

MIC MISSION NEWS

SINCE 1923



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VANCOUVER

THE CHALLENGE
OF CHOOSING

CHILE

COUNTER WINDS
AND TIDES (PART II)

IN FOCUS

FAITH
A PERSONAL ADVENTURE



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

April 2008

For Future Priests:

May future priests in young churches be formed culturally and spiritually for evangelization.

May 2008

For Missionaries Today:

May the Blessed Virgin Mary continue to accompany missionaries today, as she accompanied the Apostles in the early stages of the Church.

June 2008

For the Eucharistic Congress in Quebec, Canada:

May the Eucharistic Congress in Quebec, Canada, lead to a deeper understanding of the Eucharist as the heart of the Church and the source of evangelization.

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. 35, N° 2 | APRIL • MAY • JUNE 2008



COLUMNS

SPIRITUAL LIFE

4 A Search for Refreshing Water!

André Gadbois

LAY MISSIONARIES

6 Counter Current

Lyse Letendre & Gilles Fortier

WOMEN

8 A Thirst to Fulfill

Monique Fortier, M.I.C.

YOUTH

10 Everyday, a Calling

Alexis Pearson

MISSION BRIEF

12 Quebec City – Eucharistic Congress 2008



IN FOCUS

FAITH

13-20 A Personal Adventure

ABOUT THE MICs

21 More Than a Trip

Nathalie Genest

22 A Promising Future

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

24 Counter Winds and Tides (Part II)

Marie Brassard

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EDITORIAL

READERS' CORNER

SUSPENSE!

Alfred Hitchcock, Stephen King, John Grisham, Agatha Christie: authors or film-makers renowned for their suspense stories. A type I enjoy very much. However, it is quite disappointing when we can guess the intrigue from almost the beginning. I prefer remaining on the alert, trying to discover the mystery as the story unfolds. The unexpected always leaves us with a good surprise ending.

Has there ever been a greater suspense story than that of our life? Isn't God the best film-maker there is! Who knows the end of one's life and thereafter? We suppose the outcome, but no one came back from above to reveal anything to us; however, we believe in Eternal life. That is faith!

TO BELIEVE: A TRUE PERSONAL ADVENTURE

In Scripture, many persons relied on the call heard from above: Abraham left his country; Moses accomplished a mission that was out of his reach; the apostles, simple fishermen, witnessed their faith in Jesus Christ and even died for Him. What about the Samaritan woman who became a missionary and Mary, the one who believed, the mother of God?

TO THIS VERY DAY THE ADVENTURE GOES ON

A good number of people still hear the call and act upon it; they dare dedicate themselves for others in a variety of volunteer services. Some opt to consecrate their entire life to follow the Lord more closely; are these not the FOOLS OF GOD? They walk counter-current in a world that is dominated by performance and productivity. So, what exactly motivates the believers to be different? What gives them a feeling and the courage to BE for others? Why leave all behind to go and serve even beyond frontiers? Could it be that their motivation comes from the love of God who identifies himself in the neighbour: *Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.* (Mt. 25.40) Do they really believe these words? And do you?

I leave you with the suspense of discovering yourself the answer in this issue, a possible anchorage point for a rich and fruitful sharing...

Marie-Paule Sanjean, 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.

Gemma Perrier—Montreal, Qc.

It is with great delight that I read the articles in your magazine. The issue: *Immigration—Clash of Culture*, made me realize that for your community the 'reasonable accommodations' are already in the making. You are a source of inspiration for all those who want to welcome these brothers and sisters who have come from other countries. Thank you for opening our eyes and heart to this reality.

Louise Marsolais—Saint-Esprit, Qc.

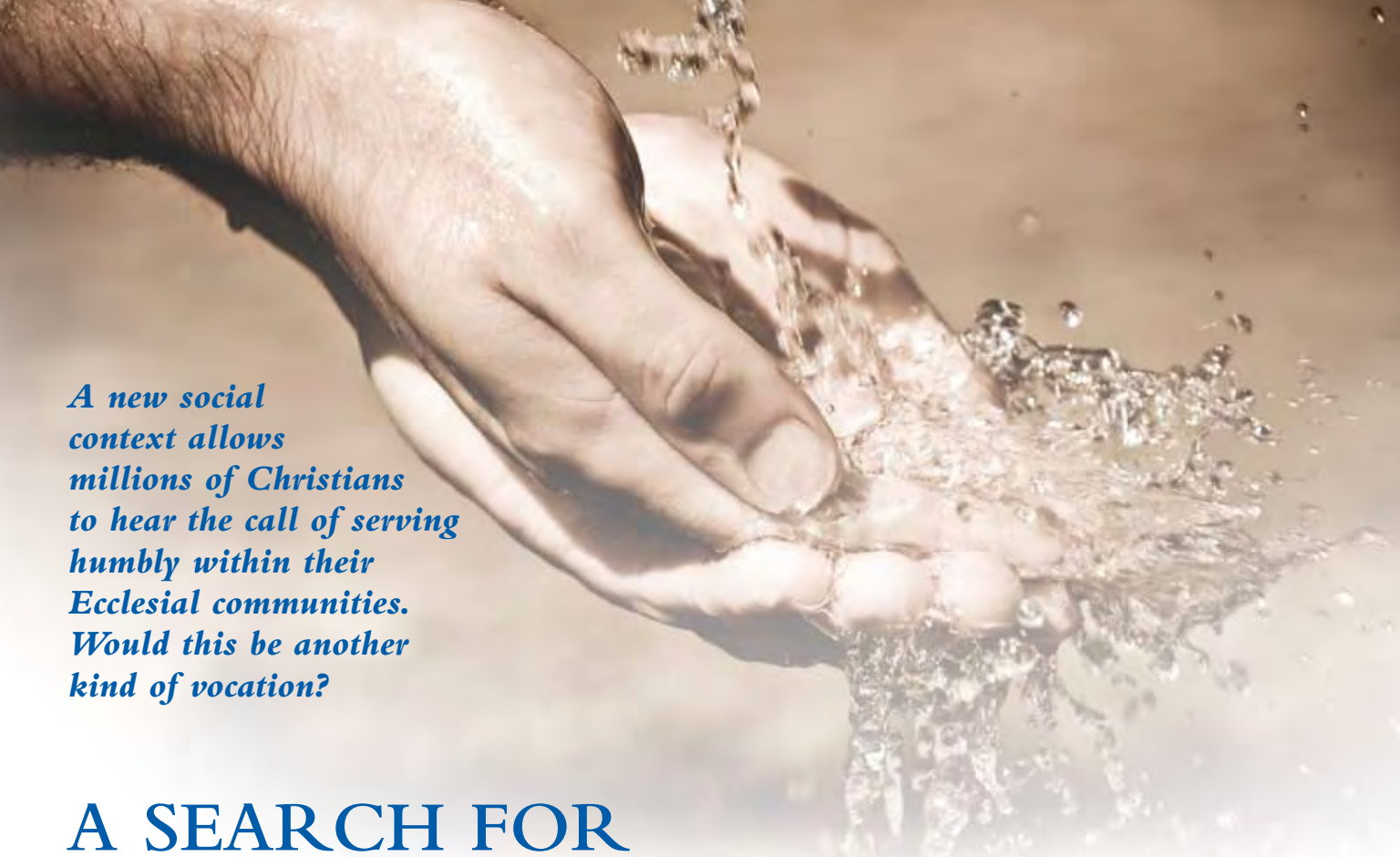
The Focus of your fall issue on Immigration was very interesting, it added content to the Bouchard-Taylor commission. True, if we communicated with the immigrants we would get to know them better and our rapport with them would improve. Let us pray the Infant Jesus that He may help us to greater understanding and lead us to witness love, peace and justice.

Gilles Dupré—Stoke, Qc.

From cover to cover, I read the December issue of your magazine. It gave me great joy. ALL FROM ABRAHAM'S LINEAGE... This editorial helps us remember that we are all of a common origin. From that source comes our universal brother/sisterhood. All along my reading, I savoured the fruitfulness of the MIC apostolate here at home and in the world.

Cécile Rioux—Rivière-du-Loup, Qc.

Definitely, I wish to continue receiving your interesting and fascinating magazine. I always look forward to receiving the issues; the articles help me greatly in my reflection. I read this magazine over and over again; then I pass it around to those who cannot take a subscription and they always appreciate receiving it.



A new social context allows millions of Christians to hear the call of serving humbly within their Ecclesial communities. Would this be another kind of vocation?

A SEARCH FOR REFRESHING WATER!



