

MIC

VOL. 36, Nº 3 | JULY ▪ AUGUST ▪ SEPTEMBER 2009 | \$3.00

MISSION NEWS



To sow seeds of joy and hope

PERU

A DECOR
OF SIMPLICITY

MADAGASCAR

FROM ONE CELL
TO ANOTHER

*MOMENTS OF
HAPPINESS*



MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

JULY

For the Faithful Throughout the World

May the Church be the seed and nucleus of humanity, reconciled with God through the testimony of the faithful throughout the world.

AUGUST

For Religious Freedom and Equality for Persecuted Christians

May Christians who are persecuted because of Christ have their human rights and religious freedom recognized.

SEPTEMBER

For Christians in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar

We pray for Christians in Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar that they may not be discouraged from announcing the Gospel, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

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. 36, N° 3 | JULY ▪ AUGUST ▪ SEPTEMBER 2009

COLUMNS

4 SPIRITUAL LIFE

Come Home

André Gadbois

6 MISSIONARY WITNESS

A Decor of Simplicity

Elmire Allary, M.I.C.

8 YOUTH

Isabelle's Uncle

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

9 Transmitting the Faith

Louise Pagé, M.I.C.

10 THE WAY—to Others and to the Other

Nicole Joly, M.I.C.

12 Chantal Petitclerc – A Gold Medalist

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

ABOUT THE MICs

14 A Leprosarium—An "Incubator" of Happiness

Jacqueline Villemure, M.I.C.

16 From One Cell to Another

Alain Eid

18 A Lasting Mission

Suzette Jean, M.I.C.

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Capture the Moment

If I had been invited to Barack Obama's inauguration in Washington, D.C., I would not have missed that great opportunity. But why wait for spectacular events to savor a bit of happiness? How often we unconsciously walk right by favorable circumstances without capturing the joy it offers.

Life is strewn with precious moments: the birth of a child, a scholarly success, a marriage, a business contract, to mention a few. The source of these joys comes from efforts put into the preparation of these events.

Chantal Petitclerc, trained and worked relentlessly to win her medals. Children who prepare to receive the sacraments of initiation spend hours in learning about the Christian way of life. The missionary who is sent to a new mission takes time to adapt to her milieu. The murderer who hears God's inner calling and responds positively like Saint Paul is another example of how one can capture the event that will give a new meaning to life.

What does Jesus say about happiness? Happy are those... (Mt 5:3.12). The Beatitudes speak to us of happiness; an enduring and irreplaceable happiness because it flows from a heart that is open to God and to our neighbour. Délia Tétreault understood that; how often she would say: *Sow seeds of joy, it is the bread most lacking in our world.* She had the recipe that would bring about happiness.

During the summer season, it's up to each one of us to capture the opportunities that come our way to bring about joy. A positive attitude, an encouraging word can help save a life; we don't know what is brewing deep in a heart that is despairing. To sow seeds of happiness is an effective means to prevent a dramatic event—which could be closer to home than we think.



This summer issue invites us to capture happy moments and sympathize with individuals who are struggling through life, especially during this economic crisis. With hope in our hearts, may we continue to be optimistic for the future and project this confidence onto others.

Marie-Paula Sanjacon, 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.

Thérèse Bourdeau — Chateaugay, QC

I found your magazine on a table at the residence where I live and read it from cover to cover. I appreciated the articles; therefore, I am sending you my subscription as I wish to receive my own copy.

Paul Beaulé — Quebec, QC

Recently, I went to China and saw the seed of faith reviving—this is thanks to all the religious like you.

Denise Crépeau — Montreal, QC

Congratulations to the team who produces *Le Précurseur/MIC Mission News*. I always look forward to the next issue and read the articles with much interest. I admire the work of the Sisters in mission and I wish you success in all your achievements.

Sr. Loretta Voqt — Chatham, Ontario

I have been a reader of *MIC Mission News* for many years. It's an excellent publication; it offers us so much food for thought. The Jan.-March issue: *On the Move With China* was most inspiring. I am happy to have my own copy.

Florian Aubin, priest,

— Sainte-Émélie-de-l'Énergie, QC

Le Précurseur/MIC Mission News (Jan.-March 2009) speaks about the faith, the courage, the love and dedication of the MIC Sisters who have worked in China for one hundred years. Their commitment is most edifying and I am deeply touched. Praise God!

Draw: Figurine from Haiti

Sr. Cecile Martel, our expert researcher, draws the lucky winner... who is: Mrs. Rita Lacombe from Montmagny, Quebec.

Congratulations!

COME HOME!

The great Roman Emperor, Julius Caesar, found the recipe of happiness for his subjects: give them bread to eat and games to play so that they may forget their subjection. Similar to animals kept on a leash, they were unaware of their cage-like situation; they seemed content and happy with their lot in life: They ate and they played. This recipe for happiness always ended up in an explosion of violence and this, unfortunately, is seen even nowadays on all continents.

By André Gadbois

In his novel *The Little Prince*, Antoine de Saint Exupery portrays an unhappy prince travelling the world of planets hoping to find happiness. So it was with the king whose happiness was to be obeyed, with the proud to be admired, with the drinker to forget, with the businessman to possess. None of these convinced the Little Prince of their happiness, not even the lamp lighter who was sympathetic but totally committed to his task, nor the scholar who was absorbed in his book. However, the fox convinced the Little Prince of that which is the most important... *It is the time you have spent with your rose that makes your rose important.* I often wonder if the convinced Little Prince truly found happiness. When I look up at the stars, I seem to hear him laugh as he holds his rose in his hand, but such an imagery depends on my disposition.

In Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* the Grand Inquisitor who knows all about happiness, arrests Jesus and tells him: *We have corrected your work, giving it a better foundation based on: miracle, mystery and authority. And men rejoice because they are once again led as a flock.* And the Cardinal Inquisitor explains to Jesus that for men's happiness He should never have resisted the three temptations in the desert.



