyewitness accounts, Kateri's face so disfigured and so swarthy in life, suddenly changed about fifteen minutes after her death—in an instant she became beautiful and radiant.

TEKAKWITHA'S MISSIONARY SPIRIT: SOURCE OF INSPIRATION

The Amerindians of North America claim Kateri as one of their own. Remaining faithful to her Great Creator, she had touched her people. Devotion to this young Native American spread throughout Canada, the United States and worldwide. Every year, pilgrimages multiply at

Auriesville and Kahnawake; pilgrims from various countries come to venerate the one who still is a source of inspiration.

Annually, the *Tekakwitha Conference* strives to unify Native Catholics of North America and accelerate the canonization of Blessed Kateri Tekakwitha. During the event, a Eucharist is celebrated with traditional drums and chants. At the penitential rite, sticks made up of sage leaves and burnt cedar twigs are used as customary in Amerindian rites of purification. The Conference allows the Natives to better celebrate their Catholic faith while safeguarding their cultural heritage.

The *Wampum Centre* under the direction of Sr. Marie-Laure Simon, C.N.D. is another manifestation of Kateri's missionary spirit. This centre is a place where native peoples and those of other nations can establish intercultural and inter-religious dialogues. Here, without prejudice, questions are raised about the culture and the spirituality of the First Nations. Inspired by the missionary spirit of Kateri, Sr. Marie-Laure gives conferences in various cultural settings.

The Native Cultures have a religious dimension and the peoples are profoundly spiritual. Their homestead is a DIVINE MILIEU where the SACRED dominates the individual and collective life.

Kateri Tekakwitha is part and parcel of our great history. Are we not invited to build bridges, to let-go of our prejudices that often dictate the way we act? Are we not called to come closer to our brothers and sisters with sincerity, respecting their way of thinking, of being, of living? Opening-up to the richness of that culture is also contributing to life,... a life worth celebrating! ~



^{1,2} Kateri, Lily of the Mohawks
paintings by Dorothy M. Speiser

* Mohawk: — River in the United States — Amerindian people

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Quebec City: *The Eucharistic Congress in 2008*



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By Camille Doucet, M.S.

THE ARK OF THE NEW COVENANT

An interesting initiative in view of preparing the International Eucharistic Congress in Quebec is the Ark of the New Covenant. In the same line of thought: the Cross symbol of the World Youth Day, by a group of young people, the Ark offers another original sign reminding us to prepare our hearts for the great Faith gathering that will be held in Quebec City, June 15-22, 2008. The Ark of the New Covenant evokes the spiritual journey of the people of Israel and is a reminder of the pilgrimages cherished by so many Christians since early Apostolic times.

The Ark carved in the shape of a ship is a reminder of the Old Testament Ark that the Jewish people had as a tangible sign of God's Covenant while they journeyed toward their promised land. It also reminds us of Noah's ark. As it moves throughout Canada, The Ark of the New Covenant gives many people a foretaste of what is to come: a major gathering in Quebec City to celebrate the 49th International Eucharistic Congress.

Sculpted in wood by a local artist from the region of Quebec, Mr. Alain Rioux—The Ark of the New Covenant evokes another dimension, important to all Eucharistic Congresses since the very beginning and that is: pilgrimages. I think of the shellfish symbol that accompanies the pilgrims along the road of Compostelle and the staff of those who walk the roads of Christian Russia. The Ark is also becoming a powerful symbol of the pilgrimage leading to Quebec City for the Eucharistic Congress. For the Christians of all times, the pilgrimage represents a culminating

point in their search for a life without stain and divine liberation.

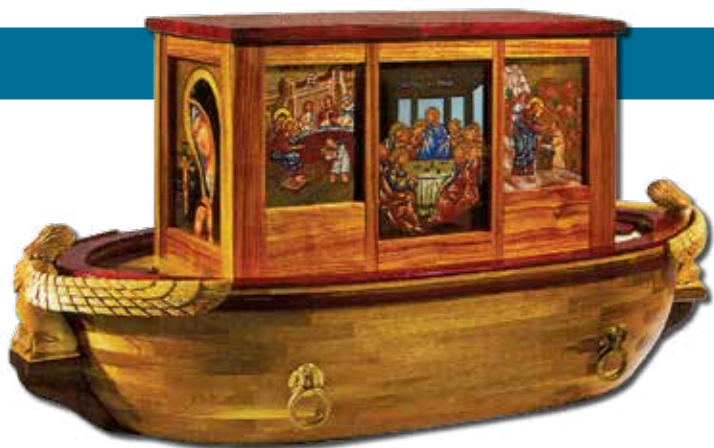
The Ark of the New Covenant of the Eucharistic Congress was blessed by Pope Benedict XVI, on May 11, 2006 during a moving ceremony attended by the Bishops of Quebec who were visiting *Ad limina apostolorum* close-by Saint Peter's tomb. Also present at this celebration were members of the organizing committee and the host of the Congress, Cardinal Marc Ouellet.

At the top of The Ark of the New Covenant are large icons which represent the various moments in the Paschal Mystery and various aspects of the Eucharist which is at the heart of the new covenant. As it travels throughout Canada and stops at various places, the Ark becomes a rallying point for prayer vigil in presence of Jesus in the Blessed Host; the Ark can also serve as pedestal for a monstrance.

To help animators in their teaching, a catechetical document has been prepared; it contains three great objectives:

- promote a catechesis on the Eucharist in terms of the Pascal mystery
- foster active participation in the liturgy: listening to the Word of God, offering of one's self, and develop a sense of fraternal community
- take an extra step to enhance human solidarity and actively participate in transforming the world by way of concrete actions as a sign of the Kingdom in our midst.