By André Gadbois

GARDEN LOVERS

Breeding-grounds are no longer what they once were. At one time, we would say that a certain village or a certain college was truly a nursery for vocations... religious ones, of course. Nowadays, few weeks after Easter, nurseries are invaded by millions of persons who passionately look for and minutely choose garden seedlings...and these are not to embellish the front lawn of the rectories, oh no!

In New France (400 years) as well as in the ancient one, it really seems that the breeding-grounds for religious vocations are facing difficulties. Paraphrasing Jean Ferrat: *Must we cry, must we laugh? Are we being envied or are we being pitied? I don't have the heart to say it!* Observing today's world, one can say that *a man's ties with his fellows are constantly being multiplied, and at the same time "socialization" brings*

further ties, without however always promoting appropriate personal development and truly personal relationships¹, and this drift concerns the Gospel.

It seems to me that a type of ecclesial institution which is based on its dogmatic teaching and the expansion of the kingdom of the Church rather than on that of God is gradually disappearing. That institution which was impersonal, authoritative and governed in a political fashion, like the great ones of this world, is fading out, giving way to new and varied ministries which serve Man and Woman in quest of daily bread, refreshing water and reconciliation.

That institution packed with norms, attracted millions of individuals who generously chose by vocation to consecrate their entire lives for others and they ac-

complished marvellous works in all spheres. Unfortunately, she left in the shadow, the baptismal vocation of its members who would attend Mass on Sundays without always receiving the spiritual nourishment they craved for. We need not reproach the past for what it was...but it bears important consequences for today.

A RENEWED VOCATION

The socio-religious context has been transformed! Modernization calls all Christians to critically strip away the superfluous religiosity while at the same time becoming attentively more supportive of men, women and peoples of our time, especially the ones most in need. Within this modern world, Jesus invites all to pursue His testament, to be reborn, as He said to Nicodemus who struggled between his religious heritage, his fellow-contemporaries and the words of the Nazarene.

The modern world shows itself at once powerful and weak, *capable of the noblest deeds or of the foulest*,² before it lies the path to freedom or to slavery, to progress or retreat, to brotherhood or hatred. In this modern world where persons are reduced to consuming, producing, gaining—Baptism becomes more than ever, a true and authentic CHOICE, a real VOCATION.

Furthermore, it is up to Christians to dialogue and seek out new ways to humanize our society where reconciliation draws us to one another, in memory of the One who said: *This is the cup of my blood, the blood of the new and everlasting covenant; it will be shed for you and for all so that sins may be forgiven* (Mt. 26:26.28). Christians are not to be with the Church but are the Church: sacrament of Christ who continues to heal and reconcile.

OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

When in the Church we trust Christians then vitality is disclosed, resources come forth, fervour and initiatives mature and unfold. In other words, the once paralysed presence of the Spirit appears and brings about life. Repeated formulas give way to creative

*means of 'being' capable of presenting the message of Jesus in a world of diversity.*³

More and more Christians whose faith has grown and taken another dimension now come together to unfurl their autonomy, their audacity and tenderness. They read the reality in the light of the Gospel; they come together with men and women of their milieu in search of refreshing water, daily bread and reconciliation.

Baptized in the water of the Spirit, nourished by the Bread of Life, each one seeks to refresh and feed those who are hungry and thirsty, building with them a different world, reconciling them with the Truth and their dignity. This hope that has just begun flourishing is to be celebrated humbly. It is a fragile hope? Yes...but a true, authentic hope.

It is up to Christians
to dialogue and seek out new ways
to humanize our society... 

Social pastoral agents, those involved in catechesis, and those who journey with catechumens, journalists, parish pastoral agents, those who assist the sick and comfort them, animators of youth movements, those who are dedicated and reach out to the marginal, the excluded, those without an ordained ministry who take charge of communities, all of the above have reached their VOCATION. Theirs is a service or function which is carried out in silence, reflection, suffering, often away from the beaten track and always with the acknowledgement of their small community.

These committed Christians have no titles and are not called masters or lord. They are always on guard, ready to serve; they hope for six and want ten. In the evening, when night has come, they speak to the Lord about His children—Humanity and they join all those who for the past 2000 years have contributed in expanding His Kingdom by their vocation. 

¹ Vatican II, *The Church in the Modern World*, 6.5

² *Ibid*, 9.4

³ Pierre DE LOCHT, *La foi décantée*, p. 187



Counter current

Going counter current—are we within the norms or not? This is the question we are asked as a couple who seems to be going counter current. What a surprise! Looking back at our history, our choices, the road we've travelled appears to us very ordinary and normal. However, giving it a closer look, we notice the differences that mark and color the landscape of our personal stories.

By Lyse Letendre & Gilles Fortier

GETTING UNDERWAY

Both of us were born into Christian families, our roots stem from pretty much the same soil. From the outset, respect and love were at the heart of our union. Without cymbals and trumpets, the starting point held the premises of faith in simple prayer. The need to nourish this faith became manifest from our very early years together; to solidify our life as a couple, sessions and conferences were deemed of utmost importance. Somewhat like those who engage in sports and discipline themselves for better performance and success, so do we participate regularly in renewal activities that nourish our faith.

It was a slow spiritual process. Then a unique encounter provoked that special opportunity leading us to become aware and express that spiritual flame that kept us oriented in the ways of God. That transforming encounter propelled us to go further in our faith and to confirm our will in committing ourselves to the people of God, the Church. A few weeks

after the baptism of one of our children, we were walking together to go meet a young couple who also wanted their child to be baptized. This new commitment—helping young mothers and fathers prepare for the baptism of their child, was one of the first steps taken in sailing with the Spirit. Navigating with the Holy One, we found ourselves on the open sea with many types of ocean currents. As modest laity, we were beginning our apostolate, one designed for modern times. With audacity, we launched our nets, no matter the counter currents, we extended our hand to all men and women out in the ocean or in their boats anchored off piers. This God, present in our daily life, was our point of reference and support in the choices we made. He filled us with peace and love. Such was the early stage of our action within the Christian community. It provided us the opportunity of sailing farther out on the ocean and of taking risks. We were confirmed in our commitment and given advice to go out at large no matter the counter currents.

Why did we respond positively to this commitment? Why did we decide to become “yeast” in our respective milieu? Why did we choose to proclaim HOPE in a society so centred on power and

wealth? We found our answer in the root of the Latin word 'fermentum' yeast: that which brings about passion or agitation. For us as a Christian couple, awakening the passion means deepening our conversion, of being salt for the earth and light to the world, daring to openly express our faith by word and action. It's our way to become passionate witnesses in our respective journeys. In this context, we have taken specialized courses to better accomplish our task as lay missionaries.

NAVIGATING

Our Church commitments follow the road of our daily life: preparing parents, children and adults to the rite of Christian initiation, being involved in a process of renewal and action at the heart of the diocese brings about dynamic elements in our own personal growth. All these commitments within the family, community and diocesan milieu take on the color of Christ who invites us to walk with our brothers and sisters.

Notwithstanding the counter currents that often generate storms, our commitments and challenges bring about countless joys. They become the ingredients of our conversations, essential elements for the on-going solidification of our couple. For example, sharing together the grateful response of a person who received help during troubled times transforms us from within and energizes us. All these activities improve the condition of our spiritual "ship" and allow us to experience deep inner joys guided by the wind of the Spirit. At large, Christ is

present; His Presence nourishes our faith and sustains our love for each other as a couple. He becomes our 'life line', with Him our boat can securely and confidently sail out on the open sea, no matter how high the waves, no matter how severe the storm. During the crossing, He reassures us, though at times we are tempted to divert the course and come to shore. The Lord, captain of our ship, helps and guides us in moments when, as a couple, we must reconsider our choices and commitments other than our family duties. His Presence is tangible. Working in His vineyard brings us great joy. In difficult moments, our dialogue and His grace always put us back on the road and open our eyes to His Presence; He is at the heart of our storms and rainbows.

ANCHORING

As a Christian couple, we believe that to live our mission as disciples of Jesus' Spirit, we must be bearers of the Good News. Whether with our family, or at work, or during recreational activities, we as volunteers are present to serve and witness. We believe it is important to reach-out, to act and to be of service to those around us, particularly today in our global society which has become so competitive; we believe that simple gestures of love can give rise to Hope, so much needed in our world.

Everyday, Christ calls us to remain in the counter current and take risks, His words to us are: *Put out into deep water and let down the nets...* (Luke 5:4) 



¹ Georgette Lefebvre, Gilles Fortier, Lyse Letendre during a Cursillo (Ultraya) weekly meeting at the Vimont Community.