The columnist Patrick Lagacé wrote: Life has become so tumultuous that it pushes us in a crazy pursuit of all that is bigger and better. *We forget the small things and go for—the 64 inch television sets, the enormous spas, the biggest and most ostentations of everything. The race becomes an end in itself, and the turmoil like a web...I am not implying that happiness is necessarily in small things but I am certain that it is not found in the race to acquire huge NICKNACKS.*¹ With humor I would say to Patrick: the race is a HUNGER in itself.

FIND YOUR VOICE

When I stop to think of happiness, what images appear? The misfortune of some represents happiness for others; or, I don't believe happiness exists; perhaps a lucky-charm may by chance bring good luck; or a hand shake may bring joy; and while money can't buy happiness, it helps; happiness is for the other world,

the beyond... Sometimes we minimize happiness to a banality, other times we reject it completely, but also, we can spend a whole lifetime searching for it. We feel its presence in the Gospels, but then we could ask: Did Jesus experience happiness? Can happiness last a whole lifetime? Does happiness and thrills go hand in hand? Is there a link between happiness and faith? Is a whole-hearted laugh a sign of happiness?

Happiness for me can be compared to that of a seed that is planted in fertile soil and grows to fruition. Also I like to think that past actions will give rise to an abundance of new and unexpected acts of kindness and generosity. Often we must struggle to find a milieu that is conducive to giving of ourselves. But happiness comes from giving of self and it seems to fill the air and become contagious. Happiness generates happiness. And to continue with the metaphor of seeds, planting and fruition, let us recall the mystery of the Great Sower. Let us remember Paul of Tarsus.

Our tumultuous life
pushes us in a crazy pursuit
of all that is bigger and better. 

For Gilles Vigneault, a French Canadian singer, happiness is COMING HOME. He goes on to say: *Come out of your cell and find your voice. It is a long journey; nevertheless, come home.*² Through His Son, Jesus, the Great Sower said: *And do not forget I am with you always* (Mt 28:20) *that you may have life and have it to the full* (Jn 10.10). 

¹ Patrick Lagacé, *La Presse*, February 14, 2009, A8

² Gilles Vigneault, song: *Arriver chez soi (Come Home)*

¹ André Gadbois and his granddaughter, Florence

Photo credit:

Marie-Claude Gadbois





A DECOR OF SIMPLICITY

To live with impoverished people in the remotest areas of Peru has always been Sr. Elmore's ideal apostolic field. After many years in Latin America, she currently works in Cajabamba, Peru. She opens her mission log book, where life's rhythm is as slow as a donkey's pace, in a decor of simplicity, not to say—poverty.

¹Harvesting the potatoes

²Baptism in a small village –
Sr. Gisèle Guinois, M.I.C.

³Sr. Elmore and Sr. Gisèle
with villagers

⁴Long winding roads
in the region

Photos Credit: MIC

By Elmore Allary, M.I.C.

Living in the midst of the Andes people, gives me the opportunity to meet simple and loving folks. Daily, I meet peasants walking along beside their donkeys loaded with merchandise or fire-wood to sell in the city. In this part of the world, food is cooked over an open flame—primitive cooking methods still exist. Progress is slow. The small villages scattered in the mountains have no running water, no electricity, and no health-care services.

IN SUCH SIMPLICITY COMES THE UNEXPECTED

In the small town of Cajabamba, located in the Diocese of Cajamarca, life is a bit different. The decor remains simple; however, there is a touch of the post-modern era. Cell phones are beginning to appear—these compensate for the lack of telephone services. Publicity is luring people, creating superfluous needs when they don't even have the essential in their homes.

Sometimes, their simple way of life is astounding. I like to tell the story of my adventure to the City of La Paz... a short trip from Cajabamba. Six kilometers from

our destination, the bus driver received news that fighting was actually taking place in that city. Without any warning, the bus driver parks the bus in a vacant field by the roadside and tells the travelers to look-out for themselves. Each one must find a way to reach his/her destination. As I was mulling over my next move, wondering how I could reach the city, a truck came by and offered me a ride to the bus terminal in La Paz. Here, I must always be prepared for the unexpected... and God, in His loving care, always provides the solution.

AN ENDEARING PEOPLE

Last November, I accepted to be the Godmother of a 10 year old boy who was to be baptized in the Catholic faith; his grandmother is his guardian. After dinner with the family, I am given a gift of a live chicken and two live guinea pigs. Such poor people, yet so generous! They are discreet, isolated, often forgotten or ridiculed, but what dignity, courage and generosity they manifest in their great poverty. They are encouraged by their firm belief that the next generation will see better days. As I see these people living out their poverty with such courage, my faith becomes stronger—they help me grow!



3



4

The Andean people do not know their origin. Generally, in the Andes, the spoken language is the Quechua. The people living in Cajabamba speak Spanish. Internet tells us that the language of their ancestors was the *CULLI*, it was spoken in the North Sierra of Peru, much before the Incas invasion up to the arrival of the Spaniards. Today, the inhabitants of Cajabamba have completely forgotten their mother tongue, the *CULLI* and the Quechua. They neither have the physical traits nor the skin color of the Incas.

A LIFE THAT IS THREATENED

Cajamarca, is the region where terrorists bearing the name Illuminated Paths originated in the years '75-'80. Today they no longer exist but have been replaced by organized bandits who perturb the tranquility of the families. To protect themselves, the residents organized surveillance groups who, all night long, walk about the community armed with whistles, sticks, and whips braided out of oxen skin. The surveillance groups respect the human rights and have their own laws which have been accepted by the State. At first, women did not participate, but then they joined the groups, their role as 'bumpers' destabilizes the bandits. Though chauvinism is current in these regions, women are always present to resolve the problems.

STANDING TOGETHER

The Church is not aloof to the existing problems afflicting small local communities. On the contrary, Christians stand together and are actively committed to defending the justice issues. There is solidarity between the folks of the city and those of the villages; they support

each other and favor the development of the region.

