

MIC

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MISSION NEWS

To sow seeds of joy and hope

AFRICA, MALAWI

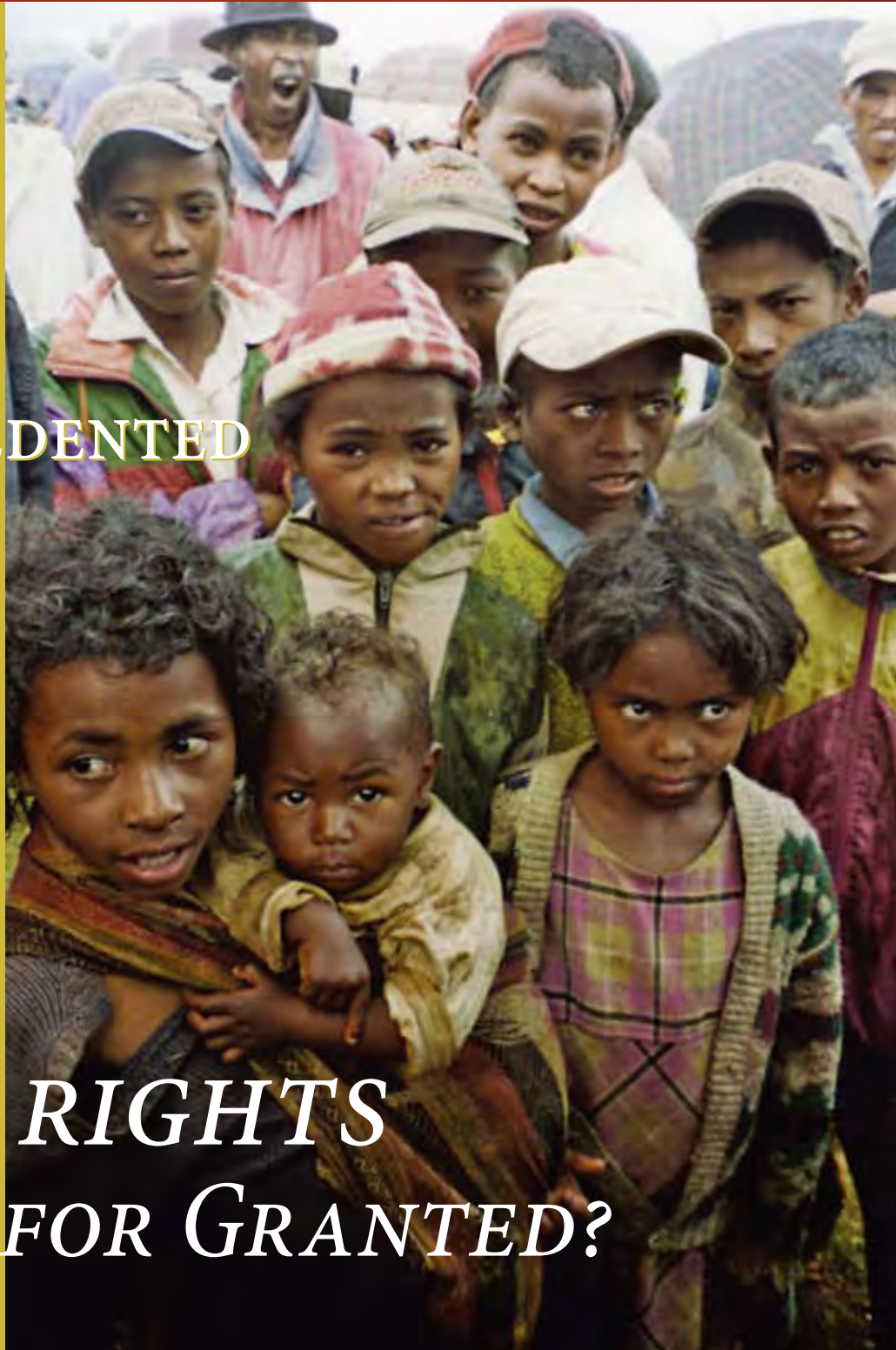
AN UNPRECEDENTED
ADVENTURE

POINT OF VIEW

SAINT PAUL
AND WOMEN

IN FOCUS

HUMAN RIGHTS
—TAKEN FOR GRANTED?



MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

APRIL

**FOR CHRISTIANS WHO WORK
WITH THE POOR AND THE WEAK**

*May Christians who work with the poor
and weak be signs of hope through the
power of the Gospel of love.*

MAY

**FOR THE RECENTLY FOUNDED
CATHOLIC CHURCHES**

*May recently founded Catholic Churches
be ready to share in the universal mission
of the Church.*

JUNE

**FOR CHURCHES IN REGIONS
MARKED BY VIOLENCE**

*May the Churches operating in regions
marked by violence be sustained by the
love and concrete closeness of all Catholics
in the world.*

MASSES FOR READERS' INTENTIONS OFFERED IN THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES:

January: *Canada*

February: *Cuba*

March: *Philippines*

April: *Haiti*

May: *Canada*

June: *Bolivia and Chile*

July: *Malawi and Zambia*

August: *Hong Kong and Taiwan*

September: *Madagascar*

October: *Peru*

November: *Japan*

December: *Canada*



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Dignity and Justice

Who does not wish the best for himself? Jesus, a clear-sighted psychologist, knew very well the make-up of human nature. His unique commandment is one of LOVE. *Love the Lord your God... and your neighbor as yourself* (Mt. 22:37.39). WOW—what a statement! To love God is easy, we rarely see Him nowadays... He does not disturb us much. But the neighbor? His rights and his dignity?

THE WORLD BEGINS WITH ME

On an individual and world-wide scale, many questions can be asked in regards to human rights. Where to begin? The world begins with me, with my own life at home, at work, at play, in the society that surrounds me. *Are human rights really well acquired, implemented and respected?* History tells us of multiple unfortunate world events where human rights have been scorned. How many times we have heard about genocide in Africa, in Eastern countries or elsewhere in the world. Sexual abuse, exploitation of peoples (children trained to be soldiers, under-paid workers, families exiled due to wars, etc.). The law of the strong crushes the most vulnerable. Voices of justice have often been muzzled, reduced to silence thus allowing the number of victims to increase.



AN ANNIVERSARY THAT CALLS FORTH REFLECTION

To celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Dec. 1948) the Catholic and Protestant Churches invite all the faithful to proclaim: *Dignity and justice for us all*. In a world ravaged by divisions: racial, social, economic and religious,... reflection is required.

More than ever, we must defend the principles of the Declaration: it is the basic foundation for liberty, justice and peace in our world.

Defending the human rights concerns each one of us. In this issue you will read the stories of people who witnessed injustices and also stories demonstrating how joy radiates when human rights are respected.

Marc-Paul 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.

**Rose Bourque,
Bécancour, QC**

Congratulations for the attractive design and layout of your magazine; the content of the articles and photos are always interesting. There is a breeze of optimism which gives the reader a feeling that life can be beautiful notwithstanding the turmoil we observe and experience in much of the world. The general tone of the magazine gives us the assurance that things can be better if we apply ourselves to make it so. Continue offering us this refreshing breeze.

**Madeleine D. Charpentier,
St-Jean-sur-le-Richelieu, QC**

I am happy to renew my subscription to your mission magazine. I read it from cover to cover because news from the mission world has always interested me. I like reading news from former group-mates which I've known as postulants. My health did not allow me to stay, but I pray for all those peoples I have not been able to help.

**Christine and Roger Salhari,
Mont-Royal, QC**

I read your magazine and I am impressed with the way you present quality content written by authors who immerse us in the 'Christian spirit'. God bless you and guide you on your important mission. To be able to participate in your efforts, be it by our humble contribution, is truly heartwarming as we partake in your reaching-out to all Christians.



HUMAN DIGNITY

On all five continents, it happens that human rights are neglected and even ridiculed. Fifty years ago, January 1959, the late Pope John XXIII called for an Ecumenical Council, Vatican II. In a document entitled: The Church Today, the charter of human rights is put forth. What a golden opportunity this year offers the Catholic Church to re-visit its pastoral constitution on the Church Today.