The Ark of the New Covenant travels throughout Canada. On its way it gathers all the prayers and the deep aspirations of the Christians young and old alike. All cultures are invited to take part in this memorable event—a pilgrim church on the move. You are all invited! 



FRESCO DEPICTING QUEBECERS IN NEW FRANCE

The fresco depicting Quebecers in New France is a gigantic mural trompe l'oeil painting located in Old Quebec and realized by French Quebec artists in 1999. It is an homage to this City's great history which unfolded across the seasons.

This striking fresco cleverly features prominent personalities who have marked our local and national history. It reminds us that in time the present is made up of yesterdays lived out by real people. Such an exposure is a different way of summarizing the marvellous history of a people.



OF FAITH AND HUMANNES

A Missionary New France

By André Sanfaçon

About the author

André Sanfaçon, historian, retired professor of Laval University (Quebec) is completing a study on: *Offerings of Wampum Belts in the Jesuit Missions of New France*.

AT THE SOURCE OF THE MISSIONARY SPIRIT—A CHURCH IN RENEWAL

The missionary spirit which was demonstrated by a great number of newcomers to New France in the XVIIth century bore the mark of the Catholic renewal defined by the Council of Trent (1545-1563). Strong in its clarified and reaffirmed doctrine, well structured in its pastoral activities, the Church of Rome aimed at establishing an all-Christian society in Europe. She hoped to attain her goal with a better trained clergy, capable of renewing the faithful through: receiving fervently the sacraments, purifying devotional practices and a re-focusing on the worship of Christ and devotion to the Virgin.

An elite class of people, noble and bourgeois, rallied around the holy and eminent ecclesiastics. Together, they formed devout circles comprising societies, companies, congregations, confraternities in Catholic Europe. They prayed, planned, targeted, contributed and worked on numerous apostolic fronts—from the royal courts to the most miserable ones in the streets, old-folks homes and prisons.

FROM MISSIONS WITHIN FRANCE —TO THE WHOLE WORLD

In France, missions were organized in dioceses to instruct the faithful, convert sinners and sanctify the souls. The methods applied in these inner missions and the results obtained, prepared and encouraged troops of priests and religious nuns to leave their country, in the hope of conquering the world to the Euro-Christian civilization. In a Christian perspective, nothing was more worthwhile than contributing to the salvation of souls.

Canada, then known as “the country of crosses and martyrs”, fascinated and attracted candidates to the missions as well as numerous benefactors—most of them sustained by mysticism. All were convinced of the urgent need to convert the Amerindians for God’s greater glory and a way of outstripping the demon’s empire.

NOT ALL MISSIONARIES —BUT AN EVANGELIZING COLONY

The newcomers to New France were not all missionaries, though to a certain point, it was not exaggerated to think so. For a while, certain missionaries thought that all the French people who came to Quebec could and should serve as models to the Amerindians called to be converted. These pioneers, were they not all Christians? In fact, in the XVIIth century as well as in other eras, if the greatest number of inhabitants were good Christians, indeed edifying, there were others who did spread scandal. The latter was much more visible since the colony’s population was scarce.

However, evangelizing the Amerindians was one of the official objectives for the existence of New France. Champlain, Montmagny, d’Ailleboust and Lauson, successive directors of the colony in the first half of the XVIIth century, affirmed their missionary endeavours, sometimes in a most devout way.

Permanent and temporary missions were established close by numerous native nations such as the Algonquin and Iroquoian: In Acadia, the Capuchins settled in 1632; in Canada, from the Gulf of Saint-Lawrence to the Great Lakes, the Recollects established themselves in 1615; the Jesuits followed in 1625 and they maintained the monopoly of the missions

over a long period of time. In 1657, the Sulpicians of M. Olier established themselves on the island of Montreal as lords, parish priests and missionaries.

With selfless dedication, the French laity gave their services to the missionary communities. Through their hard work and exemplary life they sustained the work of conversion.

THE CITY OF QUEBEC —“COUNTRY OF FAITH”

The young city of Quebec became the port of entry for all the missionaries in Canada. From this point, they re-embarked shortly after their arrival to go where they were assigned by their superiors. Because of its clergy, its faith-filled people, its buildings for charitable and religious purposes, Quebec was perceived by the Amerindians as being “the country of faith”.

Either by way of invitation or their own wish, certain converts came to live within the French vicinities so as to be confirmed in the practice of their Christian faith. They settled close to Quebec, Three Rivers, and Montreal where limited areas, known as towns, were reserved for them; they had the advantages of being protected and assisted by the French people. They deeply appreciated the generosity of the religious nurses and teachers; with respect they would call them the “holy girls”.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION —A SUPPORT TO THE MISSION WORK

The Jesuit missionaries of Canada developed a special devotion to the Immaculate Conception. During the celebration of this Feast on December 8, 1635 the priests, by solemn vow, consecrated all their missions to Mary Immaculate, the



one who, according to the 1854 dogma, was proclaimed as having been preserved and exempted of the original sin.

Humbly, the Jesuits expressed, through their vow, the fear of their imperfections as being obstacles to the movement of divine grace, in the conversion process. They called upon the perfection of the Immaculate Virgin—they offered her Masses, rosaries and mortifications. They were committed in dedicating the first chapel or church to the Immaculate Conception.

Their Marian promise, renewed every year, was a rallying point, a missionary strength to conquer all resistance against the conversion of the Amerindian nations or individuals. Imploring Mary underlines the fundamental aspect of the missionary affiliation with the Immaculate Conception. In this XXIst century the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception still witness this vibrant and undeniable alliance. ☪

France transmitting the faith to the Hurons of New France (1670).