In small villages, the people choose a catechist for the spiritual celebrations. His function is to prepare the children for the sacraments of Baptism and First Communion; he participates in all the reunions that take place at Cajabamba's Formation Centre. He is the right hand of the pastor and a local authority. The MIC Sisters help train the catechists and also the health care providers. Two Sisters who are nurses gathered the latter and with the help of a specialist in natural medicine, they studied how to utilize the natural resources of the milieu to relieve the many aches and pains... Here, doctors are very rare.

My pastoral oriented mission is to visit the people in the seventeen small villages adjacent to the City of Cajabamba. This population, entirely rural, does not exceed 400-500 inhabitants per village. When I arrive, they show much joy and greet me with a good cup of coffee. These moments of friendship are precious; our dialogues help me to know them better and share with them the issues that are at stake.

The MIC commitment consists in: Preparing the Sunday worship, teaching the importance of the sacraments, visiting the people in the villages, training the catechists and assisting them in their work, organizing youth groups, preparing weekly dinners for the elderly in need. We are currently three MICs: a young Peruvian, Sr. Carmen Tito, and two Quebecers, Sr. Louise Laberge and myself. We love this mission and thank God for being here; in spirit we live it with each one of you who encourage us in so many different ways. All our gratitude! 

Discreet,
isolated, often
forgotten or
ridiculed, they
are a people
with dignity,
courage and
generosity
notwithstanding
their great
poverty.



Isabelle's Uncle

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

She is 3 ½ with curly blond hair, she is mischievous and curious like many children of her age. Isabelle likes to explore her environment and she asks many questions.

One day, her mother tells her that Aunt Alicia who is a religious and also a missionary has come home after five years of mission work in Haiti. What a pleasant surprise for Isabelle!

From the very first visit, a bond of affection is present between the aunt and the niece. However, the child is intrigued... looking at her Aunt Alicia, she asks:

– *Where is the gentleman that is yours?*

– *I don't have a gentleman that is mine.*

For this three year old, such an answer is unbelievable because her aunts and uncles all have a partner. Isabelle is not satisfied with

the reply. After Aunt Alicia's departure, she asks her mother:

– *Why doesn't Aunt Alicia have a partner?*

– *Because she is married to God*

– *So, it's like you and daddy?...*

– *No, not exactly.*

– *You mean it's the same and not the same?...*

– *That's it! Aunt Alicia is married to Jesus but we do not see Him.*

A few months later, during the summer vacation, Isabelle's family comes together to celebrate an anniversary. Couples arrive one after the other and Isabelle, in her childlike enthusiasm, runs to each one and gives everybody a hug—a way to say welcome! Then Aunt Alicia, the missionary, comes in. Isabelle runs to her, gives her a kiss and a hug. Then she goes round her, extends her arms in the open space and begins giving loud kisses which everyone could hear.

The adults are intrigued! The mother asks:

– *Isabelle, what are you doing?*

– *I am kissing uncle Jesus, because Aunt Alicia is married to Him.*

From a true story...

One day, when speaking about the Kingdom of God, Jesus prayed thus: *I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children* (Lk 10:21). 



GDick 2009

Watercolor drawing: Geneviève Dick

<http://creincarnation.googlepages.com/contact>

Transmitting the *FAITH*

Once upon a time there was the FAITH... that of our ancestors, the one transmitted to us from generation to generation. Is this Faith, a precious treasure, to be transmitted to our children and grand children?



By Louise Pagé, M.I.C.

Current social changes in Quebec have compelled us to be creative. The Ministry of Education has taken the responsibility of implementing throughout the elementary grades the Ethics Course and Knowledge of World Religions/promotion of religious culture.

Families have reacted to this new program and express their concern about the faith education of their children. Who will teach our young ones about the God of Jesus Christ? Who will transmit the faith, handed down to us from generation to generation? Who will journey with the youngsters as they become more rooted in their Catholic faith?

These many questions urged us to respond creatively. Via our web site, we initiated a program called: *Il est une FOI...* It presents pedagogical methods that can help parents assume their responsibility in teaching their children in the Catholic Faith.

Always up-dated by a team of catechists, adults and parents, the program offers authentic content appropriate to family life; it includes materials adapted for children and youth. It can be used to awaken the faith, to nurture and to promote growth.

The team draws its inspiration from the prime material offered by the Office for Catechesis in Quebec: *The Four Seasons*.

Autumn theme—back to work and back to school, family life, nature, life's mysteries, the feast of all those who passed away and enjoy eternal life.

Winter theme—what is the meaning of Advent, Christmas, the Three Kings; the public life of Jesus, his Baptism and Mission.

Spring theme—the unfolding of new life leads us to experience Lent, the Holy Week, Easter, Pentecost and Mothers' Day.

Summer theme—integration of the year's content.

The Web site is meant for adults. There is a thematic space, along with a "landing area" for renewal and reflection, for questioning and learning, and for orientation... We propose links to other sites designed for children and youngsters.

There is also a space for those who wish to communicate with us. We invite you to visit us, and tell others about us...by word of mouth is a very efficient way. For us to respond adequately to your needs, your suggestions and questions are most welcome.

Come and discover who we are! ☺

Web sites:

www.ilestunefoi.org
Catholic teaching for families

www.ombreslumieres.com
Ombres et Lumières
Productions — a Quebec
enterprise specializing in
the production of videos
and web development

¹ Sr Louise (center)
with team members
Photo credit: MIC

THE WAY—to Others and to THE OTHER

For many years, Sr. Nicole Joly, M.I.C., has been involved in pastoral ministry, particularly in schools and parishes. Having worked in Madagascar and Haiti within the catechetical field, she has a rich experience in the Christian Life Formation at all levels. She is currently working in the Diocese of Montreal and we have invited her to share with us her point of view on the new catechetical approach.



By Nicole Joly, M.I.C.