² Peter Johnson Robert, Subajini Selliah, Johanne Germain, Luc Laurence, pastor, Lyse and Gilles Fortier. Subajini becomes a new member of the catechumenate at St. Elzear Parish in Laval.

³ Gilles and Lyse

Photos-credit: The authors

He is at the heart of our
storms and rainbows. 

Changing the course of one's life is not easy. Married, mother and grandmother, Monique took a while before recognizing the Lord's call. With courage, she followed the inner Voice and took decisions with much determination. A true passionate story is hers to read.



Thirsting for Fulfillment

By Monique Fortier, M.I.C.

What more could I ask for? I was a chartered accountant, had a managerial position with certain powers: I had the esteem of my employees and colleagues, I also had financial security. Isn't this what everyone desires—power, esteem, possessions? Yet, I felt an emptiness within me. I had received a Christian education but I had stopped practicing a long time ago. Occasionally, I would go to church but

it no longer meant anything to me. I felt sadness! However, deep within, there was a real thirst for truth and goodness, there was a longing to go beyond one's self.

THE LIGHTNING FLASH

My daughter, Isabelle, went through a turbulent time during her teen years. I felt guilty, thinking I was not a good mother. One night, I cried out in desperation: *God, if truly you exist, do something!* He heard my cry. *The poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.* (Ps. 34.7) One day, as I was attending Mass, I was touched by the homily given by a representative from the organization, Peace and Development; he spoke about the needs in Africa. I remembered when I was 14, a missionary sister had also come to speak about Africa. At that time, I wanted to leave with her, I wanted to be a missionary sister. However, my mother brought me back to reality; I was too young. That particular Sunday, 23 years later, I felt the same impetus, the same call. This was the lightning flash that transformed my life. My God was calling, I would be His lay missionary. I could leave with my daughter Isabelle...

DISCOVERY AND WONDER

I contacted the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. During my training as a lay missionary I discovered a welcoming and receptive Church. I marvelled at the sight of so many people who shared the same values, the same aspirations as I did. I no longer felt isolated in my faith, it was shared and I could live it with others. At work, I had changed. People had become more important: I organized fund-raising bazaars for the homeless, battered women, and victims of AIDS.

Some years later, Isabelle was old enough to take her own responsibilities; she left home. Now free, I could go to mission as a laity. However, enthusiasm was lacking even though I had nourished that dream for years. The desire to become a religious sister kept resurfacing, but to me that made no sense... I was a

mother, grandmother, and divorced! I had begun the steps to obtain an annulment, but the process would last years. The desire to radically follow Jesus Christ as a nun and make life-long commitment was very strong within me. Some MIC Sisters believed in my vocation and invited me to journey with the community. I was overwhelmed with joy and realized that *nothing is impossible to God*. (Lk 1:37) My deepest dream, fostered for such a long time was beginning to take shape.

A UNIQUE MISSION EXPERIENCE

After my pastoral studies, I went to Bolivia as a lay missionary; shortly after, I entered the postulate. Then my two years of novitiate took place in Peru. Each level of my formation and my encounters with people of other nationalities led me to discover the different faces of God, to love Him above all and to focus my entire life on Him and His Mission. My emptiness is thus fulfilled; I am no longer alone. God is with me, He is the One my heart had always longed for. As for my daughter, Isabelle, she always supported me in my vocation, respecting the will of God and telling me that even though physically she is not leaving with me for the mission, she is nonetheless standing by me in my choice.

MY MISSIONARY LIFE

After my perpetual vows, I left for Cuba. Entering the reality of a communist country was a cultural shock for me. When I left I had prejudices, thinking that the Cubans ate well, their appetites were satisfied, that they all had a superior education and benefited of the best health services in the world. I discovered the real situation: poverty, corruption, lack of freedom... Within me, I could feel revolt mounting. I was overcome by the public mood of mistrust and non-confidence created by the system. I lived it personally. Fortunately, my MIC Cuban Sisters welcomed me with patience and respect, waiting for my willingness to open-up thus allowing me to journey with them on the path of hu-

mility and in the spirit of service. Much dying within me had to take place... I had to let go. Divesting one's self brings about a truth, an awareness that one's own will power is not sufficient and that a Saviour is needed. If we are not centered on His Mission, on our faith in Christ, we can die without resurrecting.

A real thirst for truth, goodness and longing to go beyond one's self... 

¹ Sr. Monique with young Cubans

² At her perpetual vows:

Sr. Monique with her parents and daughter Isabelle

³ Isabelle with her son Samuel

Photos-credit: MIC

I opened my eyes and I discovered Christians who during 48 years of revolution have struggled against desperation and hopelessness. They are vigilant in their faith notwithstanding the persecutions, even though members of their families have been imprisoned or had to flee to the United States. Discreetly they sow the seeds of faith, hope and love convinced that God will make them flourish. That's the way they witness their faith. I deeply admire their faithfulness and with them I live in a spirit of thanksgiving.

Currently I am in Quebec where my community needs me. I am happy and content in my dream come true and in my fulfilled thirst of being a religious missionary. Love, service and sharing are my daily joys as I live out the offering of my being to Christ and this I will do for always. 



EVERYDAY A CALLING



By Alexis Pearson

... Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God. (Mt 4:4)

To live. What does this actually mean? For many of us, it is limited to the humdrum of everyday life: metro, work, sleep, metro, work, sleep.

To live. For most of us, we need not worry about our physical existence; we need not worry about our security, the food we are to eat, our dwelling place and clothing. For us, to live is a reality taken for granted: we go to sleep with the certainty of waking up tomorrow; and the routine is repeated...

In Matthew's gospel, Jesus reminds us that not by bread alone is man nourished. What is this word of which we must nourish ourselves? The life He promises, what is it like?

A SEARCH FOR MEANING

A few months ago, I shared with the readers of this magazine the road that has led me to leave behind the world of communications to begin working in a community organization for street kids.

Money, job security, status: that *bread* Jesus speaks about, I had in abundance. However, from within I felt empty, my soul was suffering. Notwithstanding my young age, I was heading toward a professional burn out and depression.

For months, I searched to find the way that would help me climb the slope. Finally, seeing I had nothing to lose, I decided to go back to a childhood dream: that of helping young people in distress.

When the door of a Montreal organization opened before me, God gave me a great big ‘wink’. This was the road which would lead me out of the darkness in which I was plunged. Up to this day, this field of work is the place where I continue to grow and bloom as I am in touch with outstanding persons.

HONESTY

It’s now two years since God allowed me to discover this world of counselling, a calling that had been set deep within my heart. I even undertook studies in social work so as to continue in this field when my current contract will be ended.

Nevertheless, today, I must admit that certain days of my life seem more like the endless humdrum described above than the fulfillment of my deep-seated desire. Even my prayer becomes stagnant. Instead of lifting me above and beyond my routine, it is embedded in it: metro, work, prayer, sleep.

WHAT IS THUS HAPPENING?

In this kind of work, I am constantly confronted with my limits and poverty. My colleagues are a source of support as they listen and give me advice. Their experience and assistance help me find a sense of direction when I am overwhelmed by the realities lived by the youth: drug addiction, prostitution, violence, etc.

More so, to accomplish this relational work, the challenge is to create a space of communion between myself and the people around me. To this effect, I must be a good listener and look for the elements that unite us rather than those that divide us. It’s altogether the contrary of a struggle or an opposition.

As I dig deeper, I discover how the theme on faith corresponds to my reality. Having the faith is not walking counter-current, nor is it a motion outside of myself as I look at the external world but rather an inner attitude that I develop from within myself. For me, walking counter-current is first and foremost resisting the

tendency of wanting the worldly *bread*: material comfort, security, status and also letting-go of my own certitudes, because I know these *values* amount to nothing. To me this seems of utmost importance as I mix with young people who do not eat everyday and go to sleep at night not knowing what tomorrow will be like for them. Why give the impression that happiness is found in things to which they have no access for the time being?

GOD’S WORD

He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. (Dt 8:3)

What has changed since the moment of my professional reorientation and today? Back then, I was somewhat like those young people who do not have a place to rest their heads: I was destabilized by life. The calling that kept emerging from within my heart led me to take a good look at myself and to begin asking the real questions. I refused to anaesthetize the intense pain of my unaccomplished desires. Above all, I dared believe in Jesus’ promise for me.

Up to this day, Jesus does not cease calling me to go out deeper, toward a greater authenticity and a higher level of coherence with my profound values. This is the reason why I can now recognize in each dissatisfaction, in each interior jolt, a calling to listen to Him in prayer, in the sacraments and in spiritual reading.