By André Gadbois

Fragile is the rule of law

The scene takes place in a Quebec city in the month of November. A volunteer greets a woman in her forties as she enters a large food bank. The woman pushes several folded plastic bags on the counter along with her I.D. card, and a two dollar coin. Crying, she says: *You know, it is sad to be so low.* Touched by her words, the volunteer responds: *Yes, it is sad and most probably humiliating.* The conversation continues while the shopping cart is being filled with the plastic bags... and she leaves for her house that is without electricity. Caring for her four children, and having lost her job, these are difficult times. She worries about paying the rent, the insurance and other bills; the children need warm winter clothes; tonight they will eat as well as tomorrow, but what about next week...?

This woman is not the only one who has been hit hard; we think about the small

villages on the Northern Shore (Côte-Nord), the favelas of Brazil, the atrocities committed in Guantanamo prison, the prostitution of children in Thailand, the famines in Africa, the arranged marriages in Afghanistan, the human miseries in India, the provoked flooding in China, the discrimination and exclusion of the forgotten natives in the Great North-West Territories and on the reservations, the children forced to work at a very young age in certain countries... For whom are the human rights? Have they been well received and implemented? *Male and female He created them in His own image and likeness* (Genesis 1:27): what we do to people, we do to God. Thus, human beings torture God, give him food or let him die, make him work like a horse at the age of six and refuse to give him an education, human beings humiliate and beat the young, the voiceless, they give him guns at the age of ten, they violate him and do not love him. *The Council* (Vatican II) *lays stress*

on reverence for man (and woman): *every-one must consider his every neighbor without exception as another self, taking into account first of all his life and the means necessary to living it with dignity, so as not to imitate the rich man who had no concern for the poor man Lazarus*¹. And the Council enumerates the universal and inviolable rights and duties of the human person: *food, clothing, shelter, the right to choose a state of life freely and to found a family, the right to education, to employment, to a good reputation, to respect, to appropriate information, to activity in accord with the upright norm of one's own conscience,...*² And I would add, the right to health and vacation, the right to be proud, dignified and free.

Criterion by which to judge beauty

The French priest, Abbé Pierre, once wrote: *The beauty of a city, the beauty of a nation, is not in its gardens, in its theatres, in its museums, nor even in its cathedrals. The beauty of a city lies in having no slums; it is to have no individuals living in despair*³. The One whose people wanted to crown, said: *This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins* (Matthew 26:28); poured for many, without exception, that they may have life abundantly because the wounds of misery have been dressed. There are the small bruises and wounds that can be taken care of through compassion and generosity: *Love one another* (John 13:34) Jesus said to His disciples. However, there are the collective horrors which only the large institutions can put an end to, institutions such as Governments and Churches.

Sometimes, I try to imagine what went on in the mind of the Nazarene as He entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey. He could have been thinking about the Prophet Amos' words: *Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream* (Amos 5:23,24). I also imagine Jesus refusing to magically change the stones into bread, to throw Himself down from the top of the mountain without getting hurt. I see Him refusing to adore the god of power, of growth, of the friends of the 'party'. Then

I picture Jesus being slaughtered like a lamb, like Gandhi, Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Romero. And I wonder why my Church is walking so slowly in the footsteps of her Master, she who knows how great a distance lies between the Message she offers and the human failings of those to whom the gospel is entrusted⁴.

Inspired by the words of Robert Buron —*politics is the art of making possible what is necessary*—l'Abbé Pierre, cried out what he thought was necessary: food, lodging, education, security, justice, work, respect, health... He gave his life so that the 'the necessary things' might become possible, and this he did even during his short political career. Without being elected, Louise Arbour gave a good portion of her life at the United Nations so that all human and inviolable rights be respected universally. I keep wondering why women and men in our political institutions are not more adamant and efficient in applying human rights—no matter the cost, even to the point of losing contracts.

... Everyone must consider his every neighbour without exception as another self. 

Why so much water in the wine?

Again, I ponder upon the words of Jesus: *Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all the rest will be given you* (Matthew 6:33). My lukewarm hope is somewhat rekindled when I read from Vatican II: *According to the almost unanimous opinion of believers and unbelievers alike, all things on earth should be related to man as their center and crown*.⁵ Is this not what the Charter of Human Rights wanted to ensure? Why is it that large institutions neglect human rights by keeping silence? Why do they allow so much water in the wine when the time comes to decide in favor of the little ones, the voiceless, the poor? 

¹The Documents of Vatican II, *The Church Today* (The America Press 1966), 226, no. 27

²Ibid, 225, no. 26

³Abbé Pierre, *I Wanted To Be a Marine, Missionary or Brigand* (Flammarion 2005), 108

⁴The Documents of Vatican II, *The Church Today* (The America Press 1966), 245, no. 43

⁵Ibid, 210, no. 12

Photo:

Market place – Des Cayes, Haiti

Photo credit: L. Gagné, M.I.C.

THE SUMMIT OF CREATION

As a student in a Quebec intercommunity missionary training program, Hervé Pichenaud offers his skills in: editing and community project development. His interests lie in the area of interreligious dialogue and he hopes to devote himself to areas in which human beings are the priority. He is currently working at l'Arche of Montreal.

By Hervé Pichenaud



Dignity and justice are the key words that guided the writers of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in Paris on December 10, 1948. In the aftermath of the Second World War, a deadly conflict of unprecedented proportions which left a devastated, exhausted and shocked world in its wake, important personalities gathered in order to determine: the limits never to be crossed so that human dignity be respected, and the necessary justice to guarantee the respect of a particular definition of humanity.

While it is true that populations have constituted major stakes in wars and conflicts throughout history, the Second World War saw civilians, or ethnic groups, who were designated for various reasons, pay a heavy price during those years. Illustrations of unacceptable collective punishment include the Jews, who were victims of Nazi barbarity, the inhabitants of Dresden, destroyed by Allied bombing and the hundreds of thousands of Japanese killed by nuclear bombs.

In these unspeakable tragedies, human life was denied and degraded to the level of pawns on the international chessboard. In reaction to this deadly folly, the United Nations proposed a text affirming

the primary values of equality and dignity for all human beings and specifying the rights that guarantee these values.

Values of justice and equality

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes a preamble that spells out the values of justice and equality that guided the writing of the text. The preamble situates the Declaration in its historical context and specifies some human rights abuses that the Declaration aims to eliminate. The preamble very cleverly mentions that the Declaration constitutes a common ideal to strive for and yet is not a legal obligation directly applicable in all nations.

The thirty articles of the Declaration specify the fundamental rights to which each human being can legitimately lay claim. Among them can be found the following: equality of treatment regardless of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political opinion or social condition; the right to liberty and security and its corollary, the abolition of slavery in all its forms and of torture; equality and equity before the law and the right to privacy; the right to work, to unionize and to have paid vacation time; the right to housing, food, clothing, medical care and financial assistance; the right to education.

Over the years, certain rights have been expressed in the form of international treaties, generally called

declarations, protocols, conventions or pacts. This is true, for example, in the case of the Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudices, the Geneva Convention for the treatment of prisoners of war, the Protocol for the status of refugees, and the International Pact on economic, social and cultural rights.

... humans
constitute the
summit of Creation;
they cannot be
objectified. ∞

Still relevant

After sixty years of existence, the Declaration of Human Rights retains its relevance. In both developed and developing countries, human-rights abuses are legion. They are not just occurring in the poorest countries.

In Quebec and in Canada, the right to unionize is not always ensured in all businesses; the giant Wal-Mart, openly anti-union, is strongly opposed to the exercise of this right. During the last electoral campaign, a political leader proposed imposing certain conditions on the unemployed who seek financial assistance.

Canada in fact voted against the adoption of the Declaration



'Casques bleus' the UN peacekeeping force in Haiti.
Photo credit: L. Gagné, M.I.C.

of native peoples, adopted by the United Nations Assembly in September of 2007, which recognizes the right of native peoples to self-government. Under American jurisdiction, the Guantanamo prison camp situated in Cuba raises serious doubts about the conditions of detainment of "irregular combatants", their status, their arbitrary and unlimited detention, their right to a just and equitable trial and interrogation techniques that closely resembled torture.