Formation in catechesis has been my field of work for a good number of years but more so since the late 1990s. At that time, Dioceses in Quebec undertook the task of establishing catechetical processes in parishes in order to ensure the children have a coherent formation for a sound Christian life, in conjunction with their families and parish communities. During a long period of time, research and studies on the matter were extensive. As a result, on May 31, 2003 the Archdiocese of Montreal officially promulgated in all the parishes a text entitled: *Proposing Jesus Christ Today* as the way to freedom and responsibility. This project is currently being implemented in all the parishes; it has been a long process with multiple adjustments in conjunction to the teaching of religious education within the Quebec school system.

THE CHURCH OF QUEBEC IS ADAPTING

Over the past years, many changes have taken place in schools, in families, in the Church and in society. We have gone from a denominational school system to a linguistic system and finally to the Ethics Course and Religious Knowledge replacing the Catholic Religious Education program in schools. The Quebec Church foresaw what was coming ahead and began its monumental work in regards to the Christian faith. Society keeps changing and the evangelical message, the Good News, must be integrated in this new social and cultural reality. It's an enormous challenge, more so because the Catholic Church does not

always have good press with the media. The Church and the institution in general are often confronted with the old "demons". When suspicion creeps in, then it is difficult to believe. We must acknowledge that believers have been put to the test. But the Church is a community of women and men who have faith in the message of Jesus and in His Promise: *Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away* (Lk 21:33). *Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them.* (Mt 18:20). It's a question of believing! When we say "catechesis", it is to say that there is a conviction deeply rooted in the **BEING THAT IS ALWAYS IN THE PROCESS OF BECOMING**. And it presupposes that catechesis is a way that leads to an encounter with the God of Jesus Christ.

GROWING TOGETHER

Formerly, catechesis was meant for children; it was a subject taught in school or a preparation for reception of a sacrament. Today, catechesis concerns everyone—adolescents and adults, as well as young children, and it is the responsibility of all members of the Christian community. Our encounter with the God of Jesus must be on-going: catechesis allows the faith to be born and to grow; it seeks to promote the development of the whole person in their emotional, social and spiritual life. All age groups are implicated within this goal. Through catechesis people discover how God walks with each one personally and collectively. In Quebec, we notice that a good number



of baptized Catholics declare themselves non-believers. We heard the debate about prayer at the Municipal Assembly—most participants seemed to agree on one point: *Municipal management is not God's business.* However, they did not deny that if *someone wanted to say a mental prayer, such an attitude did not disturb anyone and did not put anyone's life in danger.* I respect their point of view, but the power of prayer can change many things in one's own personal life and in the world.

CATECHESIS TODAY

Teaching catechesis, what does that mean for us today? We must speak about content, the witness and his testimony. Has Scripture changed or is it our interpretation that has changed? Is the Gospel message outdated or do we interpret the mysteries of Christ according to the experiences we make of them? If we believe that each human being is a gift of God to others, it is together that we are called to happiness. The faith, given at Baptism, must be received; if it is well cultivated it will grow to its full potential. Faith is like a tiny mustard seed planted in the ground...it must be well taken care of. All depends on the type of soil in which the Word is planted: *side of the road, rocky place, among thorns, or on good soil* (Mt 13: 4.9). Faith supposes responsibility, sincerity and humility.

In parishes, multiple activities are proposed and believers of all age groups joyfully participate. The table has been set and may those who are hungry come and eat!

THE WAY TO FREEDOM AND RESPONSIBILITY

The Christian faith is a way for humanity to become more human. Discovering Jesus Christ, leads us to the Father (Jn 14: 9.11). For those who journey in the faith, the Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, the Word touches the hearts of all. In a world of turmoil, struggling in darkness, we can perceive the suffering Christ, hoping against all hope, loving though surrounded by hatred, witnessing His peace in the midst of wars and famine.

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Heb: 11.1). Day by day, discreetly and concretely, faith becomes integrated in one's life. Faith allows a person to see the invisible, to capture and understand how a changing world can bring about the transformation of a society in becoming more human. To speak about the effects of catechesis is to affirm a personal and communal conviction. In the Archdiocese of Montreal, we are more than three thousand catechists; millions of parents and children endorse God's project for our world: keep the faith in the God of Jesus Christ alive and to be signs of His Presence. The Kingdom made... visible!

Catechesis invites us to be attentive to God's Word and to walk humbly with Him on this earth. It's a call to follow Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life. This is the responsibility of the catechists and of all who are baptized in the Spirit of Christ. The KNOWLEDGE acquired in catechesis is that of learning about Jesus. The FLAVOUR in catechesis is that of experiencing the presence of Jesus! ~

If we believe that each human being is a gift of God for others, then it is together that we are called to happiness.

¹ Sr. Nicole and a confirmandi

² Catechists' meeting

³ Happy children preparing for the great moment

Photos credit: N. Joly, M.I.C.



Chantal Petitclerc, — A GOLD MEDALIST

How many medals does she have to her credit? Ten, fifteen, twenty? For Chantal, the quantity is not important— it is her determination to overcome the obstacles and look straight ahead that is her strength. The athlete's serenity, brilliant eyes, joy and enthusiasm reveal the richness of her inner being, source of her athletic success but above all, of her life lived to the fullest.

Photo credit: AQSFR,
Jean-Baptiste Benavent

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

SUCCEEDING IN ONE'S LIFE

Personally I don't know Chantal, but T.V. and radio interviews reveal who she is: her dynamic drive is an invitation to excel, to believe in one's self, in one's potential to go beyond the apparent limits. In an interview with the host, Isabelle Albert, Chantal declared: *I know how to go within myself and draw on the strength I need to take part in sports competition.* At the age of 13, Chantal had an unfortunate accident which left her paralyzed for life; however, she knows how to look ahead. She has a future to build: a

change of paths is necessary! She does not want to be considered as a victim—she chooses to grow: *The event happened, it is there! I cannot control it, but it's up to the person to decide what she will do with it.* And Chantal resorted to action.