This piece of art has been preserved by the Ursuline Sisters of Quebec. France is represented by Anne of Austria, crowned and clothed of a tunic bearing colours and motives of the French Monarchy.

The person kneeling, wearing a royal blue tunic with fleurs-de-lis trimming and a porcelain necklace is a symbol of belonging to the Amerindians and representing New France. The inset painting depicts the faith and the existing link between the one who brings and the other who receives.

I SHALL MULTIPLY THE

Quebec City's Motto

Where does the title for this article come from? What gift of God is being referred to here? What do we mean by the multiplication of this gift? Is there any connection with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception? These are the questions raised by the author.

*Text registered in the Quebec City Coat of Arms Committee Report, by order of the municipal authorities. On September 22, 1988, Her Excellency the Very Honourable Jeanne Sauvé, Governor General of Canada, officially presented the new coat of arms to the City of Quebec. They were sculpted by J.J. Bourgault.

¹ Quebec City's Coat of Arms

² Fresco (cf. page 13)

Photo-credit:

M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

By France Royer-Martel, M.I.C.

WORDS FOREVER ENGRAVED

Let's go back in time, right to the founding of Quebec City, on July 3, 1608. Awed by the beauty of the scene that lay before him, Samuel de Champlain cried out, *What a gift God has given us here!*^{*} He was on his third voyage to Canada. His three-masted ship was gliding slowly up the Saint Lawrence River.

Samuel de Champlain would later write, *I will always remember July 3, 1608. The day Quebec was born will forever be engraved in my memory and in my heart.*^{*} This believer, this pioneer of New France, could not forget the fabulous site where he had lowered anchor. Anyone who knows this natural setting can easily imagine the magnificence of Cape Diamond at the beginning of the 16th century. *A veritable gift of nature*^{*}...and of lush, completely unspoiled nature at that!

Quebec City's motto, I SHALL MULTIPLY THE GIFT OF GOD has its origin in Champlain's famous utterance, and constitutes a testimony of Christian faith that encapsulates the spiritual, moral and social values of the city's citizens. A visit to Ottawa's parliament buildings gives us the opportunity to see Quebec City's coat of arms on the ceiling of the central building, situated in the northeast side,

in Confederation Hall, commonly called the Rotunda. Here again we see Quebec City's motto.

AN EXPERIENCE BOTH HUMAN AND SPIRITUAL

The 400th anniversary of the founding of Quebec City brings to mind all the festivities, joys, and activities that are associated with it. Our hearts are already anxious to celebrate. And with good reason: several MIC sisters were born and raised in Quebec City! So is there a connection between Quebec City's motto I SHALL MULTIPLY THE GIFT OF GOD and the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception?

If we compare the MICs and the motto I SHALL MULTIPLY THE GIFT

OF GOD, two elements come to the fore: a freely given gift received from God (faith and nature) and a desire to multiply this gift. We must, however, add a third important element: being receptive to the gift. Indeed, how can we desire to multiply the gift we have received and to tell others about it freely, without first having made it our own? In our opinion, this is exactly what Samuel de Champlain and the MICs have in common.

Such words suppose that the people concerned have experienced the divine



GIFT OF GOD

gift in their inner being. Overwhelmed with joy, how can we not be excited and let our hearts cry out, *I SHALL MULTIPLY THE GIFT OF GOD!* It's an experience both human and spiritual, one that is very concrete and usually part of totally ordinary daily life.

Other words, like *GIFT* and *MISSION* could be used to describe the same reality. And it's true that these two words correspond to the spirituality of Thanksgiving that drive the MIC Sisters and their mission. The free gift of God in Jesus and in the Spirit overjoyed the heart of Délia, our foundress; it first energized her, then the MICs and their partners. It has given them the audacity to reach out to brothers and sisters of every language, every culture, every nation and to share the Good News with them. The horizon broadens even further to the universality of salvation in Jesus Christ. Our hearts swell, and burn like the hearts of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus at Easter (cf. Luke 24:32). We have been endowed with a great gift, but this gift is not ours to keep—it is to be passed on and that is why the mission springs up from within like an imperial command.

THIS WORD IS SURE!

In contact with Jesus, the apostle James understood that *all good gift and every perfect present is from above, coming down from the Father of lights* (James 1:17). God's gifts are always freely given, plentiful and they come with no strings attached. And how should we humans, who have received so much from God, consider these gifts? The Word of God challenges us, *What do you possess that you have not received? But if you have received it, why are you boasting as if you did not receive it?* (1 Cor. 4:7). How then could we not take the gift seriously? (cf 1 Tim 4:14-15).

As for the Mission, it starts in the Trinity: the Father puts everything into the hands of the Son and sends him to preach the Gospel. The Son, in turn, tells his disciples, and all those who follow him, *As the Father has sent me, so I send you* (Jn 20:21). Finally, commitment, pastoral activities, prayer and meditation on the Word of God help us to realize from within just *how sure this Word is!* (1 Tm 1:15). It's a strength, a rock! And if one day for some reason we happen to stumble or lose our initial enthusiasm, Paul invites us *to stir into flame the gift of God* (2 Tm 1:6).

This gift is not ours to keep
—it must be passed on. 

The profoundly human and spiritual experience of *GIVING*, like that experienced by Délia Tétreault, sparked the sense of *MISSION* within her. In 1916, she proclaimed: *The principal reason for the existence of our Society is truly that of giving thanks.*

Even our name, The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, and the scope of our missionary commitments—the whole world!—were given to us by Pope Pius X. Today, the 400th anniversary celebrations of Quebec City inspire us to say along with Samuel de Champlain, *What a gift of God has been given to us here!**

GIFT and *MISSION*: two words, one reality, a charisma to share, here and everywhere.