When my prayer is stagnant, it might be because I lack confidence: perhaps I am trying to satisfy myself with things that do not really nourish me? If I journey with the Lord, never will my life resemble a routine. Contrarily so! Each day as I live my life *counter-current* I will taste the fullness of life—and the promise will be fulfilled. 

About the author

Alexis Pearson, 28, works with the youth and reaches out to them with a caring heart.

¹ Alexis Pearson

When
the door
opened...
God gave
me a great
big wink.





49th INTERNATIONAL
EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS
QUEBEC CITY, CANADA 2008

THE INTERNATIONAL EUCCHARISTIC CONGRESS

June 15 – 22, 2008 — Quebec City

On this occasion the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (MIC) and the Société des Missions Étrangères (SME) will have a joint kiosk depicting missions around the world.

Location of the kiosk:
'Centre de Foires de Quebec', number 309

COME VISIT US...
we'll be happy to speak with you.

WELCOME!

FAITH

A PERSONAL ADVENTURE

By Daniel Cadrin

Our religious heritage includes a spiritual heritage at its source: faith in God the merciful Creator, revealed through the living Jesus Christ. This is not a visible fact, but is more than anything else a personal adventure, lived out in the heart of each person. It's not an object or an idea but a profound attitude, expressed in the choices and decisions people make. Faith is an act of trust, of putting oneself in the hands of the Other.

Faith is the personal experience of a human being. Faith, however, which lives within and which vivifies humans, can be seen in its fruit: a sense of service, concern for others, inner peace, joy that energizes, thanksgiving for all that is beautiful and good, compassion for those who suffer, hope for tomorrow... These fruits all ultimately depend on the mystery of the grace of God and on human freedom, through their broken and renewed alliances. Thus, when we consider the question of the future of Christian faith, no certain answer is possible. It is based on what can be seen here and now, all around us, from far away right down to the depth within ourselves.

Will our spiritual heritage have inheritors? I have no grand declarations to make on the future of the Christian faith in Quebec, but I would like to share with you the realities I see, realities which raise certain questions, but which also open up ways for the future.





OBSTACLES IN OUR CULTURE

We see around us what looks like the progressive disappearance of Christian faith. In Quebec, this distance and this rejection of the Church and of Christian faith seem to go even further. We are a distinct society in many ways, one of them surely being the **shameful memory** of our Catholic past and in a tendency to saddle the Church with the burden of all our difficulties. And so our present context is not particularly favourable or receptive to Christian faith. This is something we must clearly recognize. We might even ask ourselves, at least as far as the future of the Catholic Church is concerned, if it won't turn out to be more anglophone or allophone, and be more present in the rest of Canada than in Quebec, a process which is already underway.

To get out of our closed ways of thinking, we will have to learn to see our ancestors simply as we see ourselves, as human beings who, in their own search for meaning, have left us a heritage of courage, audacity and inspiration, and as such, are more a source of life and light than of darkness. The **mass media** influence us, format us, and create a minimum of social consensus. They are today's opiate of the people, in the sense that they entertain and delude, but also tranquilize troubled consciences. This is not to say that wonderful things can't be found in the media, but as a culture, Christian faith and all religious traditions are spontaneously viewed negatively and with mistrust. Yet so be it! Faith will have a future here if people remain free and critical towards this influence and set up alternative forms of media on their own.

A great challenge in the current context is also the weakening of all sorts of ways of **belonging**, whether it be the family, neighbourhood, parish, or workplace. Christian faith can't be lived in isolation; it doesn't flourish on its own, and

always needs interaction, support from others, and mutuality.

Another obstacle is the fact that we live our lives more immediately, in periods of **short duration**. The past is absent, the future scarcely present, and death has been banished. As a society, we have trouble developing common projects. And we're always on the go, without knowing where we came from or where we're headed. Faith situates us differently in time, with a genesis and an ultimate end in view: the Kingdom of God. This perspective gives a horizon to human existence, which is the role of faith, and a taste of the future, since history is long and God is our traveling companion.

OPENINGS IN OUR CULTURE

These are some of the obstacles that we see in our culture. But I also see openings for Christian faith in the current culture of Quebec. Here are a few.

The baby-boom generation, still in a state of reaction, is the generation that has been the most anti-Church and anti-Christian. It freed itself of what it perceived and experienced as being a prison. Many will not revisit the religious question at all, while others are already doing so through approaches tied to a quest for spirituality or a search for durable values. What value does my life have? What makes it worth living? What things really matter? And, without **the force of convictions**, where is our culture headed if not towards irrelevance and slow dissolution? These questions can lead people to re-examine in a different way the tradition of Jesus' disciples and to become open to the Scriptures.

If previous solidarities are weakening, others are forming around common interests, leisure activities, volunteer work, concerns about a particular milieu or cause, the quest for a simpler lifestyle, pre-occupations with the environment, and so on. These **new solidarities** build a sense of belonging that is essential for the social fabric, but which is also necessary for the experience of faith. Generation

X-ers (aged 25 to 40) live in the context of precarious relationships in their couples, at work, and in so many other areas; I see their sense of friendship as a fundamental value in life. This is central to living simply, but also to understanding something about the Gospel, since Jesus invites us to a sort of universal friendship and He calls us his friends (Jn 15:15). Christian faith can't be separated from this trust in other human beings.

The plurality of moral and religious options clearly shows that being Christian means becoming Christian; it means making **a personal choice**, taking an option. This is even clearer when several choices are possible, as is true in our case. In our current culture, as long as there are Samaritans in search of living water who see hurting people along the roadside and reach out to take care of them, Christian faith is possible.

SIGNS IN THE CHURCH

If there are obstacles and openings in our present cultural context, there are within the Church itself what I see as more explicit signs of living Christian faith. At the **Taizé** gathering in Montreal, more than a thousand young people from all over Canada and even from Quebec participated! The young people discussed, prayed at length, and created fraternal bonds. They were able to catch a glimpse of the light and the source of life that can be found in the living Christ and in his Gospel.

At the Pastoral Institute (PI), a training centre in pastoral theology, I have noticed over the past few years a greater diversity in the people who are seeking training. People of all ages now want to give themselves a basis on which to engage in service or to explore the Bible. A few years ago, one might have thought that this PI training had a bleak future, but that's hardly the case!

At PI, we see all the efforts that have been made over the years in the areas of Christian life education, catechesis and in the many projects launched in the dio-

ceses and parishes, including child, youth, and adult ministries.

In the university student community, every year we have baptisms of young adults. They're making a real commitment, for Christian faith is a treasure for them, a heritage of which they have now become the inheritors. The **catechumenate** (adult baptism, confirmation and Eucharist) is more alive in Quebec than before.

There are also those who discreetly become disciples of Jesus once again; they are known as **restarters**, those who want to re-adopt the Christian faith anew. There are also centres like *Chemin de vie*, in Longueuil, for those in search of spirituality. Every year, at '*Le Pèlerin Centre*' several people register for a training course oriented toward spiritual accompaniment for both individuals and groups. The program extends over a period of four years. Well prepared, these adults then offer spiritual guidance to individuals or groups of people from various centres, houses, organizations, and movements.

Faith is an act of trust, of putting oneself in the hands of the Other. 

Another reality is that of groups of **as-sociated lay people**, or those associated with religious communities. They offer an attachment to a particular spiritual tradition at the same time as membership in fraternal groups and within a broader family. These groups are currently growing.

I have mentioned these experiences because for me it's the best way to think about the future of the Christian faith. Many of these realities are new and none is making much noise; you won't see them on popular TV talk shows. But all of this is as real as the seeds of good news that Jesus talked about: they don't look like much, but they produce fruits and become trees (Mk 4: 30-32). He would say: *The future is already here; don't you see it?*

The future of Christian faith is a gift that goes beyond our predictions, our fears and our hopes! 

About the author

Daniel Cadrin, of the Dominican Order, was assistant Master of the Order from 1992 to 1999. Bible specialist, professor and director of the Dominican Pastoral Institute in Montreal, he is the author of numerous books and articles.

Photo: Cross on Mount Royal



The Ethics Course and Religious Knowledge A Museum of Religions?

By Brigitte Bédard

I was one among approximately one hundred other parents, demonstrating in front of Quebec's Parliament Building this past autumn. We wanted the right to choose, or not, the new program launched by the government. The media reported us as being right wing Catholics; I was dismayed! With pain I accepted the label.

The fact we were so few is that parents ignore the content of this new course and especially its consequences.