From mission to rights

In developing countries, which often fall prey to difficulties of all kinds, certain rights in the Declaration may seem unattainable. In the mission field, projects essentially strive to meet basic needs, to support education and to promote health care.

By helping local populations, missionaries promote human rights without becoming militants or interfering in the political affairs of the country. They don't set out to change the regime, modify social structures or condemn secular cultural practices. They accompany the people they live with, at their own pace, and without judgement; they allow them to appropriate new ways of being and acting, without judging them and without a predetermined objective.

Missionaries simply bear witness to their humanist thinking and in actions consistent with their Christian faith. It is in this way that they might be defined as being engaged in the respect for human rights, simply because they are filled with the principles that put higher value on the human being than on anything else in the Universe. In Christian thinking, humans constitute the summit of Creation; they cannot be objectified, that is, reduced to the status of objects or merchandise in the service of economic ends.

This is why missionaries, regardless of the obstacles, will always defend a particular idea of the human being, a human being who holds the rights designated by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. ☺

Saint Paul and Women

Nowadays, some young adults are interested in other cultures for their personal enrichment while at the same time confronting their own beliefs. Geneviève, a young artist, goes to a Synagogue to take courses in Judaism. She is learning about the Talmud and the Kashrout Laws. This year being dedicated to Saint Paul, she presents us, in a fanciful way, the famous phrase: Wives, submit to your husbands (Ephesians 5:22).



By Geneviève Dick

In Judaism, there is a book called the Talmud; it is a record of rabbinic discussions dating back some time before Jesus Christ up to a few centuries AD. I mention the Talmud in my writing on Saint Paul because in its commentaries there is one concerning Moses—it points out that before presenting the commandments to the people of Israel, Moses made sure that

he had the women's consent. This might come across as an amusing anecdote, but it seems to me it is more profound. While reflecting upon what I could write about Paul of Tarsus and the women of his time, I recalled that story and it came to my mind that the phenomenal success of Paul's evangelization throughout the Mediterranean region could not have

been such without the women's stamp of approval. They supported his message which was liberating and egalitarian.

I took pleasure in imagining that Paul could have written his letters as a response to the women's accounts regarding the realities of their communities.

Dear Paul,

Our husbands are constantly in process; and we must tell you that Leandros, one of the poorest in the community, has been sued by a wealthy member. They went to the city's tribunal and the judges who love to be associated with the wealthy class, gave reason to Hippolytos. Our husbands do not want to hear us when we try to explain to them that such a judgment is not according to the spirit of your teaching. They tell us to go back to the kitchen and to look after the children.

In desperation, we consulted each other and have decided to go see the community's old scribe so as to correspond with you. We believe that if you wrote a letter to our husbands, one containing words of wisdom that would shake them up a bit, they would surely listen to you. However, do not tell them that we wrote you, because they would certainly reproach us.

You could also take advantage of this opportunity to somehow speak about marriage—tell us what we must do when we become widows or when we do not want to marry; and tell us how we should live our married life as believers. Here, the laws speak only about the women's submission—we are not worth more than the beasts belonging to the family. It seems that what you told us about Jesus' message, is that he wanted all women and men to be free and equal in His Kingdom.

We pray for you and for all the folks you spoke to us about when you came to visit us. Without doubt, the Lord Jesus is with you in all of your work.

A group of women from Corinth

Later, as I was reading the Acts of the Apostles, I came across the passage where the women of Berea are mentioned: *Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men* (Acts 17:12). I found it interesting that women are mentioned first, as if to imply that they were the ones who incited the men to believe.

Paul's insistence on freedom from the Law, no doubt characterized him as being a revolutionary in the world he lived. Taking a closer look at the Jewish Law regarding women, it is to be noted that there are many obligations in the realm of purification rituals. For instance, the Kashrout laws, having to do with food, are complex—eating kosher is centuries old, it dates back to the time of Moses. All the detailed laws had to be respected in the kitchen, the women's well defined area. I have the impression that Paul did not have difficulty finding support among the Jewish women. As for those in Rome and Greece who also lived in societies where social inequalities between men and women were appalling, where women were considered only as reproduction machines, they must have welcomed Paul's message with enthusiasm.

I find it somewhat amusing to think that Paul's message could have provoked marriage disputes because the women no longer accepted being treated as simple accessories. The famous phrase: *Wives, submit to your husbands* (Ephesians 5:22) could it not have been written as a result of the husbands' complaints who didn't know how to react to their wives' opinions/arguments? Anachronistically I project the feminist themes of my era... But if the rabbis wrote in the Talmud that Moses connived with the women so that the commandments be accepted by the men, then could it not be that Paul somewhat did the same to anchor Christ's message in the rising Christian communities? ∞

¹Miracles of Saint Paul at Ephesus by Jean Restout – XVIIth Century

OUR TRIP TO CHINA

Fifteen years after going to China to adopt my daughter Alice, I had the wonderful chance to go back and visit several regions of the country with my teenaged girl and two other adopting families. It was an intense and intensive three week visit!



By Nicole Giguère

We had been talking for a long time about going back to our daughters' country of origin, but the somewhat vague project finally became a reality for three families in my adoption group. We had gotten to know each other fifteen years earlier during an unforgettable trip that took us to an orphanage in Hunan. We made the trip back together, this time with our grown-up daughters, in order to explore several regions of this immense country. There was Luc, Jacynthe and their four daughters (three of whom were adopted in China), Camile and her two teenagers, my daughter Alice and myself. And since I'm a filmmaker, I also brought along a camerawoman to help me film the whole adventure, in the hope of making a sequel to my first documentary ALICE IN BIG NOSE'S LAND.

At first, I have to say that Alice wasn't exactly enthusiastic about the idea of going on this trip, and that feeling was more or less shared by the other girls. It was initially the prospect of getting back together with the gang that interested our teens. After the excitement of the first days, interest in China, however, slowly grew, which reassured and pleased us parents who had invested so much energy and money in the organization of the trip.

Our trip had some intense moments, one of which was undoubtedly our visit to the orphanages. Anne, 17, was welcomed like a prodigal child at the Wenzhou orphanage where she had come



from. The former director came back to welcome her with the translator who had accompanied the family 17 years before. They remembered Anne and wanted to know all about her present life, her studies, her projects and so on. Anne was very touched, surprised and happy that in spite of all the babies that pass through this orphanage, she had left her little trace in the hearts of a few people.

In Yiyang, where four of our daughters came from, the orphanage had moved and the director had changed; we were welcomed rather officially, but luckily we were able to visit and film a few rooms with the children. The files of our four children were taken out, and in looking them over with our interpreter, we realized that they contained information that we had never had access to. It was during this visit that we finally understood how each of the girls ended up at the orphanage. On one of the pages of Alice's file, it was written that my daughter was almost two months old when she was left at the door of the orphanage; on her there was a note with her date of birth.

Lea's file indicated that she was only a few days old when a worker found her in a lamp factory and brought her to the orphanage. Myganne was found as a newborn on the doorstep of the orphanage. For us parents, this information was both precious and moving. We asked for and received photocopies of these pages that had enlightened us a little about the unknown story of our daughters prior to their adoption. Our teenagers didn't seem as overwhelmed as we were; they explained that a little bit of their curiosity had been satisfied, but that this news really didn't change much in their present life.

Still, my daughter cried a lot at the orphanage, especially when she saw the children. Most of the children the orphanage now takes in are 'special needs' children who suffer from various physical handicaps, slow motor skills or mental disabilities. In the different rooms we were shown, we saw that the material conditions of the orphanages had improved

over the past 15 years, that there were more nannies, and that they seemed to take better care of the children. But Alice worried about the other orphans, the ones we didn't see... Was there heating in their rooms, enough clothing, food, and care?

We also visited a school which, although situated in a poorer area, was quite modern, and was very well equipped with computers, a library, and science laboratories. A few cultural differences were really striking to us; no heating in spite of temperatures that hovered around zero in winter, 65 students per class, and rigid discipline inconceivable at home. The students had practiced their English to welcome us. Each one of our daughters was invited to have dinner with a local family, which turned out to be a wonderful experience for the girls in spite of the communication difficulties.