Unexploited riches are not enough; left fallow, they remain sterile. They must become productive, and be multiplied! Indeed, *I SHALL MULTIPLY THE GIFT OF GOD!* 



A Presence Beyond the Centuries

Marie de l'Incarnation (1599-1672) was one of the first monastic nuns to leave her homeland for a mission abroad in the XVIIth century. Married mother, widow at a young age, cloistered nun and first woman missionary who collaborated in evangelizing New France, she remains a unique personality—one of a kind; and so is her message.



About the author

Sr. Suzanne, medical doctor and theologian wrote her doctoral thesis on: *The apostolic spirit according to Marie de l'Incarnation*. The author was a missionary for twenty some years in Bolivia.

By Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C.

Favored by an exceptional calling to contemplative life, but also possessing a great desire to share the Faith, Marie de l'Incarnation was, within the walls of her cloister, an outstanding missionary. Though she was a solid pillar of the new Church, she always considered herself as a *tiny pebble at the bottom of the structure*.

Listening to her speak in the language of the 17th century, her style reflects an open spirit, according to members of the French Academy. Let us hear what she tells us.

DREAMING TO MAKE GOD KNOWN THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

She thought of this even before entering the monastery in Tours: *I was stunned to know there were still Turks, infidels and so many bad Christians. I wanted to cry-out to the world that it had to love the great God, the God of love.*

Still in France, at the Ursulines, she laughed at the popular dictum: *'A woman needs either a grille or a husband!'* My body was inside the monastery, but my spirit was one with the Spirit of Jesus, and it could not be enclosed. *That Spirit would spiritually transport me to India, Japan, America, the Orient, the West, in parts of Canada, with the Hurons and all over the earth where I could see reasonable souls belonging to Jesus Christ... I travelled in spirit to the wide open spaces and accompanied the Gospel workers...and it seemed I was one with them.* Her prayer to God: *Give me a voice, so powerful, that I may be heard as far as earth's extremities.*

Once in Quebec, not content being busy within the monastery, she wanted to

be part of all the missions. Upon hearing that a post was beginning in Ontario, she wrote: *Obtaining souls for God's glory is devouring me.* Later she added: *You might say to me that at age 53 I am not wise in having the sentiments I now declare...but think what you want. If I were told we must now leave for India, or China, or go to the Iroquois, learn their language and work for their conversion, I am ready...*

REALIZING HER DREAM

When she heard about the mission in Canada, she sparked the interest within the monastery in Tours. Relentlessly she communicated her enthusiasm: *In the monastery, I made so many efforts so that everyone would appeal to God for the conversion of the Indians. For this reason, I tried to instil fervour in all the Sisters.*

When she left France for Quebec in 1639, torn of having to leave behind her son forever, she nevertheless confided: *My heart burst with joy in the fidelity I wished to render to God and to His Son by giving life for life, love for love, all for all.* And speaking to Christ: *You are all of me, You are mine. Let us go, beloved Spouse to the business you have confided me to do.*

Throughout her years in mission land, she excelled in awakening people's consciousness to the Mission. Today we would label this as 'mission awareness'. It is through correspondence that she reached out. She would write: *Bless the Sovereign Goodness for all His bountifulness. With me, be interested in Jesus Christ and in the extension of His Kingdom. Let us live and die for this cause.* She never ceased repeating this invitation in her letters: 7,000 according to some; 13,000 according to others.

¹ Stained glass window representing Madeleine de la Peltrie and Marie de l'Incarnation, located at Marie de l'Incarnation Centre, Quebec City
Photo-credit:
M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Ref: Dom Albert Jamet, o.s.b.,
Marie de l'Incarnation,
Ursuline de Tours:
Fondatrice des Ursulines
de la Nouvelle-France.
Écrits spirituels et historiques,
Paris, Desclée-De Brouwer;
Québec, L'Action sociale,
1929-1939, 4 volumes



Moreover, much before we began speaking about lay missionaries, she in her own days was already inspiring new Christians to become mission-minded. She would be alert in noticing the young boarders and said that one of them was so passionately prayerful that she would influence others to do the same. Whenever a former student would become a perfect Christian model for the other girls in Quebec, Marie de l'Incarnation would rejoice: *It is marvellous to see the fervour of our good neophytes; not only do they believe in Jesus Christ but their zeal makes them unhappy and think they are but half-hearted believers when they observe that others do not reflect believing with the same ardour.*

She did not miss her chance to point out: *Not only men are set ablaze for this cause...a woman also went to a far-away country to catechize those of that nation.* And on a sad note wrote: *We often see much fervour in our good neophytes, but without lying, they bring shame to those born of Christian parents.* The underlying statement being—they should also serve God with as much ardour.

SEEKING ADVICE FROM HER

In this XXIst century, how can we combine our hectic activities and a life of union with God, source of inner peace and happiness surpassing all others? She responds: *I never find myself more in God than when I leave my rest for His Love so as to go speak with the primitive people and teach them to act in a Christian way... I mention this so that you may know that a diverse life such as this gives me a vigour greater than I can say.*

The closer we are to God, the clearer we see into temporal matters and on account of this Torch, all is done more perfectly.

Every day, *do with perfection the first thing that presents itself to you...* to come to a point when *all the other daily actions become better and better. These are moments of ecstasy* that we must search for and according to Marie de l'Incarnation lead to true happiness

Her voice still echoes beyond the centuries... what do you think? 🌿

Hospitaller of Quebec

So many women have marked our history and have remained, for the most part, unknown. The celebrations of Quebec City's 400th Anniversary of Foundation give us the opportunity to renew with the past and rediscover our heroes—those who have fashioned our origins. With great pleasure, I present Catherine de Longpré, a young French woman who remarkably left her imprint on the history of Quebec.