DEMOCRACY—IN ITS SLYEST SENSE

A father of a family of Valcourt reproached the government for having acted in an underhanded way. A teacher approved: *The Ministry made sure parents would not be aware so as to prevent a protest. Parents are confronted with an already decided fact. It is not democratic. More than 75% of parents enrolled their children in religious education classes.*¹

The Ministry presents its good intentions: teach children to reflect on ethics issues, acquire an understanding of the religious phenomena and practice dialogue, develop attitudes of tolerance, respect and openness thus preparing the children to live in a pluralistic and democratic society. The Minister of Education, Michelle Courchesne, suddenly becomes sociologist: *This is part and parcel of a society in evolution which is taking place in Quebec.*

In June 2005, Bill 95 was adopted and chapter C-12 Charter of a person's rights and freedom was deleted—a chapter that assured parents of their rights in the religious and moral education of their children. All this was artfully done.

LABEL: RIDICULOUS!

The content of the course will be 80% Christian. This will silence the non-believers. The believers, will be forced to revise the corpus. The experience might be a great challenge or a perfect mission as stated in some moderate catholic milieu.

The problem is that religious practices will be taught without looking at the existential questions which constitute the religious phenomena: *We know that the particular character, unfamiliar or of seemingly obsolete nature of certain other religions can create difficulties in giving a just perception of what they are all about. Primary students will be unable to get the right understanding. It is not exaggerated to say that students could go as far as ridicule these different practices and mock those who seem to take them seriously.*²

A Jewish mother from Montreal (who wants to be anonymous) believes that her religion will become a commercial product since this is the way that we treat religion in the West: *You can choose between this one or that one. Shop and take what you like!* She also fears that her child will

¹ La Voix de l'Est, September 21, 2007

² Gérard Lévesque, philosopher and autonomous researcher in ethics: "Ethics and Religious Culture—A Program Devoid of the True Religious Culture", Le Devoir, January 17, 2008.

³ A survey by CROP-La Presse, December 2007 reveals that 57% of Quebecers would agree that parents "have a choice in denominational religious classes or the course of ethics and religious culture", which is to be imposed everywhere as of September 2008.

Mr. Jean-François Lisée, Executive Director of the Studies Center and International Research at the University of Montreal, believes that the percentage of Quebecers in favour of a choice has been underestimated because of the manner in which the questions were put forward.

be labelled: *Will he be asked to identify himself as Jew? Then what? Will he have to share his experience? When one aspect of Judaism is taught and perceived by others as unimaginable, will he be treated as an idiot? Prove to us that the Red Sea was parted!*

Personally, with difficulty can I imagine my children upholding their opinion in the light of the Creation of the world and the Real Presence when confronted by their peers. Marie-Claude Pellerin of St-Christophe d'Arthabaska, a Catholic mother of three girls, worries that certain rites will be practiced at school: *At the end of the physical work out, it was yoga, and mantras were repeated to ALLOW THE UNIVERSAL LIGHT IN. I informed the directress about the true powers of yoga. She could only see an exercise for relaxation without knowing that mantras are incantatory rites. Who takes religious rites seriously? I will continue to instil in my children respect for other religions, however not all are according to the Spirit of Jesus. This is simply not our way, as Christians.*

THE IDEOLOGY OF LIVING TOGETHER

In spite of *society's evolution* of which the minister speaks and is influenced by a certain elite, 62% of Quebecers want to have a choice.³ They are told that teaching different faith traditions would hinder the *living together*.

In the media, Jean-Pierre Proulx⁴ repeats that the school is a place where we *learn to live together and train future citizens*—thus justifying the mandatory course that would prevent inequalities.

To live together is a dream of the baby boomers: an ideology that arose during the quiet Revolution. Gullible, the holders of this ideology now think that—



alas!—this is the way to live universally, excluding no one.

This ideology, more than dominant in Quebec is clear: there is no *one* truth, but many; consequently, there is only *one* ethic. Paul Gosselin, anthropologist wrote: *Post modernization refuses the concept of judgement; a universal ethic and moral system does not exist.*⁵ Institutions (media, law, education, culture) mould the minds, the way of thinking—while blaming and muzzling those who think otherwise.

To believe and promote this course as being neutral in its concept is false and utopian: it is propaganda. The true mission of the parents is to **enter the narrow door, to walk the straight and narrow path**, that is, to have a critical sense of things, even though we can be treated as right-wing Catholics. We are called to affirm that religion is a wonderful, real aspect of life and not an artefact of lost illusions set-up in a museum. ☺

⁴ Proulx Report: 'Laïcité et religions' –Secularism and Religions; new perspectives for the Quebec Schools.

⁵ Text edited on the internet: www.samizdat.qc.ca
It is entitled: "Secular schools, neutral schools: an urban legend?" June 2007.

Photo: Brigitte with her family



THE CHALLENGE OF CHOOSING

The divorce of parents can easily traumatize the children. They often feel guilty, blame themselves and withdraw into solitude. The eldest of five siblings, and born in Hong Kong, in a non-Christian environment, Helen Hong, shares with us her special journey.

By Claudette Bouchard, M.I.C.

HER CHILDHOOD YEARS

At an early age, Helen sadly experiences the divorce of her parents. At the Catholic school where she is enrolled, she discovers the meaning of faith in God. As she observes the nuns, her teachers, she sees in them models that she wishes to imitate and she feels the inner calling to be like them. The dramatic separation of her parents, leads her to ponder upon the fragility of human relationships. She finds solace in solitude, comfort in the stillness and beauty of creation, and it is there that she discovers the Divine Companion once unknown to her. In touch with the inner Calling, Helen decides to respond and begins learning about the Catholic faith. At 19, she is baptized at Our Lady of the Rosary Church in Hong Kong.

As the sole bread-winner and home-maker, her industrious mother begins

sewing children's clothes. A display in the front window of the house intrigue neighbours who stop-by to see and purchase the stylish dresses and suits. The window expands and with time Helen is asked to help in the thriving small business. Within a few years, the industry becomes one of the most renowned for its fashionable garments sold in the *Swank Shops* of Hong-Kong.

A DIFFICULT CHOICE

Helen is a support to her mother. However, her heart continues craving for solitude. Naturally drawn to Beauty found in nature, she ponders upon the meaning of life and she remembers those teachers of former years whom she deeply admired. In the depth of her heart, she hears her Divine Companion calling her to His service. She can take one of two roads: the one leading to fame and wealth, or the other to prayer and service. She decides to take the road less travelled.

At a time when her beloved mother needs Helen the most in the administration of the prestigious business, Mrs. Hong, though reluctant at first, generously and trustingly offers her daughter to a God unknown to her. At age 26, Helen leaves all behind her to embrace the simple life of a faithful disciple. Within the community of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, she finds a spirituality that corresponds with her love of Beauty. Imbued of a spirit of thanksgiving the Sisters proclaim God's love for all humankind and they sing His goodness for the beauty of creation. In this context Helen's spiritual life takes root and blooms.

A COMPASSIONATE HEART

Dedicated to be at His service, Sister Helen accepts to pursue her studies. As a teacher she intuitively knows and understands the children who suffer from life's hardships; reaching-out to those in need, she brings them consolation and reassurance. In 1994 she is assigned to Vancouver, British Columbia. Once again, she leaves behind all those who are dear to her and

finds herself in a country she is unfamiliar with. Trusting in her Divine Companion, she is led to a parish located in an area that is predominantly populated by English Canadians. However, a large influx of Chinese immigrants is becoming more visible.

Sister Helen's presence in the milieu attracts the newly arrived Asians. In this parish setting, children, teens and adults come to her for advice, spiritual guidance, faith sharing and most of all for knowledge of the Catholic faith. To her surprise, some of the individuals who knock at her door are her former students from Hong Kong. Now grown-up, and with family, they thirst for Truth and the Absolute. With spiritual insight Sister Helen offers them the One she has found to be the only Source of Truth and Happiness. Many opt to follow Christ; through the waters of Baptism they become living witnesses of the faith and serve by reaching-out to others.

With ease and generosity the Chinese express their heartfelt gratitude toward anyone who, somehow, has helped them along the way. Therefore, Sister Helen's 40th Anniversary of Religious Life is not to be left unnoticed. For the Chinese Catholic Community this is a perfect moment to rally around her. Lavishly they celebrate her dedication and love of God. Touched by her prayerful, serene attitude, they highlight the positive influence she has on children, teens and adults.