SOURCES OF HAPPINESS

Capitalize on the opportunities that come our way, maintain the vigor that belongs to youth—two elements from which Chantal draws her happiness. To keep in shape, she responds to a teacher's invitation and takes swimming lessons. Bit by bit she gains confidence in herself and discovers the urge to go beyond. For

her, it is not so easy, but her leit-motiv is to overcome, to preserve her moral strength notwithstanding the many obstacles that she encounters in sports.

During the Para-Olympics try-out, Chantal aims always higher and bigger. After Barcelona (1992), Atlanta (1996), Sidney (2000), Athens (2004), she participated in the Beijing Olympics in 2008. She won five gold medals—what a victory for this Quebecer from Saint-Marc-des-Carrières! Never has this been seen before... Chantal has reached the summit and at the same time, she has won another victory which she holds dear to her heart: thanks to her extraordinary feat, the Para-Olympics are now known world-wide, on the same level as the Olympic Games. It is no longer a competition among disabled people but among true athletes who participate to a world-wide championship.

However, she still has another leap to make... her dream is to see the wheel-chair race as a discipline officially recognized at the Olympic Games. Bravo to you, Chantal, you are our Canadian heroine. We are proud of you!

BELIEVE IN LIFE

In his inaugural address, January 20, Barack Obama said: *Greatness is not given to us, it must be earned.* Chantal knows this. Her Olympic medals were the reward of her daily, hard work—practicing, and exercising relentlessly.

She likes to say: *So many people have an illusionary vision of our job, but they should see us after our training session—early in the morning, sitting at home in our woollens, eating noodles with tomato sauce.* Chantal is a down-to-earth person, and does not pretend to be someone else. She likes to come

back to her daily simple way of life. Her happiness is not in cocktails or champagne. She finds happiness in nature, early in the morning, and in being with friends or reading a good book. Happiness is not in the glory of greatness but it is hidden deep within the human being. Chantal is happy; she appreciates

those small simple things which make life a fantastic adventure.

OPENED TO THE WORLD

Because of her profession as an athlete, Chantal has travelled extensively; she passionately loves to discover all that is new and to delve into the unknown. Her friend, James Duhamel, a musician, once said of Chantal: *You should see her roll her wheel-chair in the Australian desert sands and in the jungle of Costa Rica.* Everywhere she goes, Chantal spontaneously communicates her passion, her joy. Everyone can join the ranks of such radiant persons, awakened to the beauty of life, by opting for a path that will lead to true happiness.

PERSONALITY OF THE NEWSPAPER "LA PRESSE" 2008

It is not the first time that Chantal has been acknowledged as personality of "La Presse" in Montreal. She has succeeded to impress the world. The photo of this competing athlete, rolling her wheel-chair at 30km/hr has been shown around the globe. Waves of applause accompanied her. What a

magnificent example of determination and courage.

Having reached this impressive goal, Chantal is folding up her career in the Para-Olympics and is concentrating her time and efforts on marathons. Taking up another challenge? Maybe a queen to crown... who can doubt?

Her brilliant eyes,
joy and enthusiasm reveal
the richness of her inner being,
source of her athletic success.



LIFE'S MARATHON

As I ponder upon Chantal's dynamic drive and commitment, I can't help but link this to St-Paul's epistle where he compares the Christian to an athlete. *Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize* (1 Co 9:24). God's people are called to run the race. They are capable of running long distances with endurance, patience and perseverance. It is not a race where speed is important, but a fantastic marathon where the trophy, the reward, is an imperishable crown, an unfailing happiness.

Aware of Chantal's success, a new departure is offered to us—the marathon of life! 



A LEPROSARIUM—AN “INCUBATOR” OF HAPPINESS

In 2007 and 2008, while on a mission mandate as an international development consultant for the Léger Foundation, Sr. Jacqueline had the privilege of working with Baba Christdas, priest and founder of the Little Flower, located north-east of India. He caused happiness to blossom in a leprosarium where no one could even imagine finding it.

¹ “Le Bonheur, ça s’apprend!”
(Happiness can be learned! An
interview with Boris Cyrulnik)
Actualité, 01-12- 2006, 26-27

² Matthew 5:3.12

³ Gandhi, *Letters to Ashram*

⁴ Non-violence, *Peace and War*

⁵ Gandhi, *Harijan*

⁶ Cyrulnik, Boris,
Happiness Can Be Learned,
Actualité, 01-12-2006, 31

¹ Children watching a play at the
Little Flower Primary School

² Work session: Sr. Jacqueline
Villemure with Baba Christdas
Photos credit: unknown

By Jacqueline Villemure, M.I.C, Ph. D.

TO AFFIRM—DARE?

A leprosarium, an “incubator” of happiness! Yet, the neuropsychiatrist, Boris Cyrulnik maintains that happiness does not exist in itself and that the feeling of happiness comes from a victory over adversity, like the pleasure of drinking water that quenches a thirst. According to Cyrulnik: rhythm, breathing, periods of distress and reassurance, sadness and consolation, privation and satisfaction are elements which give the feeling of being alive and arouse the sentiment we call happiness.¹

DISCONCERTING?

Then, what to think about Jesus’ Beatitudes which speak to us about happiness?² How can we find happiness in being persecuted, in being meek? In being hungry and thirsty? Jesus associates

happiness to the person’s character and not to the circumstances.

During 28 years, Baba Christdas dedicated himself in giving hands and feet to those who no longer had limbs so that they could stand tall, be autonomous and earn their living with dignity. As a child, Baba read about Father Damien’s work with the lepers; he was inspired and in his young heart his mission took shape. His destiny led him to work with persons suffering from leprosy in the very poor area of Bihar, in India.

When he arrived, Baba was without a penny and to this day his life is testimony to his leitmotiv: *The one who wants to serve should not waste a single thought for his personal comfort.*³ As I shared with Baba, I understood that throughout his life he practiced Gandhi’s words: ONE STEP AT A TIME IS ENOUGH FOR ME.