The rest of the trip was rather touristy. We crossed China to get to the ethnic minorities in the Yunnan. We caught a glimpse of the China of old (Xi'an), of today (Beijing), and of the future (Shanghai).

During the last days of our trip, we filmed individual interviews with each girl on the Great Wall (what a backdrop!). They expressed their appreciation for the trip. The four oldest ones all want to start learning Mandarin so they can come back to China together some day. The intense experience they had during the trip developed the girls' interest in the culture, food, and history of China. Yet in spite of this new pride in their origins and in spite of their enthusiasm for several aspects of life in China, including the friendliness of the people, our teenagers realized that their life, values, and culture were very different from those of the Chinese. They each expressed it in their own way; they don't at all feel torn between two worlds. They are completely Quebecers and are content to be that way. To me it seems that this is one of the positive effects of our trip, it has left an impact which we will certainly continue to measure in the years ahead! 

¹ Nicole and her daughter Alice

Photo credit: Zhi Min Hu

² Our girls at the orphanage

Photo credit: N. Giguère

Still,
my daughter
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children.





Samuel and the Starfish

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

I often feel sad when I stop to think of the millions of people who die of hunger, particularly nowadays when rice has become a rare and expensive basic commodity which the poor cannot afford. I question myself and I feel overwhelmed by the world-wide crisis. What can I do? With a grateful heart, I think of all the individuals whose hearts and hands reach out in dedication and generosity even though, at first sight, nothing seems to change. The Lord Jesus did say: *The poor you will always have with you...* (Mt 26:11).

I see myself again in Morondova, Madagascar, on a bright sunny morning. I was walking on the beach, not far from a school. All was calm! The beauty of the ocean charmed me. This is where I met little Samuel...

SAMUEL AND THE STARFISH

When I arrived on the beach I had noticed the great number of starfish which had been washed up, here and there on the white sand. A surprising sight! From far I could see a little boy coming and going from the beach to the

ocean. He would take the starfish, one by one, and return it to the water. With much care he would gently set it down, as far as he could, on the floor of the ocean so that it could recover life. Coming close to him, I congratulated him for a task impossible to achieve.

Child, even though you continue bringing the starfish back to the ocean, there are so many on the beach that at the end of the day, there won't be much difference...

At that moment, the little boy with a starfish in his hand looks up, stares me in the eyes and with a big smile says:

True, it might not change much on the beach... But, for this starfish it makes a whole lot of difference!

I asked him his name. He replied: Samuel. This young "philosopher" taught me to look at reality with optimism. True, I alone cannot solve the world's problems, but what I can do around me, reaching out to those in need, my social commitment, all these have great importance and value. Those I help can witness to that. ∞

Human rights —taken for granted?



Cameroon — Serge-Julien Tchnide (left) and a friend
Photo credit: L. Gagné, M.I.C.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR!

To love one's neighbour is not always easy! To do so, one must go beyond indifference, neutrality, coldness of heart. The other who crosses my path is not just anyone. That person has values, dreams, talents...

To love the other means to sincerely want his well-being, to give him what he does not dare ask for and to help him go beyond his own limits.

Indifference is a hand that does not reach out to the other. It's a societal problem somewhat like drugs. How often do we hear: *I've lived in this building ten years and I still do not know my neighbours...* It is unfortunate!

Harmony, happiness in a family, in a country, cannot flourish without dialogue, without cooperation, and without reciprocal affection. The true remedy one can bring to conflicts is to learn to speak to each other and to listen to each other with empathy.

Love your neighbour as yourself (Mt 19:19). This is Jesus' golden rule! It sums up Moses' ten commandments into one: Love God and love your neighbour.



Sixty Years of Darkness AND LIGHT

I begin writing this article. A chain of rosaries has just ended. Millions of Christians world-wide have been praying for an end to the persecutions in India. In darkness, the light... We are in 2009, and in Iraq, lesbians, gays and trans-genders are publicly executed and killed. In the United States a Black American has been elected president while less than a hundred years ago, his ancestors were slaves: a light in darkness.

By Brigitte Bédard

During this time, the attacks in Darfur endanger civilians and inquiries on war crimes are but a façade. In Vietnam, Catholics are repressed by the government. In Jordan, torture in prisons is a current practice. Every day, Colombians walk on the guerilla's land mines. Nearly 130 million African women have been through the clitoris ablation, the Sunni excision, infibulation or Pharaonic excision.

Should I continue?

The 60th Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights makes me oscillate between darkness and light.

When we read reports, statistics and recent data on the state of our world, we can wonder—what is that THING that

dwells in people's hearts? For me, that thing is called EVIL and there is no other explanation. Those who try to find other explanations get lost in human theories of all kinds... to finally have but one conclusion: EVILNESS. This conclusion could bear the title of General D'allaire's book: *Shake Hands With the Devil*. That's all! It was his conclusion. It is mine. And it is also the one of Him who came in our midst some 2000 years ago.

In that darkness, there is light. I have told you... There is that THING we call LOVE. Perhaps it is this love that inspired Cyrus the Great of the Persian Empire (ancient Iran) to build the Cyrus Cylinder (539 B.C.E.) considered as the first human rights charter in history.

THE RIGHTS IN HISTORY

Throughout history, defenders of human rights have always stood up. The process has been at times violent, for example the French Revolution. In 1215, the Magna Carta Libertatum (Great Charter of Freedom) was drawn up by the English Barons to protect the rights of the King's subjects. Then in 1679 the Habeas Corpus Act was enacted to protect individuals who were detained abusively without legal authority. Ten years later, in 1689 the Bill of Rights was introduced to protect the citizens' freedom of speech and of religion. In the United States, the Declaration of Independence was adopted in 1776; it included a sweeping statement on human rights—that *all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights that among these are: Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness*. This became the basis of the Declaration of the Rights of all Citizens (French Revolution 1789) and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (December 10, 1948).

Today it is easier to respect, in a civilized manner, the individual's rights because of the tribunals. Closer to home, there is Louise Arbour who wisely used the Law to bring about justice. In 1995, she was appointed President of a Commission of Inquiry to investigate and report on events at the prison for women in Kingston, Ontario. She provoked the resignation of the patron of the Correctional Service of Canada by signing an overwhelming report regarding the bad treatments inflicted upon the women. She then served as Chief Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. She accused France of dragging its feet in Bosnia by avoiding to arrest war criminals. Two years later she accused Slobodan Milosevic of war crimes. A warrant for arrest had never been issued against a head of state while in office.

In 2004, Ms. Arbour was appointed UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Her critique on secret prisons and her pro-Palestinian position were not well received by the American government. In Canada, the president of the Treasury Council declared that Louise Arbour was a

shame because she affirmed that Israel, like the Hezbollah, could be accused of war crimes if, in time of crisis, it did not protect the civilians. However, the Law Faculty of the University of Montreal, welcomed the appointment of Ms. Louise Arbour among the winners of the United Nations Human Rights. This appointment was made on November 26, 2008 by the chairman of the United Nations General Assembly, Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann. The prize is awarded every five years since 1968 to individuals or organizations in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the promotion and protection of human rights. Among its previous winners were: Nelson Mandela, Amnesty International, Jimmy Carter, Eleanor Roosevelt, Martin Luther King.

VIOLATED RIGHTS IN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES

Some people think that abuses are more frequent in dictatorship countries than in democracies. However, Amnesty International denounced the Guantanamo prison stating it is a scandal of human rights. In 2005, only Holland, Norway, Denmark, Iceland and Costa Rica had not significantly violated the human rights. Think of Quebec where the rights of a child, freedom of thought, of conscience and of religion (Art. 14.1-2) are under the tribunals' scrutiny. At the heart of the UN, some countries who are members of the organization more or less agree on certain principles of the Declaration.

Negative thinkers say that the Declaration has given very little results. On the other hand, the ideologists believe it is the world's salvation. Between the two, we must continue struggling while celebrating the victories. Historically, there are fruits—thinking in terms of the children's rights (1959) or the convention against torture (1984). We must celebrate...while being vigilant.

Oh!—I hear that in Kazakhstan, the government just enacted a law restricting religious practices... Oh!—In Cambodia, people have been evicted from their land because... Oh!—This time, it's in China...