THE LOVE OF MARY, HER SPIRITUAL MOTHER

A woman of few words who sees beyond mere appearance and knows what the heart needs to hear, Sister Helen's presence at Corpus Christi Parish is a reflection of God's care for all His people. The Divine Companion who keeps leading her is also at work among the Chinese population; so many express the wish to become acquainted with the Catholic faith and experience the Love of God.

While Sister Helen walks in the ways of her Lord, her siblings successfully continue the enterprise begun by the mother. In her heart, she admires the woman who so courageously gave up her eldest daughter for an unknown, obscure future. She also reveres her spiritual Mother, Mary, whose maternal presence has always been comforting and reassuring. To those who come knocking at her door for advice or spiritual guidance, Sister does not shy away from presenting them to their spiritual Mother, for she knows the many blessings Mary wishes to impart on her children. From the road less travelled, a faith-filled and fruitful mission is being blessed and brought to fulfillment. ∞

¹ Helen at the age of 5

² Helen as a young religious

³ The Vancouver Chinese Community celebrate Sr. Helen's 40th anniversary of religious missionary life.

⁴ Sr. Helen with parishioners from Corpus Christi Church, Vancouver, B.C.

Photos-credit: MIC

Touched by her prayerful
and serene attitude, they highlight
her positive influence... ∞





I Shook Hands With God

Goodness does not make noise, but it can change the world. Paul-Émile Trudeau has discovered this truth as he witnessed the simple deeds full of love lavished upon the disadvantaged ones of the street. This encounter gave him the impression that he shook hands...with God!

Little
miracles
happen
every
day!



About the author

Paul-Émile Trudeau, a trained engineer, is currently an administrator at a Montreal hospital.

By Paul-Émile Trudeau

It might seem pretentious or perhaps easy to appropriate the well-known title of a book or movie highlighting General Dallaire of Rwanda. However, I do so with the intent of giving hope to people who believe that we, as humans, are powerless in relieving the suffering and distress of our contemporaries. Would humans be incapable of improving their behaviour, if they learned from history's tragic events such as the holocaust or the Rwanda genocide?

Some would say: *Yes, there are persons like Mother Teresa.* Then a quick response is heard: *There are no more people of that calibre.* Are you sure? What about Jean Vanier the well-known founder of

l'Arche communities around the world, who brings relief to so many individuals with developmental disabilities? Is he an exception?

Personally, I believe there are many others like Mother Teresa and Jean Vanier but little is known about them. Their good deeds never appear as spectacular, the kind that inspires us to change. No, these are the people who simply make little miracles happen every day, without publicizing them worldwide.

On Thanksgiving week-end, I had the joy of meeting this kind of person. He is Jean-Louis Lebel, originally from Montreal, a man in his 60s with an impressive smile, a tender look in his eyes and a gentle voice. Former teacher, who expatriated to Peru, he turned his attention to the street children who parallel our street gangs. Often orphans, these young boys survive thanks to crime. Jean-Louis, as if born for this special mission, has willingly opted to care for these youngsters and their problems. He first began with one, then two followed by four others. Sixteen years later, more than 100 teenagers are being helped in becoming responsible adults; Jean-Louis works with a team of approximately 40 collaborators.

The CIMA (Integration Centre for Abandoned and Unloved Minors) looks like a permanent summer camp where respect and education are honoured. Love, discipline, sharing and work are all words and realities that are fearlessly promoted and translated into action. It's in this small Peruvian community that they re-learn how to share and to hope for a better life. The Centre operates, thanks to public charity, from diverse foundations and a great number of individual donors. Jean-Louis and his assistants do not perform miracles; they are...a miracle!

One day, when I shook hands with Jean-Louis Lebel, I truly believed I shook hands with God, for He uses us as His instruments to transmit His Love. If ever you have the opportunity to shake hands with someone who is trying to help another person, you could also say that you are shaking hands...with God. 

¹Jean-Louis Lebel with young Peruvians

MORE THAN A TRIP

Since a long time, I have been searching for a way to express my gratitude to the MIC Sisters. So great is my thankfulness that I don't seem to find the proper words to thank these missionaries who have given me life. I would want the whole world to know: these are passionate women for Christ and for His Mission. Transformed by Him they radiate the faith, the love, and their thanksgiving as they walk with and accompany others on the road of life.

By Nathalie Genest

TOUCHED BY AN ENCOUNTER

This story begins with Sr. Lucille Prévost, a Missionary of the Immaculate Conception. I met her at a time when my life was limited to work and studies—to me, this no longer made sense. With all her missionary dynamism, Sr. Lucille came to my parish to give a talk on mission. I was so thirsty for God! I felt so powerless! After hearing Sr. Lucille's message, it came to my mind that I should go on a trip with little more than my backpack. Following up on this inspiration, I talked with the person in charge at our parish who suggested that I speak to Sr. Lucille who in turn referred me to Sr. Pauline Williams who was at that time responsible for the lay mission program. Here, I was offered more than a trip! Within this mission program I found a place where I could express my faith and be heard. I was deeply touched. Now, every time I meet Sr. Pauline I remember how very timid I was when I first came to her. That woman no longer exists compared to the person I am today.

Furthermore, the 19th Annotation of the Spiritual Exercises with Sr. Monique Préfontaine, also a Missionary of the Immaculate Conception, helped me tremendously in building a solid foundation for my faith: a living faith opened and rooted because of a language I could understand. A beautiful spiritual friendship developed between Sr. Monique and me. How grateful I am for this sacred link!

A TRIP... NO! A MISSION

After six years of preparation, the trip project was no longer an absolute. I had received the essential: discovery of my personal identity and a circle of exceptional friends. A mission project was destined for me. I left for Madagascar where for three years I lived and shared the mission life with the MIC Sisters.



They welcomed me as one of their own; they accompanied me during my missionary experience. I discovered another culture, I learned the local language, I visited families in their homes, and I worked with mentally handicapped people. The latter confirmed my vocation. After this experience I decided to go live with the communities of L'ARCHE of Jean Vanier. Responding to the daily needs of people who are different from me and being in contact with them, truly transforms me.

FURTHER STEPS...

The love I have for this MIC Community is engraved in my heart and prevents me from doubting God's existence. Strong in this love, I can in turn be a missionary. As you know, dedication and commitment for people my age is not so simple. However, this link with the MIC Sisters leads me to take further steps in Him and with Him.

Thank you for allowing me to be at home with you... Thank you to Délia Tétrault who has been the inspiration of this Community and to this day continues inspiring her daughters. Yes, of course, miracles do exist! ~

¹ Richard (left) and Nathalie at 'Le Rameau Home', L'ARCHE-Montreal

A PROMISING FUTURE



Malawians, Zambians

1



Philippina

2



Canadian, Bolivian

3

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

There is a blazing fire burning at the heart of the MIC Community and it has been spreading on all the continents for over a century. Délia Tétreault, our Foundress, had dreamt of revealing God's marvellous deeds to the whole world... Today, her daughters from 18 nationalities pursue her dream in 15 countries.

Above and beyond their cultural differences, what could so deeply unite all these women? What allows them to work hand-in-hand to proclaim and witness the Good News?

Mission with all its dynamic components gathers them and leads them on. We live in local communities made up of women from diverse backgrounds and nationalities. However, the same inner call, the same ideal unites us. We all work for the same Mission: following Jesus, visibly showing the Love of the Father for all human beings. It is the same spirituality of Thanksgiving that animates and vitalizes us.

The local community members acknowledge, accept and live their differences; this reality becomes a manifestation of God's Kingdom in our midst, it is a visible sign saying: universal brother/sisterhood is possible. As we live-on, future promises take root. The Lord never ceases to call young people and they respond with enthusiasm and generosity. A promising and dynamic future is in the MIC horizon.



Haitians



Chinese from Hong Kong



Madagascans

A FEW STATISTICS

As of January 1, 2008:
The Institute of the
Missionary Sisters
of the Immaculate
Conception brings
together 610 Sisters
of 17 nationalities and
83 junior Sisters in
formation representing
13 nationalities.

NOVICES (12)

South America (1):
Bolivia

Haiti (7)

Madagascar (3)

Philippines (1)

SCHOLASTICS (51)

Africa (9):
Malawi, Zambia

South America (3):
Bolivia, Chile, Peru

Canada (1)

Haiti (11)

Hong Kong (2)

Japan (1)

Madagascar (18)

Philippines (6)

POSTULANTS (20)

In Africa (8):
Malawi, Zambia

South America (3):
Bolivia, Peru

Haiti (3)

Japan (1)

Madagascar (3)

Philippines (2)

To know more, visit our website:
www.soeurs-mic.qc.ca

¹⁻²⁻³⁻⁵ Photos-credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

⁴⁻⁶ Photos-credit: Lucie Gagné, m.i.c.