Little Flower is a large family where love is the strength that unites and where services are free of charge without any distinction of colour, race or belief. *Little Flower's* mission is to give medical care, to heal, rehabilitate and eventually reintegrate into society those afflicted by the disease.

Symbolically, Baba likes to compare the persons living at *Little Flower* to petals of a flower. The more petals there are, the more beautiful are the blossoms. Like a flower, the beauty of *Little Flower* is destined to give happiness to everyone. To this day, it has transformed the life of 50,000 marginalized individuals. The members have their weaknesses, like the rose has its thorns; however, this does not prevent *Little Flower* from blooming as long as there will be people afflicted with leprosy.

According to Baba, persons who are victims of leprosy suffer physically, psychologically, socially, financially and spiritually. Inspired by the Gospel of Matthew (25: 35.36) he formulated a program conceived to bring healing to their wounds.

WHEN I WAS SICK...

The simple hut where Baba began his medical work gradually

evolved into a hospital; it counts 140 beds with an out-patients clinic. In 1982, Baba met a colleague who worked with Mother Theresa; he became Baba's associate and was entrusted the responsibility of the hospital service.

WHEN I WAS HUNGRY...

Little Flower serves three meals a day to 300 patients and boarders.

WHEN I WAS THIRSTY...

Five hundred wells have been dug for persons suffering from leprosy because they have been forbidden to use those of the villages.

WHEN I WAS A STRANGER...

A construction program gradually developed; sturdy and well ventilated houses were built for all the residents of the village and for the 25 colonies.

WHEN I WAS NAKED...

A craft centre coordinates the weaving of silk and cotton activities. The surplus is sold. *Little Flower* also provides for the youngsters' education and for the adults' community work.

In 1984, a young teacher victim of leprosy became Baba's associate.

This man physically mutilated, with an imposing stature, radiates serenity—he finds his happiness in serving the teachers and students.

The attentive presence of Baba rapidly transformed a population of beggars into persons capable of taking responsibilities. Thus, Gandhi's words became a reality: *The moment the slave decides he will no longer be a slave, his chains break and fall.*⁴ Little Flower has a good number of projects that help develop the autonomy of families; and Baba firmly believes that *happiness is when your actions are in harmony with your words.*⁵ Thus, he never stops stimulating commitment and self-assurance. Each person receives a salary for the work he/she is able to perform according to one's ability and strength.

At *Little Flower*, all have had to overcome desperation caused by cataclysms, physical abuse inflicted by the surrounding population, and banishment from the city schools. However, all have experienced some happiness: the victory of being able to sell their dairy products at the market place; the pride of having access to an international market for their weaving products. In this, *Little Flower*, illustrates very well Cyrulnik's approach: *If you want to be happy, don't try to eliminate a hardship at all cost, but search how and with whom you will be able to overcome this ordeal.*⁶ While I was at Little Flower, these folks proudly took part in discussions and cheerfully expressed themselves with self-assurance.

Isn't this extraordinary? Baba Christdas with a group of outcast individuals transformed an old leprosarium into an "incubator" of happiness. ☺



FROM ONE CELL TO ANOTHER

He grew up at Antsirabe, Madagascar, in the midst of drug addicts and prostitutes. At the age of 13 he was imprisoned for drug trafficking, at 27 he turned towards the monastic life.

By Alain Eid

It's not at Antsirabe's arcade games that you will meet Richard Rakotomalala, but rather at the Cistercian-Trappist Monastery located at Maromby, Fianarantsoa. There, he is Brother Richard Maria Gabriella, a 27 year old aspirant whose desire is to become a monk of St Benedict's Order.

Born in 1981 of a Lutheran family, Richard's childhood years were not easy. When children of his age would be playing ball, police, or firemen, he was already a developing delinquent. At 11 years, he was smoking cannabis, inhaling glue, drinking heavily and getting drunk. What about school? He played hooky, resisted instructions and got into fights. Notwithstanding his misbehavior, the school principal did not expel him. Sister Estelle Messier, M.I.C. was the first person who caught a glimpse of the tiny light shining within this young boy. *I will never forget, says Brother Richard, she showed me the possibility of choosing*

another path, but it took a long time before the wild weeds disappeared.

Richard had a bad start as early as his childhood years. He chose the wrong friends, his misconduct led him into trouble. In 1994, at the age of 13, he was arrested for drug trafficking, he was six months in a correctional facility—Antsirabe penitentiary.

At night, alone in his cell, he would think of Sr. Estelle. Looking at the dark sky which appeared through the bars of the window, he would wonder if someone up there knew that he existed. Free once again, Richard went back to drugs and street life.

DIABLOS 16

In 1997, he initiated a rap group called *Diablos 16*. These are hard core individuals—in 2003, one of them succumbed to an armed robbery attack. *DIABLOS* is quite a strange name for a brutal young chap who, a few years back, dreamt to convert. Numerous are the examples of



young DIABLOS who are totally lost in a perverted world, but have been saved by the 'Call'. For Brother Richard, it all happened in 1999. He was 18 when his father died of a sudden heart attack. The event made him realize that he was wasting his life; he, therefore, decided to convert to Catholicism. However, the flame was absent! Then, in that same year, another harsh reality came about in his life—his mother died in September. The young convert looked to the sky in desperation. *At that moment, he says, I experienced darkness and bareness; my faith was not there to sustain me, nor was God's existence/presence.*

To him the shimmering lights of the world seemed to offer him assurance. He went back to drugs. Heroin which gradually destroys the teeth, the skin, the bones and takes away your life was his preferred drug. He felt within himself a thirst for violence that he believed he could exorcise by joining the **COMMANDOS**. A machine gun firing bullets of hell, is all he needed. After two years, refusing to obey a general, he was called to appear before a discipline tribunal. The sanction was withdrawn: he was expelled. Even the army could not control him.