By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Catherine de Longpré was born in Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte, Normandy on May 3, 1632. Raised by her grandparents, she entered the Monastery of the Hospitallers of Bayeux at age 12. Catherine took the religious habit on October 24, 1646 and from then on was known as Sr. Marie-Catherine de Saint Augustin.

In New France, religious women were already at work since 1639. In the process of building the Hotel-Dieu Hospital, they needed help. On May 31, 1648, Sr. Marie-Catherine left France, she was then 16 years of age. Three months later, on August 19, she arrived in Quebec and began working immediately, taking up heavy-duty jobs while getting acquainted with the native languages. Remarkably talented with practical, economical sense of things and her competence in nursing, she soon was responsible of various functions: treasurer, nurse, novice mistress. With admirable strength and vigour, completely dedicated to the sick and the less fortunate, Marie-Catherine de Saint Augustin consecrated all her life to the service of others, no matter their background.

It is here, in New France, that she accomplished the most important apostolic mission for

the future development of the new country which she adopted and loved so dearly. On May 8, 1668, the Hotel Dieu Hospital of Quebec lost one of its first courageous, devoted, passionate pioneers. Marie-Catherine was only 36. The Hurons gave her the name “Iakonikonriostha”, meaning “she who makes the interior more beautiful”.

She had offered her life for the Church and the salvation of her young country—New France. This is the reason why Marie-Catherine of Saint Augustin is considered as co-founder of the Canadian Church. On April 23, 1989, the late Pope John-Paul II proclaimed her BLESSED. ☪

STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS:

These pieces of art by master glazier Mr. Olivier Ferland, remind us of the greatest moments lived by Marie-Catherine de Saint Augustin. The first illustrates her departure from the Port of La Rochelle; the sailing ships are reminders of the long and perilous voyage this young missionary undertook to be among one of the first pioneers. She dedicated her utmost energy and strength for the establishment of the first hospital in North America.

The second stained-glass window illustrates the Saint Lawrence River, the forest, the new country, Marie-Catherine teaching religion to the Amerindians, treating the sick, praying at the moment when the Virgin carrying the Child Jesus appeared to her. At the top of the stained-glass window: the Canadian Church for which Catherine de Saint Augustin gave her life.

Thank you to the personnel of the ‘Centre Catherine de Saint Augustin’ for the documentation they provided.



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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After extensive research, the historian Lionel Groulx wrote *Le Canada Français Missionnaire*.⁽¹⁾ This work led him to conclude that the Society of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception was a golden gift offered by French Canada to the Church. This was a unique religious community in the early part of the 20th century where he could identify all the spiritual and corporal works of mercy.

Though proud of this recognition, let us mention the fact that this Community was international from the outset. What dynamism! With very little means at its disposal, particularly in that era, what country in the world could boast of reaching-out to such an extent?

These women missionaries have an extraordinary talent in adapting. In many countries they have created outstanding works of charity which have become the pride and envy of many of our political ambassadors.

They were the ones who, once in the field, invented works of benevolence such as Doctors in Sandals, Children Helping Children (Holy Childhood), etc.

To this day we find them in fifteen countries. When we think of Quebec's young history, this foundation having international dimensions is quite unique in its kind. Perhaps this is the reason why the historian and priest Lionel Groulx, after researching our history, was so moved by the fact that these women from our Province, the majority from rural areas, have succeeded so well in their apostolic works still unique in its kind.

This said, I am personally favourable in encouraging the cultural and humanitarian works of these Missionary Sisters who still reach-out in so many parts of the world.

Benoît Lacroix, O.P.

⁽¹⁾ Publisher: Fides, Montreal 1962



*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

Tel.: 514 279 0514, Fax: 514 279 3321, m.morinmic@sympatico.ca | For more information: www.soeurs-mic.qc.ca



COUNTER WINDS AND TIDES – First Part

A meeting of a few hours—can this be sufficient to adequately present the apostolic work accomplished in Chile, since 1963, by the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception?

Coverage by: Marie Brassard

If God wants us to go there,
we will respond without hesitation. 

As I shake hand with Sr. Gisèle Lachapelle, M.I.C. the last religious Quebecer to leave this mission territory after 33 years of dedication, I measure the immense challenge that is before me. We are at the heart of Santiago, in a modest house located in Conchalí, which served as a postulancy until just recently. With a welcoming smile, this gentle septuagenarian generously accepts to share her memories: *I truly want to speak about the history of our mission here in Chile, a mission I deeply love. By this sharing, may all the friendly links we've had, the welcoming, comforting presence we've offered and the co-operative support we've given remain in the memories and be witness to our commitment here in this land.*

THE PAST RESURFACES

As on a movie screen, we fly over the Island of Chiloé. Exposed to all winds of the Pacific, it is one of the largest in the Chiloé Archipelago along the Chilean Coast. This is where the action begins.

We are in 1963, the island's population is approximately 40,000. In his mo-

dest office, the Bishop, Msgr. Alexandro Duran Moreira is anxious. News has come to him that the German Sisters who had been directing a college and boarding house had to leave. Hardly back on their feet after the devastating earthquake of 1960 which made many victims and caused the destruction of the cathedral, the Bishop faces the impasse: his faithful are so poor that rebuilding seems to be impossible; yet, he knows his people well: they are valiant workers in the vineyard.

Established in 1840 by Pope Gregory XVI, Bishop Moreira is proud of his Diocese and appreciates the vital legacy left behind by the Jesuit priests who worked there in the XVIIth century. Those evangelists, were they not inspired to use the 'circular mission' method? Had they ever thought that someday they would have to leave the island because of Spanish territorial wars? Had it come to their mind that their teaching based on 'the implication of authority' would be a turning point in training leaders to take charge of small Christian communities that would survive the many jolts of history?