COUNTER WINDS AND TIDES – Second Part

In Chile, after going through some adjustments in their mission field, it is with joy that the MICs working in Ancud reinvent their insertion, adapting it within the local context of their new country. In September 1973, a coup d'état brings Pinochet to power...

Coverage by Marie Brassard

DEPORTEES OF 1973

When Pinochet takes power in 1973 an unprecedented wave of tortures and deportations begins. Chile is shattered, even in its most remote regions. The Island of Chiloe welcomes the deportees: men, women, children whose lives, health and hearts are broken by the countless repressions.

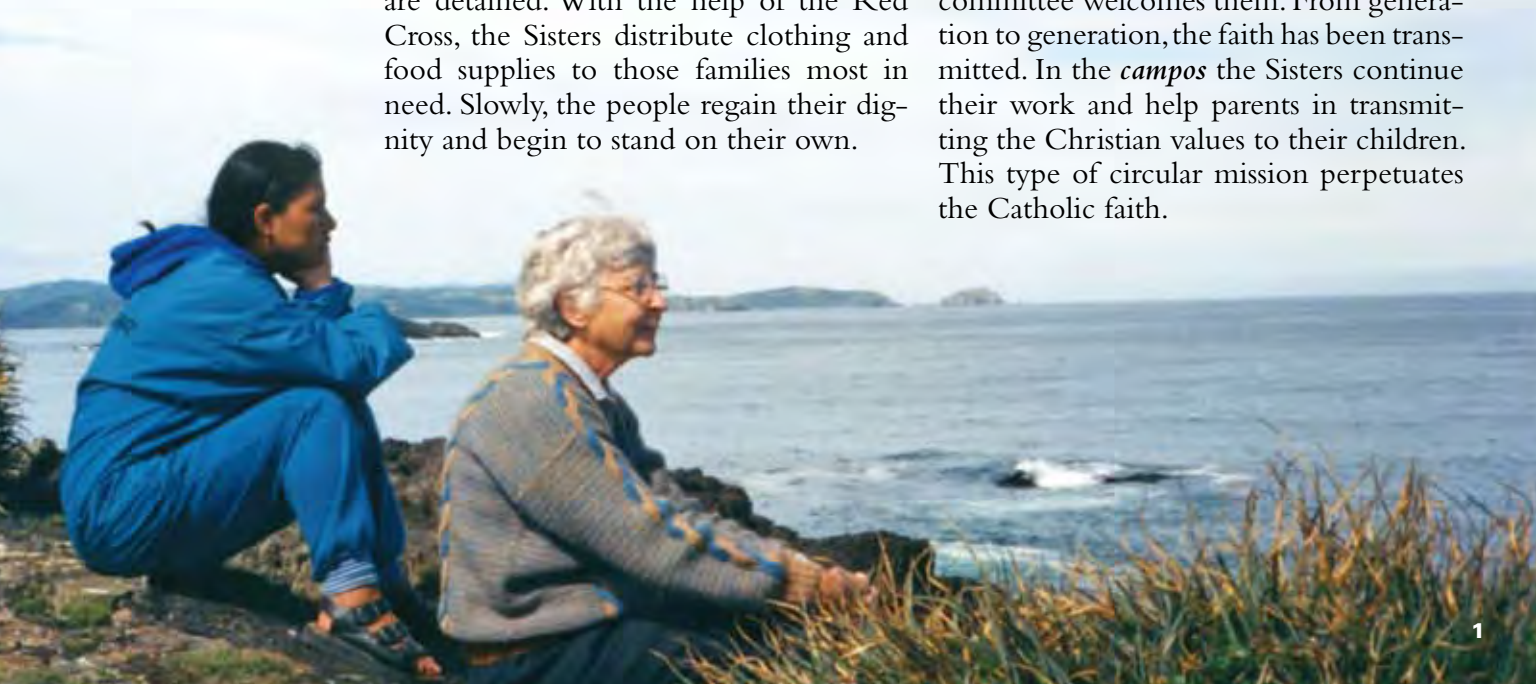
To help the victims of this military dictatorship, the Archbishop of Santiago organizes the Vicariate of *Solidarity*. Other bishops do the same. Msgr. Ysern of Ancud appoints Sr. Véronique Caouette to be responsible of this pastoral work. The MICs participate in the social reinsertion; they offer comfort and psychological help to the people. They accompany them to the prisons where members of their families are detained. With the help of the Red Cross, the Sisters distribute clothing and food supplies to those families most in need. Slowly, the people regain their dignity and begin to stand on their own.

The prisons are overcrowded with people who have been arrested because they oppose the regime; to alleviate the situation, prisoners are deported to Chiloé, south of Chile. There, the Sisters help them find shelter and work; they establish links between the exiles and their families in view of reassuring one and the other.

A CIRCULAR MISSION

Further south, enclosed in the Andes, the Chaiten population live marginally according to world standards. For survival, it has adopted a family way of life focused on agriculture and fishing. In 1984, four MICs reach the area to continue their mission work, actively participating in the area's community development.

To their surprise, a dynamic pastoral committee welcomes them. From generation to generation, the faith has been transmitted. In the *campos* the Sisters continue their work and help parents in transmitting the Christian values to their children. This type of circular mission perpetuates the Catholic faith.



For many years, the nuns visit the basic communities deprived of priests. This process allows the isolated population to develop and become better acquainted with modernization. Schools, medical clinics, community services and lay associations find fertile soil for long-lasting development, while respecting the local culture. Another innovation: the social context requires an immigration bureau.

Simple means of communication have been established for family fathers who must travel to Argentina in order to earn a decent salary. Left on their own for months, mothers rely on the MIC Sisters to be links between the men working abroad, who send money to their spouse and children for their subsistence. The Sisters also help in other ways: passports, work permit, lodging for men at Bariloche. This charitable work consolidates community relations at a time when family survival is most difficult.

At Ancud, the main city of Chiloé, the MIC Sisters organize the pastoral family services. Sr. Thérèse Lebeau trains the future leaders. At the diocesan *Caritas* Sr. Gilberte Perras sees to the co-operatives where snails are cultivated and bees are kept so as to produce quality honey. All these projects have one goal: to help these local populations stand on their own, and to build a vital Church for a people opened to newness.

A STIMULUS THAT INSPIRES

Established in Santiago since 1963 the Sisters decide to open a postulate for young girls desiring to know more about religious life. Aspirants come all the way from Peru and Bolivia. The missionary vocations multiply, and these are nourished by a desire to serve God and the local communities. Some of the young women persevere and take the final vows in the MIC Community. One of them, Nancy Campos, from Chile, later becomes Provincial Superior of the South American Province.

AS THE YEARS GO BY

With time, the MIC Sisters have no choice, they must consolidate their energies. In their footsteps, many adults opt to commit themselves to the works already begun. Associates to the MICs (ASMIC) multiply; networking together, they take on the responsibilities of the basic communities.

As I am about to leave the Chilean territory, Sr. Gisèle Lachapelle calls upon all the groups of peoples who will assure the continuity after the departure of the MIC Sisters. This last encounter is steeped in deep serenity, fruit of a shared faith, united and supportive. All age groups organize a feast to highlight the transition and ask the Sisters to accompany them spiritually, no matter the distance. The seeds of the Gospel have been sown here—God will make them germinate... just as He has kept the torch of faith lit during a period of at least 400 years in Latin America. 🌿



¹ Sr. Monique Larouche

^{2,3} Community life in Santiago, Chile

⁴ Sr. Gisèle Lachapelle and MIC Associates

Photos-credit: MIC

ODE TO THE VICARIATE OF SOLIDARITY

*You were a beacon in the darkness of night,
An oasis in the parched desert.
Your walls became a shelter to the disinherited,
To the unbelievers, hope and faith.
Your firm hands, long arms,
Were for the poor and tortured,
A maternal refuge.
Blessed be your Vicariate,
For its solidarity, its strength,
For its presence in a country of pain.
Your voice rose crystal-clear and strong,
As if Christ had been present,
In the midst of His people.*

VELASQUEZ, Katia (2005).

Amasanda Encuentros y Despedidas, Chiloé, p. 45-46.

Letters from here and abroad

Chicoutimi (Quebec)

A missionary family...in a missionary parish!

Last August, the Vachon and Bouchard families together with the people of Saint-Ambroise (Chicoutimi) were reunited to celebrate Sr. Gisèle Vachon's 50th anniversary of religious life. She is of the parish and has been working in Haiti since 1970. She shares with us the great moments of this gathering.