He returned to the night clubs—in the midst of prostitutes, drug addicts, hooligans, he discovered his vocation. He states: *I understood that if the Lord called me in the midst of wolves, it was to save them.*

During a period of two years, while he was a lay associate to the Missionary

Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (SMIC) his call to monastic life became clearer: *to become a contemplative monk, dedicated to prayer for all the delinquents of my kind.*

With passion, he would read the life of Venerable Délia Tétreault (1865-1941), foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Délia's prophetic dream of the golden wheat field ready to be harvested touched him deeply. He states: *I felt that this was a message for me. Decidedly, I went to the monastery at Maromby and knocked at the door.*

The wolf entered the sheepfold—not to devour, but to become lamb. With humor he adds: *I wanted to give the Lord a helping hand; my experience with hooligans would be helpful to Him...*

EVEN FOR ATHEISTS

Brother Richard whose name is now Brother Maria Gabriella comes from Blessed Maria Gabriella Sagheddu (1914-1939), an Italian Trappistine. She was called *the little sister of unity* because she consecrated her prayer life for the success of ecumenism. He who had come from the Lutheran faith, the life of Blessed Maria Gabriella could not leave him indifferent.

Walking in her footsteps, he acknowledges today that he *prays for all believers of the world and even for atheists*. Nine months have elapsed since Brother Richard entered the monastery and he keeps taking his role as a postulant very seriously. Seven times a day, at the sound of the bell, he goes to the chapel with the monks to pray.

Life at Maromby is completely different from the one he has lived in the past. He rises at three o'clock in the morning and retires at eight in the evening; he lives the strict rule of St. Benedict and puts into practice the austere motto: *Ora et labora* (Pray and work). He, who once upon a time, resisted authority, is astounded by his willingness to obey the Fathers who are journeying with him. In five years time, at the moment of his solemn vows of profession, he will be a full-fledged monk.

Brother Maria Gabriella states: *When we decide to become a monk, we know that it's for a lifetime. We seriously remember the watchword: be vigilant and pray.* ∞

¹Sr. Estelle and a
Madagascan student

Photo credit: MIC

²Richard, his years
in the Commandos

³Richard, at the Monastery
Photos credit: E.H. Raonifary

I understood
that if the
Lord was
calling me
in the midst
of wolves,
it was to
rescue them.





A LASTING MISSION

The missionary life demands continuous adaptation or re-adaptation. There is the sadness of leaving one's family behind and the joy of discovering other nations and the customs of the people. After many years of service in Madagascar, Sr. Suzette has come back home; however, the transition period is important—she needs to rediscover her native land before feeling at ease with her mission in Quebec.

By Suzette Jean, M.I.C.

Having served for more than thirty years in Madagascar, I cannot forget all I have lived with the brave and courageous Madagascan people. As a musician, what has always fascinated me the most about this culture is their “joie de vivre” attitude, their sense of celebration and their harmonious songs often chanted *a cappella*. No matter the age, all Madagascan people easily demonstrate their cheerfulness—an attitude I have admired.

Interacting with the youth has been for me a source of vitality and inspiration. I had the opportunity of journeying spiritually with many university students, and also with our junior Sisters who were preparing to enter religious life within

our Institute. Courses in music and singing gave me great opportunities to deeply communicate with the youth.

NOSTALGIA OR SOURCE OF DYNAMISM?

My thoughts often wander—thinking of the country and people I left behind. I reminisce over the circumstances and events that brought me so much happiness; the many friends, who over the years, became family for me.

Such deep friendship cannot be forgotten overnight; it has left a lasting effect in my heart. Luckily, today, modern communication makes it easy to keep contacts alive and immediate.

FROM ONE CULTURE TO ANOTHER

The life values of the Madagascan people helped me deepen certain aspects of my own culture which I had overlooked. For example, welcoming the stranger. How often members of our families of yesteryear, especially those who were from the countryside or small municipalities, would welcome a stranger, a traveler, or an itinerant at their table. The Madagascan families have retained that hospitality; there is always a bowl of rice for the needy. We take time to greet the person who crosses our path, we often offer ourselves to God, we part giving each other God's blessings. These are the many meaningful signs which express human values, harmonious communication, strong and abiding faith.

**MY MISSION TO BE CONTINUED
IN QUEBEC**

A year has already gone by since I have come back to my homeland. I was asked if I'd be willing to work with the Quebec youth. An enthusiastic yes was soon given; however, where to start and where to go? I went to the University of Montreal, knocked at several doors and a favorable reply came from the Centre Etudiant Benoit Lacroix which is located on Côte Sainte-Catherine Road, in Montreal. Students at CEBL come from various backgrounds—25 nationalities are represented. In such a context I felt right at home, it's as if the milieu was cut out for me. What joy to find so many young people from all over the world. Every evening, there are different activities: faith sharing sessions, music and song, prayers, film discussions, leisure time. The Eucharistic celebration held on Sunday evenings is hosted by the university students after which coffee is served and socializing takes place. I now take part in their liturgical singing; the group I have joined has a love for life and joy is easily expressed in song. As for the faith sharing group, it is attended by a good number of students who wish to nourish their spiritual life. Here, they find a place where questions can be asked openly and freely—together we try to bring light on the issues.

A SOURCE OF DYNAMISM

Journeying spiritually with the youth gives me joy and is most gratifying. Catechumens and young adults who ask to be baptized in the Catholic faith are well aware of their choice and are ready to live the Christian life with conviction; they are committed to follow Christ no matter the obstacles. A person whose origin is Islam, and who opts to be baptized, knows very well what her commitment to Christianity entails...

Those in charge of the Centre and of Youth Ministry are young adults. They accepted me in their circle as volunteer and my participation is mainly in spiritual guidance. I often see the grace of God active in the hearts of individuals and in the events of life.

For a missionary who has been absent so many years from her native land, this insertion within campus ministry is most favorable in discovering 21st century Quebec. It is wise to say that happiness is always present when we know how to read the signs that come our way and with joy commit one's self to the Lord's mission.