¹ President of Serbia 1989-2000 and of Yugoslavia 1997-2000.

He died of a myocardial infarction on March 11, 2006, during the proceedings, after nearly 5 years in the war criminal prison in The Hague. Report on the development of the UN Human Rights Council: Article 9

Caption:

¹ Louise Arbour in Colombia, 2005

² Louise Arbour

Woman! A day FOR YOU

From the very beginning,
woman was created
in the image and likeness of God.

Throughout the ages,
women have been insulted,
violated, sold, mistreated,
all those 'Eve' who are carriers
of the original sins...

By Huguette Chapdelaine, M.I.C.

Every year, the 8th of March highlights the International Women's Day. It began in the early 20th century in Europe and the United States; women came together to manifest and cry out for their right to vote and demand better working conditions. In 1977, the United Nations officially approved the event, inviting all countries to celebrate a day consecrated to women's rights.

Throughout the world, it is a day when women demonstrate—claiming equality and assessing conditions in which they live and work. Even to this day, in 2009, we can ask ourselves: Women's rights, have they been fully acquired? Because women continue to face inequity on many fronts, they rally together to be

heard: claiming justice, seeking to improve their conditions, celebrating their victories and making their issues known.

In the socioeconomic world, women confront many obstacles; they must strive to obtain their legitimate recognition. To bring about transformation, attitudes must change and all girls should have access to an education. Yes, give the girls the same chance as the boys and reinforce the fact that women should be admitted in all fields of knowledge. The time has come for women to take up greater responsibilities within the Church and within Governments. Yes, women are emerging in these spheres, but there are still many obstacles and discrimination...

The violation of women is still a weapon of war: how many young girls are violated every day? Think of the women's plight in countries like the Congo, Iraq, Afghanistan, Darfur, Somalia, China... How do we react before these criminal acts, knowing all too well that the guilty receive inadequate, ludicrous sentencing? How do we reach out to those victims of all ages who are broken in their bodies and in their hearts?

Thanks to the media, we now know more about the distressing conditions of women around the world. However, the road is still long and bumpy before the dream can be fulfilled—that concretely the cultural mores of peoples become more attuned to equality, equity and social justice.

Photo credit: L. Gagné, M.I.C.

Jesus, in Your time, women were far from being equal to men and were subjected to a certain degree of segregation. Men were not allowed to speak to women in public. Yet, You risked conversing, one on one, with a woman known for her loose morals and a Samaritan as well. You defended the adulteress woman who was to be stoned to death. We present you all the women who, up to this day, still have hopes in their hearts:

Women victims of violence and wars

Women who pacify,
smile of God

Women prostitutes and victims of rape

Women who create beauty and harmony

Women, willing or not,
racked by abortion

Women who are life-bearers,
believing in the future

Women oppressed by religions,
customs or superstitions

Women-prophets who mould History

Women without jobs and in need

Women who share and welcome the other

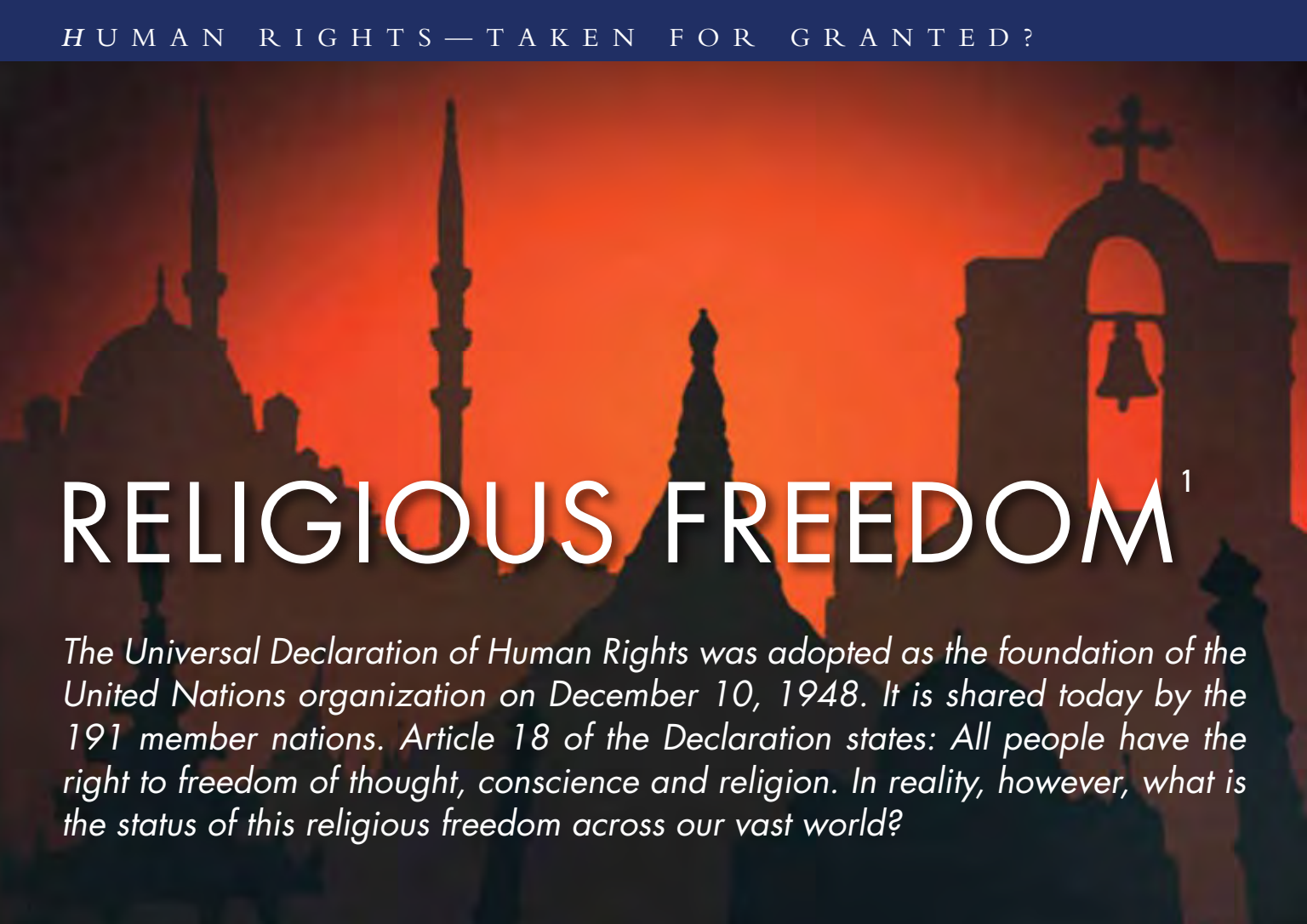
Women old and lonely, sick and forgotten

Young girls and adolescents
who are tomorrow's promise

Women of all races,
peoples and nations

Women of thanksgiving,
in a Marian way. ∞





RELIGIOUS FREEDOM¹

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted as the foundation of the United Nations organization on December 10, 1948. It is shared today by the 191 member nations. Article 18 of the Declaration states: All people have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. In reality, however, what is the status of this religious freedom across our vast world?

¹ Persecuted and Forgotten –
ACN (Aid to the Church in Need)
Report on Christians oppressed
for their faith 2007/2008
(Illustration: report cover)

ALGERIA

Often seen as foreigners, most Algerian Christians are indeed foreign born. With the rise in fundamentalist Islam early in 2008, the Algerian press was accused of fomenting intolerance by giving excessive importance to stories of Muslims who had converted to Christianity.

In May of 2007, local authorities invited all Catholics present to leave Algeria.

SAUDI ARABIA

Saudi Arabia rejects the very principle of religious freedom. The kingdom claims to be integrally Islamic; it considers the Koran to be the country's only constitution and the Sharia as its fundamental law. Any expression of non-Muslim faith, such as possessing a Bible, wearing a crucifix or praying in public, is forbidden.

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

Even if religious freedom is enshrined in the Constitution of 1995, some alarming cases of discrimination and violence have been reported. Muslims, Catholics and Orthodox Serbs have all witnessed cases of aggression and religious intolerance.