Bishop Moreira secretly toys with the idea of building a seminary for priestly vocations. For this to happen, it is urgent to assure the survival of the Immaculate Conception College—but how?

GOD'S WAYS

In Canada, in the city of Montreal, Sr. Madeleine Payette, Superior General of the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception has missionaries working in fifteen countries.

Today, she receives a call from the Archdiocese of Montreal telling her that a Chilean Bishop will be visiting and has an important request. Msgr. Duran introduces himself and expresses his wish to have Canadian religious women take charge of the primary and secondary schools together with the boarding home for young girls on the Island of Chiloé. The financial means of his Diocese are so meagre that without the help of women missionaries supported by their home country, he would have to shut down these institutions. His plea was convincing.

Sr. Madeleine reflects to discern the Will of God: *If God wants us to go there, we will respond without hesitation.* A few days later, she receives a telegram from Cuba: *Due to the escalating crisis on the Island of Cuba, authorities demand all foreign citizens to leave the country immediately.* Since 1948, many MIC Sisters from Quebec have been working in Cuba; they have been involved in dioceses and parishes. They master the Spanish language and are already well trained in the teaching field, supporting the local clergy. This is the perfect group to take over the missionary torch on the Island of Chiloé. A visible sign of God's Providence appears—He is the ultimate planner. *May His Will be done* is the response of Sr. Madeleine while she sees to the transfer of the first missionary team to Chiloé.

CHILOÉ, THE FARTHEST AWAY ISLAND

In 1963, the Bishop of the Ancud Diocese rejoices when he sees the ship anchoring and six Canadian Sisters, five from Cuba and one from Quebec, under

the leadership of Sr. Thérèse Pichette, come to meet him. The villagers are also there, smiling, timid and curious to see so much commotion, and for the most part, not knowing anything about Canada.

With enthusiasm, the missionaries begin their work. Summer is almost ended and student enrolment is low. The Sisters visit the villages, meet the natives *whuilliche*, and reassure the parents of the quality of the education that will be given to their children. The newly arrived Sisters begin the school year with a minimum of students and boarders.

Winter brings winds that penetrate the walls. The cold humid weather of the island stiffens hands, feet, and movements. These missionaries who had lived in the tropical climate of Cuba find it most difficult to tolerate this mission. Surviving the winter weather is a struggle against cold, hunger and solitude. Food supplies come only once a year, they are shipped from Peru; hence, the population must live from their meagre reserves and support each other.

Six years later, considering the decline in enrolment and numerous other schools that can fill the demand, the Sisters rethink their mission. Their dilapidated building requires much repair; they decide to take advantage of the renovation to convert the quarters into a boarding school—the most appropriate solution. A core group will coordinate the activities for young students who will live in residence; others will continue teaching in the existing schools nearby and some Sisters will be available for a new mission in El Chañten. It is with joy that the members of the small MIC community reinvent their mission while adapting themselves to their new country, within a very local context. 🌸

(To be continued...)

¹ *The new mission* (1964)

Sr. Thérèse Pichette gives a course in natural science.

Photo-credit: MIC Archives

² *Sisters in Ancud, Chili* (1967)

1st row: Srs. Dolores Tremblay, Armandine Gauthier, Desneiges Brault

2nd row: Srs. Gilberte Perras, Laurette Goulet, Irene Trudel, Srs. Thérèse Pichette, Véronique Caouette

³ Sr Gisèle Lachapelle,

2nd from left, with co-workers

Photos-credit: MIC Archives





EARTHQUAKE IN PERU

A powerful earthquake of magnitude 8 on the Richter scale struck Peru on Wednesday, August 15, 2007. The following is the editorial point of view of a Peruvian, Wilfredo Rimari Aias, published in San Jeronimo magazine. As for those of us who have everything we need, earthquakes like this cannot leave us indifferent.

By Wilfredo Rimari Arias

The aftermath of the earthquake that shook Peru last August 15 has been tragic. The quake left approximately 500 people dead in the different disaster zones: Pisco, Chincha, Ica and Canete. Houses and public buildings in the provinces of Huaytara, Castrovirreyna, Yauyos and Canete suffered serious damage. It has been a hard blow for the Peruvian population, especially for the poorest ones, who are hit even harder by such natural disasters. The poor are always at a disadvantage; they don't have sufficient means to recover their losses when catastrophe strikes.

Thank God, this situation immediately spurred a wave of solidarity in the Peruvian people. Such a wave, in fact, that the government was overwhelmed. Only slowly and with great difficulty could aid be brought to the disaster zones. Several families have taken from their own necessities to help their brothers and sisters from the south! Hundreds of young people have responded to the call by freely giving their time and energy to distribute this aid.

Unfortunately, the lack of serious leadership and planning plus the organization problems we have experienced, have made the pickup, transportation and distribution process much less adequate and efficient. Several Peruvians have preferred to

do their giving, person to person, because they don't trust their government to do it.

The aid the government has provided to the disaster victims is however praiseworthy, but immediate intervention will not be enough, for there is a profound problem: the poor are always the most affected by earthquakes and other natural disasters. They are the ones who live in flimsy houses; the ones for whom electricity and potable water are most deficient; they are the ones who are most vulnerable when adversity must be faced. We have a debt of justice towards the poorest in our country and it's urgent that we repay it. The time has come to plan development, the economy, and housing construction in order to respond to the most urgent needs of a majority of the population. Otherwise, our nation will have no future, and nature will continue to strike those who are already the hardest hit by poverty and unemployment.