There are marvellous acts of true solidarity and sincere friendships that are life giving and invigorating. That evening, I experienced unforgettable moments of thanksgiving. More than 260 persons responded to an invitation that was mission oriented. They shared a fund-raising meal like many others that had previously taken place in the past; the goal—to support my mission in Haiti.

To highlight my golden jubilee, the organizers of the evening secretly asked me to wear my former habit dating back to the fifties...What a surprise when I entered the meeting hall! Never before had I been so photographed and applauded. I was jubilant and in my heart I thought: *These are my parents, family and friends who have kept such good memories of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception and of the religious in general.*

A traditional meal 'tourtière du Lac-Saint-Jean' and desserts prepared by the organizers were a delight for all. Conversations abounded on a variety of topics. Then came the speech delivered by my nephew Martial; his description of me was beyond who I am but it's always good to keep an ideal in mind.

Then came my turn to speak; I greeted everyone as my brothers and sisters in Jesus.

What a super great family! I give thanks to the Lord for my beloved parents who did not refuse giving birth to their 11th child (followed by two others). I thank my brothers and sisters for all their love and affection, my friends who respected my choice to religious life. I thank in a special way, the Good Shepherd Sisters, for the formation and education I received from them, and to my Community, all my gratitude for having accepted me and trusting me throughout all these years.

I thank all the parishioners for their constant and generous participation in all the mission activities organized by my family and for their encouragement in supporting our magazine Le Précurseur/MIC Mission News; Srs. Gemma de Grandpré and Madeleine Patenaude could witness to that and speak highly about you all. Lastly, I thank Haiti who always welcomes me with open arms. Seeing so many people living in such poor conditions without despairing increases my own faith. I hope that their patience and ours will one day be blessed a hundredfold since the Psalm proclaims: He hears the cry of the poor. (Psalm 34: 6, 17.19)

Mr. Marcel Claveau, mayor of the area, congratulates me for the pride I've always demonstrated for my parish; he promises to continue encouraging all missionary initiatives of my family in favour of Haiti and to create other activities if possible.

Before ending, I like to mention the 'conference' of Saint Vincent-de-Paul of Saint Ambroise who, last year, supported Cap-Haïtien's Notre-Dame-du-Perpétuel-Secours Parish with a donation of \$2,000. If other 'conferences' wish to imitate them, I would be happy to present you some interesting projects.

The evening was animated by a 'country' orchestra who played on a volunteer basis; the benefits generated from this organized activity amounted to \$7,100. Sum that will be sent to the novitiate of Cap-Haïtien where I live and also some of the amount will be for the mission awareness of which I am responsible at the level of the Diocese.

Sincere thank you to all who read our magazine!

Gisèle Vachon, M.I.C.



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!



*Sr. Josephine during a course
in catechetics*

Originally from the Diocese of Nueva Segovia, Philippines, Sr. Josephine is returning to Cuba where she will continue her mission work among the Cuban families. Evangelization is her priority and it is with joy that she is going back to the people she loves.

JOSEPHINE L. LEAL, M.I.C.
—Tagudin, Ilocos Sur, Philippines



*Sr. Marie Theresa preparing a Domestic
Science class, Mzimba, Malawi*

Expert in community based projects, particularly regarding the women's status in Africa, Sr. Marie Theresa is leaving for the Philippines where, after a period of adaptation and learning the local language, she will bring her collaboration to the Aboriginal mission.

MARIE THERESA KATONGO, M.I.C.
—Ndola, Copperbelt, Zambia



*Sr. Germaine visiting the children attend-
ing a kindergarten at Mzimba, Malawi*

Sister Germaine has been 49 years in Africa and she does not hesitate to return. Her long experience in the mission field has led her to deeply understand the people. Appointed to Mzimba, Malawi, she will bring the help that is very much needed in this local area.

GERMAINE PÉRUSSE, M.I.C.
—Deschaillons, Quebec

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for your solidarity!*

Dawn of a New Life



Lucy Lu Chi Hsu, M.I.C.
(Sr. Lucie-de-Fatima)
1922-2008
Peking, Ho Pei, China

Born of Buddhist and aristocrat parents, Lucy studied four years at the Catholic University of Fu-Jen in Peking. Living under a communist regime, she was searched by the police because of her membership to the Legion of Mary. As a refugee in Hong Kong, Lucy wished to become a Missionary. She entered the MIC Community and when her religious training was completed she was appointed directress of a renowned Chinese school in the Philippines. Sister Lucy also taught Mandarin in Hong Kong and Taiwan. She lived a life of faith and selfless dedication in thanksgiving.



Lucille Sanschagrin, M.I.C.
(Sr. Pierre-Damien)
1915-2008
Champlain, Quebec

Her father being a railroad station master, the family often had to move and Lucille quickly learned to adapt. After completing her studies, she remained at home to help out with the chores. During a retreat in Joliette, she clearly heard the call of the Divine Master. A year later, she entered the novitiate of the Missionary Sisters of the I.C. In 1962, she was assigned to Haiti where she directed a Centre for the integral formation of women. With joy, she shared the Good News and radiated peace, serenity and wonder...



Aludia Rufin, M.I.C.
(Sr. Bernadette-du-Rosaire)
1928-2008
Mati, Davao Oriental, Philippines

At a young age, Aludia's father read her bible stories. As a teenager, she dreamt of becoming a religious, but her father died—she was the eldest of five siblings! Aludia placed all her trust in her Heavenly Father. Later, she entered the MIC Institute. Being an excellent teacher with leadership qualities, Sr. Aludia took the direction of important colleges in the Philippines. In the United States, while in Arizona, she worked 10 years with the Mexicans; her missionary ardour and generosity were appreciated by all who knew her.



Germaine Fréchette, M.I.C.
(Sr. Saint Frédéric)
1915-2008
Drummondville, Quebec

Sr. Germaine was born of a second marriage and was welcomed into the family by seven half brothers. At 15 she attended the boarding school run by the Sisters of the Presentation of Mary. While assisting a sickly relative who had three young children, she contemplated the idea of becoming a missionary someday. In 1936 she entered the MIC novitiate at Pont-Viau. Her mission land was Madagascar; during her many years there, she taught and organized a centre for the education of young women. Sister Germaine's gentleness and humour were characteristics of her pleasant personality.

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

Délia Tétreault

A Guinness World Record

When a person reaches a record breaking achievement, the name is inscribed in the Guinness World Records. Do you know that the oldest priest in the world died last December in Hong Kong? He would have been 111 years in January 2008.

Father Nicolas Kao Shi Qian was born in 1897 in Chang Le, Fu Jian Province, mainland China. Baptised in 1915 he was ordained priest in 1933. During 40 years he dedicated his apostolic work for the people in Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. In 1972, Fr. Qian entered the Trappist monastery located in Hong Kong and pronounced his perpetual vows at 100 years of age.

Sr. Huguette Turcotte, when she met him in 1999, asked the secret of his longevity? His response was: *I don't smoke, I don't get nervous, I don't drink, I don't eat too much, I try to be wise, I pray and I don't stop doing sports-like activities.*

Exemplary and devoted priest, he always had a great devotion to the Virgin Mary. ∞



Father Nicolas Kao Shi Qian and Sr. Huguette Turcotte, M.I.C., at the Trappist monastery of Hong Kong, Photo credit: MIC

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception also celebrated, in January, at Pont-Viau, one of their Sister's 102nd anniversary. Sr. Délia Philippe, native of Saint Cecile-de-Masham, Quebec, was an active missionary for years in Italy, Cuba, Bolivia and Peru.

Together we give thanks for those long grace-filled years consecrated at the service of the Lord, the Author of Life. ∞



Sr. Délia Philippe (1st right)
Photo credit: M. Ouellette, M.I.C.

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Crossing Over

*Crossing over into the unknown,
crossing over from a secure land
to one whose roads I have never walked.
Companion and Guide,
you are my transition coach.
You say to me:
"Cross over the bridge.
Go ahead, come on over.
It's sturdy enough.
Don't look down, though,
or you might get terrified
and never walk across.
Don't look back too long
or you will lose courage
and want to stay
right where you are.
Hang on. Keep going.
That's what bridges are for,
to get you to the other side.
Trust me to protect you."
For all of us who have bridges to cross,
bless us, God of the journey,
gift us with the desire to go ahead.
Help us to trust
that the bridge will be strong
and the risk will be worth it.*

Joyce Rupp
Out of the Ordinary
Ave Maria Press 2000
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