Over the course of 2007, the Catholic Church, and the Serbian Orthodox Church, as well as Protestant and Muslim communities were all victims of attacks and vandalism.

BANGLADESH

In 2007 and 2008, Christians and other minority groups were alarmed by a dramatic increase in the activity of extremists. According to reports, Christians no longer enjoy protection, in spite of a Constitution that considers freedom of religion a priority. Extremist groups pressure Christians to convert by sometimes threatening them with violence.

NORTH KOREA

The communist regime of Kim Jong-Il claims that the country enjoys religious freedom. In reality, the situation is very different: the communist government demands that the faithful join organizations controlled by the Party.

CUBA

Almost 50 years after Fidel Castro's seizure of power, strict control over religious activities is beginning to ease. The moment when Fidel officially handed over power to Raul coincided with the visit of the Vatican's secretary of state to Cuba. This trip awakened the population to the hope of a new springtime for religious life and practice.

EGYPT

The rise of an extremist Islamic movement has increased the pressure on Egypt's Christians. This country has the largest Christian population in the Middle East, more than four million. Despite their numbers, Christians, especially Orthodox Copts, have now been reduced to the status of second class citizens.

INDIA

At the end of 2007, in the state of Orissa, Christmas celebrations were interrupted suddenly when fanatical Hindus went wild. They attacked 70 churches and other Christian institutions; 500 houses belonging to Christians were destroyed. This attack sounded the alarm about the critical situation of Christians in certain parts of the country.

IRAK

The kidnapping and death of Archbishop P.F. Rahho, early in 2008, shocked the world and

forced it to recognize one of the aspects of the Iraqi crisis about which nothing had been said until that time: the Church is currently undergoing a wave of persecution. Assaults against Iraqi Christians have become as bloody as they are unrelenting.

IRAN

Sparking widening concern in the international community, President Ahmadinejad has started to propagate revolutionary ideas in his country, the most powerful Chi'ite Muslim country in the world. Little by little, the State has adopted a rigid approach and an intransigent vision of Islam, which is exerting growing pressure on minority groups.

LEBANON

Article 9 of Lebanon's constitution guarantees the respect of all religions and ensures their autonomy over questions like marriage and inheritance. The various religious groups are represented in Parliament according to fixed quotas: the President of the Republic is always a Maronite Catholic, the President of the Council of Ministers is a Sunnite Muslim and the Orator of the Parliament must be a Shiite Muslim. Lebanon has for a long time been considered the best Middle Eastern country in terms of religious freedom.

NIGERIA

The victory of Umaru Yar'Adua in the presidential elections of April 2007 could turn out to be crucial in determining the outcome of the religious tensions that have lasted for so long in Nigeria. As president, the Muslim Yar'Adua swore to respect the commitment of his predecessor in ensuring social and religious

cohesion. Still, there is no sign that past tensions will disappear.

PAKISTAN

In December 2007, the assassination of Benazir Bhutto temporarily united the country in mourning: Msgr. Joseph Coutts observed unprecedented levels of cooperation between Christians and Muslims. For many Christians, Bhutto and her Party represented a promise of equal rights. Over the past several years, there has been a dramatic rise in the number of attacks against religious minorities in the country.

RUSSIA

The predominant Russian Orthodox Church still resists the presence of other Christian communities in Russia. Its icy attitude towards the Catholic Church, however, has begun to thaw thanks to certain circumstances that have drawn the two Churches together.

VIETNAM

A new law on religions, which came into effect in February 2007, considers the different confessions in the country as social forces which can and must contribute to its progress, under the umbrella of the Communist Party.

ZIMBABWE

The amended constitution of 2000 granted broad freedom of religion. In practice, however, this right has not always been respected. The government has continued to harass and intimidate religious leaders who denounce human rights abuses perpetrated by public powers. ☞



¹ Sr. Charity Zimba, M.I.C.
in-charge of the
pre-school/kindergarten
centre

^{2,3} Life at the Centre

⁴ Tiny-tots' Graduation

Photos credit:

L. Lefebvre, M.I.C.

To live in Malawi, Africa,
we need to be especially
attentive to the signs of distress
and the urgent needs that occur
in our midst.

In the mid 20th century,
the missionaries opened schools
and health care centres as
a response to the demands
of that time.

SEE THE SIGNS

By Louise Lefebvre, M.I.C.

In the nineteen-nineties, the MIC Sisters lived through a period of transition. We understood the importance of training local people who could eventually take over the responsibilities of the existing education facilities and health care centres.

AIDS—A SIGN?

Nowadays, striking life conditions beckon us to respond creatively and adequately to the pressing needs of the time. For the past twenty years, AIDS has been devastating the country. The small town of Mzimba, located north of Malawi, has not been spared. As a result, many problems have come about: the village has seen its young and not so young leave their birth place to go to cities in quest of

jobs. They come back home seriously ill and there is no hope for them to recover. Parents die at a very young age leaving behind little tots on their own. Other family members cannot take care of these children, the burden is too heavy.

AT WORK!

This situation does not leave the missionaries indifferent. We therefore decided to offer these little ones the favorable advantages which ordinary children receive when they have parents. A project is drawn up and takes shape. We begin transforming and renovating some of the existing rooms of our centre; thanks to some Canadian benefactors, we hire electricians, carpenters, painters. While this work is unfolding, other important preparations are necessary: training educators! The Montessori method is to be imple-

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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Pre-schoolers
take care of
their little corner
of the planet



mented at our pre-school centre. This approach takes into consideration the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual potential of each child, considering him/her as member of a family, the world community and the cosmos. Sr. Charity, one of our Malawian MIC Sisters, takes up the challenge with brilliant success. In January 2007, 'DELIA'S GARDEN' opens its doors to fifteen orphans.

DELIA'S GARDEN

Sister Charity is happy to welcome her little ones and sees to the immediate needs: giving each one a hot meal, a good wash and some clean clothes. Gradually a daily ritual is introduced: each one is given a small responsibility or chore in taking care of 'DELIA'S GARDEN'; flowers and shrubs adorning the area need to be watered; dried leaves are picked-up and used for compost—the pre-schoolers learn to take care of their small corner of the planet. Play-time is also important—trapeze, swings, snake-ladders, rotating wheels all are adapted to their size and strength.

In class, children learn the alphabet and are taught how to draw. When you enter their room, you see pink, blue and yellow chickens which they are proud to show you. With the drawing comes a game: giving each chick a name.

A FIRST GRADUATION

Eleven months later, 'Delia's Garden' is like a little bee-hive. Everyone is preparing for the tiny-tots' graduation. This includes: special attire—mini hats and capes, prizes, and a party. Then each one receives a diploma with the grade one uniform. Radiant joy is seen in the eyes of these children and for us we realize that we are responding to the signs of the time.

'Delia's Garden' sees its first graduates take a step forward. Other AIDS orphans, with their cries and hunger for love and affection, are waiting to come in and replace them. Each year, they are becoming more numerous and our doors are wide open for them. ☺



An Unprecedented Adventure

Mzuzu, Malawi — At a secondary school, Sr. Huguette worked with students and young women. To better understand their psychological and spiritual needs, she completed her studies in psychology and counseling. Well trained, she now helps many individuals on their personal journey, giving them ways and means to develop their positive self-esteem and self-assurance.

¹Sr. Huguette with some collaborators

²A counseling session

³Learning a trade

Photos credit: MIC

By Huguette Ostiquy, M.I.C.

When I returned to Malawi in 1994, I first began by offering sessions in the area of self-knowledge and personal growth. I met various groups, including young people preparing for religious life. Doors opened, and I was invited to counsel individuals who wished to have a deeper understanding of one's self and thus improve their life. Since AIDS leaves a damaging impact on the families and individuals, the issue has become a priority for specialists in pastoral counseling.

This was my first step toward training future counselors in Malawi. The growing number of AIDS patients and the fact that individuals with mental disorders were a priority, counseling had become an essential service. I've always had at heart to adequately respond to the needs of the local population, particularly in the health-care area. Therefore, when the authorities of the institution invited me to develop and implement the Counseling Service Department I responded with great enthusiasm. Today the institution is called 'St. John of God Community Services'.