We have to work out long term solutions that take into account the common good, and are inspired by a real social consciousness. Politics, like the economy, must be considered a means to an end and not an end in itself. To come up with solutions to this social problem, there is nothing like getting all sectors of the country working together. It's by working together that we'll be able to solve the problem of



poverty. Along with this solidarity and the support shown to our brothers and sisters in need, God wants us to have the audacity to make demands, and the courage to make a collective effort towards seeing that all Peruvians have the same opportunities to find a job, get an education, and have access to housing, health services and assistance in emergencies.

In this context, the role of teachers in Peru will be very important. First of all, it is up to them to dialogue with their students about this catastrophe; otherwise, this will turn out to be just one more unresolved conflict. It is essential that we reflect together about this tragedy, sharing the pain and the pent up sufferings, and drawing the necessary lessons so we can face adversity. With the present as our starting point, we must build projects of life and future together, and assume the challenge of taking charge of our lives.

Secondly, it will be important to improve our present structures in order to better confront the consequences of catastrophes, based on the experiences of each and every one, and by taking on the roles that our new situation will demand of us. Assuming our responsibility in the process of reconstruction will consolidate our self-esteem, which is indispensable in such circumstances, and will make a precious contribution to the common good. Thirdly, it will be important to share the progress we have achieved, to evaluate our successes, and to see how we can improve our efforts, both at the personal and the community levels.

We are faced with a situation that demands the participation of all Peruvians from all over the country. There are many ways to participate as we bring our sisters and brothers in need the spiritual, emo-

tional, affective, financial and material support that they so desperately require. We can all participate in our own way: a simple sincere prayer, a word of encouragement, or as big a gift as our generosity can afford. 🍷

*As long as someone suffers,
The rose cannot be fair.*

*As long as someone looks at bread with envy,
The wheat will never sleep.*

*As long as raindrops fall on beggar's chests,
My heart will never smile.*

Poets! Put sadness to death!

Don't speak of the iris's romance.

*There are things much more important
Than to mourn the loss of love.*

*The murmur of a people stirring
Is fairer than the dew;
The gleam of angry metal
Is fairer than sea foam.*

A free man is harder than a diamond.

Manuel Scorza, Peruvian poet (1928-1983)

Translation – Spanish to French: Véronique Bernatchez, M.I.C.
Monique Bigras, M.I.C.

Letters from here and abroad

Mati, Philippines

Diamonds for IHMA (Immaculate Heart of Mary Academy).

In Mati, Philippines, we celebrate the 60 years of our co-ed school, elementary and high school levels. The humble beginnings of this institution are today officially highlighted with festivities. The theme chosen for these many years of accomplishments:

IHMA IS 60 YEARS OLD

Thank the past
Transform the present
Create the future
Keep the dream alive



This year of celebration is above all one of thanksgiving and a confirmation that, as we enter this Diamond Jubilee year, IHMA has remained unshakeable in its determination to train leaders. The students are imbued with a Christian formation and education enhanced by a dynamic drive for the witness to the Gospel and for the growth of the local Church.

Today, we are proud to announce the realization of another dream. In the course of 60 long years, we have reached the stage of celebrating the diamond we have become. In this diamond, we express our satisfaction with the past. We have become a transformed and transforming people of God. Through this diamond, we create a future bearing fruits that keep our dreams alive.

These words were spoken before the Mass presided over by Bishop Patricio H. Alo accompanied by Fr. Jacques Doyon, P.M.E. and six other priests. Family members, benefactors and religious sisters were also present. In his homily, quoting his favourite phrase: ***The truth will set you free***, Bishop Alo expressed a wish: that IHMA continue being a significant help to the pupils in quest of light and truth. He acknowledged the meaningful presence of IHMA in Mati.

At the end of the Mass, the official logo of this Jubilee year was unveiled. If IHMA has become what it is today, it is due to the sacrifices, continuous support, the lasting love and loyalty of numerous persons. On this occasion of the launching of the Jubilee, IHMA presented: ***Very Simply... Gratitude!*** a one and a half hour of songs and dances in gratitude to the pioneers (men and women), benefactors and friends of the Academy who freely gave to IHMA and the community of Mati, their time, talents and even their lives out of love of service.

Congratulations to IHMA, its personnel and students!

MIC Chroniques



YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

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!



Educating and training future leaders is Sr. Estelle's priority. Foundress of CEPA (Education Centre for Adults) she is returning to Tsaramasay, Madagascar to continue her work in the field of communications/relationships—a program she has been directing for the past 30 years.

ESTELLE FONTAINE, M.I.C.
—Valcourt, Quebec



Her many years of experience in Africa have taught Sr. Hélène to be attentive to the needs of the people. She is returning to Muzu, Malawi, where her presence and support will be appreciated.

HÉLÈNE GEMME, M.I.C.
—L'Ange-Gardien, Quebec



Already having served 37 years in Haiti as educator, animator and editor of the Mission Youth Magazine *Ti-Moun Misyonè*, Sister Gisèle is returning to Cap-Haïtien. As Diocesan Director of the Pontifical Missionary Works, she will offer her expertise and work with the local leaders of the Diocese.

GISÈLE VACHON, M.I.C.
—Saint-Ambroise, Quebec

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Dawn of a New Life



Simonne Boisclair, M.I.C.
(Sr. Imelda-de-l'Eucharistie)
1910-2007

Almaville (Shawinigan), Quebec

At a young age, Simonne was taught how to pray and read Bible stories. Naturally inclined in wanting to help others, she decided at 19 to become a religious missionary in the MIC Congregation. After her training she was appointed for Suchow, China. There she learned the Mandarin language, written and oral. Mastering it well, she became a competent catechist in China, Hong-Kong and Taiwan where she lived and devoted herself for 50 years. Sr. Simonne was a zealous and dedicated missionary.