Somewhat like Délia Tétreault whose dream came true, I like to dream that Quebec will one day realize how abundantly blessed it has been—so much is offered to us as on a silver platter, and this in many areas of our everyday life.

Mission is not only in the 'doing' but rather in the 'being' with the Other whose presence is deeply within us and leads us to others who are in need of help. Sometimes a kind, comforting word transmits the Living Word in the heart of the person who is searching the way.

I therefore live my mission here in Canada as intensely as I did in Madagascar. The decor has changed, but happiness is ever growing. It is always there, if we know how to read the signs. 

^{1,2} Students at the Benoit-Lacroix Centre

³ Sr. Suzette with candidates opting for religious life—Madagascar

Photos credit: MIC

Happiness is
always there
if we know
how to read
the signs.



Dawn of a New Life

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

Délia Tétreault



Mariette Bouillé, M.I.C.
(Sr. Marie-Odette) 1918-2009
Montreal, Quebec

Second of a large family, Mariette quickly learned to be flexible. Her education received at the boarding school of the Sisters of Charity of Quebec also prepared her to adjust to situations. Shortly after her entrance in religious life, her father passed away. Though devastated, she knew how to accept without resistance. As a teacher in Haiti, Sr. Mariette was appreciated for her expertise in catechesis, but also as school principal and novice directress. Retired, she continued being joyful, helpful, and grateful. Always prayerful, Sr. Mariette passed away with knitting needles in hand, as if each stitch brought her closer to the Lord.



Jeannine Sabourin, M.I.C.
(Sr. St-Léonard-de-Port-Maurice)
1913-2009
Très Saint-Rédempteur, Quebec

At a young age, Jeannine would pray Mary for whatever she needed. Having completed her studies at a teacher training college in Rigaud, she wanted to become a religious, but did not know where to go. One day, two MIC Sisters were at her house, promoting the magazine *Le Précurseur/MIC Mission News*. As they needed someone to accompany them, Jeannine offered to assist the Sisters. As she talked with the missionaries, she realized she wanted to be like them. Later, as a religious, Sr. Jeannine endorsed various responsibilities: retreat organizer, superior at St-Jean, Chicoutimi and in Peru she rendered countless services. We could always depend on Sr. Jeannine's generosity; her amiable character was appreciated by all.



Jacqueline Chamberland, M.I.C.
(Sr. Sainte-Martine) 1925-2009
Saint-Philippe-de-Néri, Quebec

There were twelve children in Jacqueline's family; she was fifth in line. At age five, she already displayed enthusiasm in wanting to take charge of the ones who followed her. At seventeen, she received a teaching diploma and began her career as a teacher in a parish school of l'Ancienne Lorette. In 1946, after attending a retreat, Jacqueline decided to join the MIC Institute. After her religious training, she was assigned to Rome and later to Madagascar. Throughout the years, Sr. Jacqueline struggled with health problems. Though fragile, her moral strength kept her hopeful and with faith she lived her retirement years serenely.



Blandine Massé, M.I.C.
(Sr. Sainte-Blandine) 1926-2009
Saint-Sylvere, Quebec

It's with the Alleluias of Easter that Blandine was born. This young lady loved life and was attracted by its charms. However, in 1947, during a pilgrimage, she heard the Call—the following year she responded favorably. Her first mission assignment was in Haiti. An innate educator, she successfully presented her senior students to the official exams of Cap-Haitien. The overwhelming success of her students brought fame to the school and Sr. Blandine was given a new responsibility as 'prefect of studies in Haiti'. Until the very end of her life she demonstrated courage and radiated the spirit of faith that characterized her throughout her missionary life.

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!*



MURIETTE HILAIRE, M.I.C. (to the left)
Hinche, Haiti

Having been in charge of formation for the MIC postulants for many years, Sr. Muriette has recently received a new assignment and will leave for Peru. She will first study Spanish and then be involved in parish ministry.



MARIE AND SUZANNE LECLAIR, M.I.C.
Quebec City, Quebec

After a brief stay in Quebec, Srs. Marie and Suzanne returned to their beloved mission land, Malawi—Africa. With many years of experience, they both will be appreciated by the African people and their MIC companions.



VICTORINE RAZAFIARIMANANA, M.I.C.
Avaratrakoholahy, Madagascar

Experienced in the field of religious training, Sr. Victorine left for Cochabamba, Bolivia. She is a member of the new MIC international team at the novitiate in South America.



DORIS TWYMAN, M.I.C. (1st row, 2nd to the left)
La Tuque, Quebec

Sister Doris has returned to Lilongwe, Capital of Malawi—Africa. A second mandate has been entrusted to her as Provincial Superior.



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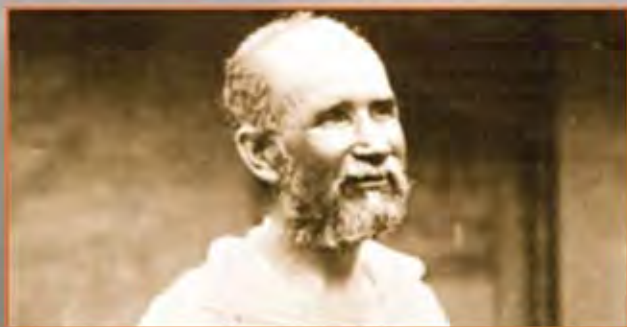


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Dream Dreams

*Dreams come and go in our lives.
Far more die than come to reality.
Reaching out to a dream
can be risky.*

*It can involve hardships
that our imaginations never knew.
Our comfortableness
can be disturbed.*

*But, what beauty
can be experienced
as we accept the challenge
of a dream.*

*What a precious feeling
to be supported,
to have others say you can do it.
Nothing is beyond our reach:
if we reach out together,
if we reach out with confidence,
if we are willing to persevere
even in difficult times,
if we rejoice with every small step
forward, if we dream beautiful
dreams that will transform
our lives, our world.*

(anonymous)