They helped young people to face their difficulties.

In 1996, a new mental health centre 'St. John of God' opened in the town of Mzuzu; the directors asked me to give psychotherapy sessions to some clients and to initiate some health workers to

Responding to a desperate need

In Malawi, 16% of the population has AIDS. Though some health care workers had received courses in counseling and worked as a team, we could no longer meet the demands. The administrators of 'St. John of God Community Services' decided to open a college dedicated to the training of nurses specializing in psychiatry



and mental health care. This was an excellent opportunity to include basic formation in counseling—the college took up the challenge.

University certificate in counseling

Since 2003, in agreement with the University of Malawi—Faculty of Social Science—Department of Psychology, and also with the assistance of a Scarborough lay missionary, Mrs. Beverley Vantomme, we have begun offering a university certificate in counseling. This course is composed of ten modules, offered in two semesters of twenty weeks, including official exams under the supervision of the University. The course includes: An introduction to psychology, theories in counseling, professional ethics, personal and occupational development, developmental psychology, psychopathology and other pertinent subjects such as scientific research on HIV/AIDS.

What an adventure for me! With each new group of students, I discover the beauty and complexity of the human being. A deeper understanding of its development and psychological growth, the deep seated emotional hurts and the healing process are all elements that

are studied and brought to light. Journeying on this course with the students gives me a beautiful opportunity to help them heal their hurts, to find joy, inner freedom, to live and love more fully.

During these ten months of training, the students have the possibility of practical internship in a health care centre, a high school, a university or at a local prison where they can help young adults who live difficult situations. My role in training and supervising the students keeps me close to the clients they work with; this helps me understand their suffering, and discover the strength and courage of those who trust in themselves and in God.

Facing the reality

During their internship, students learn how to help HIV/AIDS patients. Facing the fact and knowing how to live with the disease in a positive manner is not so easy. With this pandemic comes the sadness of having lost a loved one: almost all of the population in Malawi is plunged in mourning. A million and a half orphans need material help, they crave for loving attention, affection, support and direction. Many children have

been infected with HIV from the moment they were born or during breast-feeding.

On a period of five years, the College has trained forty-five men and women in psycho-sociology. They now work throughout the country, meeting the youth who have no future, are discouraged and tempted to take drugs. These counselors also meet with women who are victims of violence, abuse, rejection and grief.

And the adventure continues...

The university certificate in counseling is greatly appreciated. Currently, we are developing a two-year curriculum which will lead to a diploma in counseling. At the professional level, this program is indispensable—not only will it guarantee quality service to the clients but also counseling will be acknowledged as a profession in Malawi.

The adventure I have undertaken is ongoing... With me and after me, others will commit themselves in this demanding but wonderful adventure: to be attentively present and to listen. ☺



During the years I worked in Bolivia, there is one thing I learned about the Bolivian woman which is of paramount importance: When given a chance, one can change! Whether she comes from the rural area or the city, whether she is educated or illiterate, whether she is from the valley or the high plateau, the Bolivian woman has a reserve of untapped resources ready to blossom in the light of the first sun rays.

One ounce
of self
confidence
can truly
change
a life!



A chance for... "las Chispas"

By Monique Bigras, M.I.C.

For the majority of the women, violence and fear are their daily bread; gender equality and women's rights are unheard of. Sometimes, during a conversation, I was able to capture a faint radiant smile and a glimpse of trust. It is with much care, tactfulness, love and respect that the MIC Sisters and lay personnel of IER (Institute of Rural Education) gradually reach out to these women to offer them the necessary tools that could help them have a better tomorrow. Much time and patience are needed for life to take on a new meaning, humanly speaking but also professionally and spiritually.

Institute of Rural Education (IER)

Women from remote villages are at the heart of the IER project. They come from all over the country, and they are

welcome at the Institute for a period of two years. In this new context everything is so different from what they have known that, at first, these young women are greatly intimidated. Gradually openness takes place and the courses allow them to go beyond themselves and walk the new path which is often destabilizing. They learn to leave aside their isolation, to share their experiences, to help each other and eventually find a certain dignity within their activities.

The Institute of Rural Education was founded in 1958 by a Bolivian priest. Later, the bishop of the Diocese of Cochabamba requested that the MIC Sisters take over the project. Sister Gaetane Guillemette successfully re-launched the project. For the past fifty years, the MICs have been diligently working with the quechua women; now the harvest is fruitful and we

¹ Students at the IER

^{2,3} Knitting, crocheting
within the prison walls

⁴ Sr. Rose-Alice Rousseau,
M.I.C. (left)

Photos credit: MIC



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are most grateful. To celebrate the Institute's 50th Anniversary, Cristine Calderon, an alumna of IER came all the way from Titacachi to present the evolving course of her life. This peasant woman, gathered 500 women from her region; together, they began a sewing and embroidery cooperative—a perfect example of an initiative taken up by a young rural woman who had received her training at IER and was inspired to lead. Today, all these women have a good source of revenue that allows them to have a more decent living and hope for their children's future.

Noteworthy progress

Today as well as yesteryear, IER has only one dream: Give the Bolivian women, from remote rural areas, a chance to develop their self-esteem by offering them the proper tools to be affirmative, to seek freedom from all the social constraints that keep them imprisoned and above all, to improve their way of living with a more positive outlook on life. For many, what they learn at the Institute becomes a life-saver, particularly when husbands abandon the home and family, leaving them without any resources.

At IER the young girls have a chance to finish their high-school years; for others, it is a chance for them to learn how to read, write and count. According to their talents, there are some who receive

training as rural nurses or as veterinarian technicians. The certificate they receive is now recognized by the university and it offers them the possibility of a better paying job. However, most young adults return to their villages and become BUSINESS WOMEN in the field of agriculture—selling eggs, chickens, guinea pigs, etc.; while others administer medical care to their own local people. One ounce of self confidence can truly change a life!

Women in prisons

Another group is claiming the right to stand tall: the women prisoners. It is not easy to be granted permission to visit them, nor is it easy to come to their aid—but it is possible! Sr. Rose Alice Rousseau, M.I.C. has the experience. These forgotten women are crumbling under the pressure of years lived in the unhealthy environment of their cells. Why are they there? Very often for a minor offence: selling or possessing drugs. Sr. Rose Alice has been visiting them for many years, she teaches them embroidery and sewing. She especially encourages them to find hope in life; when they leave the prison behind them, she advises them to hold-on to their skills and talents and to go forward with confidence in order to earn some money for their own survival.

For these women, prisons in Bolivia become their way of life,

their family circle. They live with their children in the same quarters. The latter leave for school in the morning and after classes they return to the prison, their temporary home. Occasionally, the husbands have a right to short visits. Without any doubt, this milieu is most unhealthy for the young children. Proximity is intolerable—a large space divided into curtain stalls measuring six feet by eight feet is the only area where mothers and their children live. This cohabitation does not favour a change of behaviour: noise, thefts, quarrels, jealousies, all contribute to make life difficult.

How to prevent drug addiction when government authorities leave these women on their own? Obviously, it is not so easy for them to speak out and be heard or to claim their rights. However, the creation of small craft industries, allows them to get organized; they succeed in gaining credibility and confidence to speak out in their local community. Defending women's rights and gender equality is an every day battle and the road ahead is still long and steep. However, there is progress and it is encouraging.

I always loved calling the young peasant women CHISPAS (spark) because I believe it only takes a small spark to kindle a huge fire. Yes, when we have a chance we can change! 🌸

Letters from here and abroad

Dubuisson, Haiti

In the aftermath of the cyclones

Today, I went to Port-au-Prince's market place to buy goods for our school. Even though the area has been hard hit by the cyclones, there is already an enrolment of 118 students. We hope others will come join them; however, it is more difficult for children who live in rural areas. The majority of the students cannot afford manuals. Life is difficult, but with added efforts perhaps education could become a priority. Due to financial difficulties, I allow the young people to come to class with whatever they have to wear, until the time we will be able to purchase uniforms for them.