Agathe Bolduc, M.I.C.
(Sr. Marie-Georges)
1917-2007

Saint-Damien de Brandon, Quebec

Agathe had a happy childhood embedded in faith and affection. Often she prayed God to know her way in life. At 20, she entered the convent of the MIC Sisters. In 1956, Sr. Agathe was named for Japan. Specialized in evangelizing the non Christians, she demonstrated competence and enthusiasm as a catechist. Serene throughout her long illness, Sister revealed her deep faith in the God of Life. Sr. Agathe left a long-lasting imprint on the life of her many friends in Japan.



Pauline Longtin, M.I.C.
(Sr. Saint-Léon-le-Grand)
1918-2007

Saint-Philippe de Laprairie, Quebec

Born during a period of influenza, Pauline was often sick as a child. The father pampered her, the mother and sisters cherished her. Later in life, she chose to become a missionary and as a licensed nurse she left for Malawi, Africa. Upon her return to Montreal, Sr. Pauline directed the construction of the second Chinese Hospital. Some years afterward, the Cause for the canonisation of Délia Tétreault was under her direction. With faith and competence she undertook her new mission and closely followed its development. Délia Tétreault was declared Venerable in 1997.



Rosa Labrosse, M.I.C.
(Sr. Marie-Annette)
1921-2007

Windsor, Ontario

As a young child, Rosa experienced the loss of her parents. Her eldest sister took charge of the siblings and Rosa studied at the boarding school of the CND Sisters (Congregation of Notre Dame) which she came to know and appreciate. At 19, she opted for the missionary life with the MIC Sisters. Artistically talented, she shared her giftedness while working in Quebec, Peru and Bolivia. A zealous, loving, joyful, devoted missionary, she radiated in a special way her love of Mary.

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

Délia Tétreault

Evangelizing by Means of a Magazine

—MIC Mission News? I Don't Understand!

This brief remark by a generous benefactor incited us to look-over the role of our missionary magazine for this day and age. For this purpose, the promotional team of MIC Mission News organized a friendly gathering with its collaborators and families. Thirty-two participants arrived from various regions and dioceses: Cornwall, Ottawa, Gatineau, St-Hubert and Montreal.

By Antoinette Castonguay, M.I.C.

The goal of this meeting was to encourage our volunteers and offer them tools that could facilitate their work. Presenters oriented the participants as they spoke on the current phenomenon of communications. Over the years, media has acquired great power: radio, T.V., internet, movies, books, magazines, billboards, newspapers, all these capture our attention unceasingly. A quick look in a convenience store, or a book stand, and you will note the variety of publications for all ages and all interests.

The Church would feel inadequate if she did not utilize these powerful means of communications to bring about the Good News, for these are key factors in today's world. In 2003, late Pope John Paul II stated in his apostolic letter *THE RAPID DEVELOPMENT: Communications media have acquired such importance as to be the principal means of guidance and inspiration for many people in their personal, familial and social behaviour.*

According to the message delivered by the late Pope John Paul II on the 37th World Communications Day, 2003—our publication strives to bring its contribution to peace by *breaking down the barriers of mistrust, fostering consideration of the point of view of others, seeking to go beyond understanding and respect to reconciliation and mercy.* Could the MIC Mission News Magazine be considered as an instrument of awareness that brings about information and knowledge of the peoples where our missionaries work? Can a mission oriented magazine be of any help to the public who seeks to know and understand? Do we have a place in the world of the media? These open ended questions were presented to the participants for them to ponder upon and discuss.

It all began in 1920, when our Foundress Délia Tétreault launched this missionary magazine called *Le Précurseur* (French edition). Three years later, the English version appeared, it was then named *The Precursor*, currently known as *MIC Mission News*. These publications are indeed the oldest missionary magazines in Canada published by a religious community of women. From the outset, Délia supervised closely the editing of the articles; she would even send money to her Sisters in mission for them to send us professional photos. Above and beyond presenting mission information in the magazines, Délia wanted to awaken the missionary spirit in the Canadian Church and call forth the laity's participation.

At the end of the meeting, the collaborators realized the importance of continuing this mission, so dear to Délia Tétreault's heart. It is a way of reaching out to others and of communicating the Good News. Small group discussions around pertinent subjects found in the MIC Mission News can arouse interest and be most enriching for persons in search of hope, justice and understanding. ☺



¹ Collaborators looking over the magazine format changes

² At the registration table
—left: Sr. Lucy Virginia Hung, M.I.C., and Rosario Gelluagan, Associate

³ The exhibition
—left to right: Srs. Elizabeth Relacion, M.I.C., Cécile Martel, M.I.C. and Sr. Antoinette Castonguay, M.I.C.
Photos-credit: MIC

About the author

Sister Antoinette, worked in the Philippines for many years; she is currently involved in promoting the magazine *MIC Mission News*.

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Mission prayer

*Lord, our God,
help us to walk with you
on the pathway of the beatitudes
and to live out your mission
in today's world.*

*Bind us to all men and women
of our time so that together
we may bring the Good News
to the ends of the earth.*

*Open our hearts and
our Christian communities
to the needy, the afflicted, the oppressed.
May we radiate the Living Christ
and transform our lives
in the hope of the Resurrection.*

*This prayer we make to you
who are the living God now and forever.*

Amen.

On the occasion of World Mission Sunday,
October 21, 2007
Society for the Propagation of the Faith, Missio
Canada

Sr. Francine Ravaoarilala, M.I.C.,
with the local Christian community of Bafoussam,
Cameroon

Photo credit: Lucie Gagné, M.I.C.