Their parents who are farmers lost all their harvest because of the cyclones. A half hour from where we are, houses have been destroyed but the desolation is not as great as Gonaives where human lives were lost. To come to Port-au-Prince, I must now cross Mirebalais River in a canoe, because the bridge was damaged by the torrential waters. On the banks of the river, many houses collapsed; fortunately, residents had time to escape. If the bridge had not given in, the whole region would have suffered from enormous material loss and also human lives would have perished.

At school, the victims of the cyclones were given support. We appealed to all: the poor must help the poor. One morning when it was time to collect the donations for the disaster victims, a student had nothing to give. However, spontaneously, she came to offer her small bowl containing a banana and an egg: it was all she had for her lunch/dinner.

Sr Adeline Bonny, M.I.C.



Baguio, Philippines

MIC Inter-Asia Novitiate

Last July and August, Teresa Li Ping and Katherine Broso, both postulants, took modular courses which initiated them to religious life. A three-day session on PRAYER AND DISCERNMENT has helped them learn about the different forms of prayers and daily spiritual discernment, a dialogue with the One who is calling them...

A modular class on the LITURGY OF THE HOURS, facilitated by a Benedictine nun, has helped the postulants find more meaning and the spiritual value in praying the Lauds and Vespers—an ecclesial prayer chanted in all the monasteries and in many religious communities world-wide.

During the years of formation, it is important to write one's journal. By means of CREATIVE JOURNAL WRITING the person focuses on the callings of the Holy Spirit, listens to the inspirations, and evaluates her responses. It is a way of progressing in the spiritual life. This three-day course was greatly appreciated.

An intriguing question: Why live one's gift of self to God within a religious community? What's at stake: communication, multiculturalism, a common objective, etc.? A thorough study of RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY LIFE was not only an eye opener but answered all the questions.

The rigorous formation years are demanding; however, the young people who come from various ethnic backgrounds appreciate the knowledge and the sense of direction they are given. It is a means for them to discover their potential and to integrate successfully into their new way of life.

*Irene Ferrer, M.I.C. (right)
Postulant/Novice Directress*



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!*



A specialist in PHR (Personality and Human Relations) Sr. Suzanne has returned to Tokyo, Japan. Her vast experience and knowledge of the Japanese culture allows her to understand and comfort the people she spiritually journeys with.

Suzanne Morneau, M.I.C. (left)
Sainte-Perpétue, Québec



Sr. Emmanuela has been in Peru for a number of years. She is now a member of the Formation Team, training young Latin American women, from Bolivia and Peru, interested in becoming religious in our MIC community.

Emmanuela Vincent, M.I.C.
Cap-Haitien, Haiti



For many years, Sr. Catherine-Henriette has had a special love for the Cuban people. While visiting families and listening to their stories, she will continue speaking the Good News of Jesus and bring comfort to those who are in need.

Catherine-Henriette Raveronomenjanahary, M.I.C.
Masoarivo, Majunga, Madagascar



Whether vertical or horizontal, numbers have never been a problem for Sr. Marcelle. She has returned to Taipei, Taiwan, where she served for many years, and has resumed her work as Provincial Bursar.

Marcelle Paquet, M.I.C. (right)
Saint-Prosper, Quebec



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Dawn of a New Life

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

Délia Tétreault



Thérèse Smith, M.I.C.
(Sr. Thérèse-de-la-Providence)
1921-2008
Southbridge, Massachusetts, U.S.A.

Thérèse was very young when her father died; however, the mother and aunts provided for her education. During her years of schooling with the Sisters of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, she developed an interest in religious life and also an attraction for the missions. Thérèse left home at 17 to fulfill her dream in the MIC Institute. She studied radiology and then served in Haiti. Later, she worked at the Action Center City in Montreal. Sister Thérèse patiently suffered from a long illness and will be remembered for her quiet presence.



Thérèse LeBlanc, M.I.C.
(Sr. Thérèse-de-la-Sainte-Face)
1916-2009
Moncton, New Brunswick

Of frail health, Thérèse received special attention from her parents. As a student she participated in the Eucharistic Crusade and became interested in the work of the missionaries. Later, she answered the call and after the Second World War she was sent to the Philippines, where she served for 15 years as an educator. In 1964 she was appointed to Hong Kong where she taught for another 19 years. Upon her return to Canada, she was assigned Editor of our magazine the MIC Mission News. Sr. Thérèse will long be remembered as an excellent educator; her enthusiasm and positive outlook on life helped many of her students.



Véronique Bernatchez, M.I.C.
(Sr. Marie-Hermine)
1915 – 2009
Neuville, Quebec

Véronique was the eldest of a large family. The key elements which nourished her spiritual life and awakened her missionary vocation were the faith of her parents, daily mass and attending a school where teachers were nuns. At 18, she entered the MIC Institute and specialized in the field of education. Sr. Véronique had multiple talents and served in Cuba, Ancud (Chile), Lima (Peru). On many occasions, her poetic mind and fluent Spanish were appreciated. Upon her return to Canada, she worked for the Missionary Press. Sr. Véronique's fraternal, loving spirit and her readiness to serve will be greatly missed.



Georgette Richer, M.I.C.
(Sr. Saint-Philias)
1914-2009
Plantagenet, Ontario

Human and Christian values were at the heart of Sr. Georgette's large family. Her energetic, respectful, firm and disciplined character served her well as a teacher. Sister's innate capacity to convey the knowledge she had acquired throughout the years was exceptional. She worked many years in Malawi, teaching at Katete's Teacher Training College. She also trained postulants and scholastics to the religious life. Entirely dedicated to the missions, Sr. Georgette accepted to be on the mission awareness team in Ontario and Pont-Viau. The last phase of her life was lived serenely, in communion with her God.

A good choice

My father, a Swahili immigrant, owns a modest grocery store at Katoto, a neighborhood area in the City of Mzuzu, Malawi.

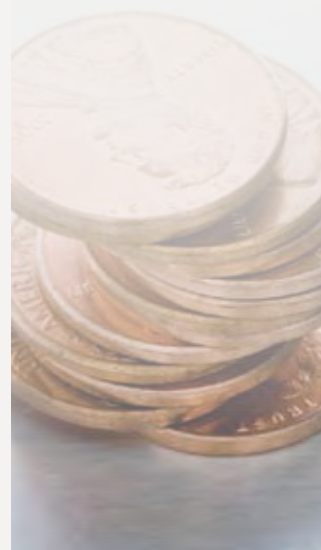
On Christmas Eve, before closing his store, my father realizes that he has a surplus sum of 250K (2,30\$ CAN) in his cash register. This day is one of the busiest of the year: clients hurry to buy what they need for the Christmas celebration. In his mind, my father goes over his day... Suddenly, he remembers which client this sum belongs to. The phone being on the blink, my father decides to walk to the client's house. I go along with him. After a thirty minute walk, we arrive at destination and my father gives back the sum of money he owes him. Happy to have found his 250K, the man keeps thanking my father for his honesty.

The following month, that same client delays paying a bill which amounts to a large sum of money; he leaves the city without paying his debt. I can't believe it! I ask my father if he remembers the incident of last Christmas... Without hesitation, he places his hands on my shoulders, looks at me in the eyes and says: *In life, we have to make choices. It was my choice to do what I thought was right. For him (the client), it was his choice not to pay his bill.*

Since then, I have obtained from the University of South Africa my diplomas in Philosophy, Pedagogy, and Human Resources. Throughout my years of studies, I have always kept in my heart, as a precious gem, the lesson I received from my father.

Thank you, father, for having taught me to always make the right choice!

By Peter Mwaipape



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Grateful Praise

*In you, O Lord, I take refuge;
let me never be put to shame.*

*In your justice rescue me and deliver me;
incline your ear to me and save me.*

*Be my rock of refuge,
a stronghold to give me safety,
for you are my rock and my fortress.*

*You are my hope, O Lord;
you have taught me from my youth,
and I proclaim your wondrous deeds.*

*Your power and your justice,
O God, reach to heaven.*

*Renew your benefits toward me,
and comfort me over and over.*

*Open to me the gates of justice;
I will enter them,
and give thanks to the Lord.*

*I will give you thanks with music,
for your faithfulness, O my God!
As I sing your praises day by day,
I shall proclaim your justice.*

Excerpts: Ps. 71 & 118

