

MIC

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MISSION NEWS



To sow seeds of joy and hope

HAITI

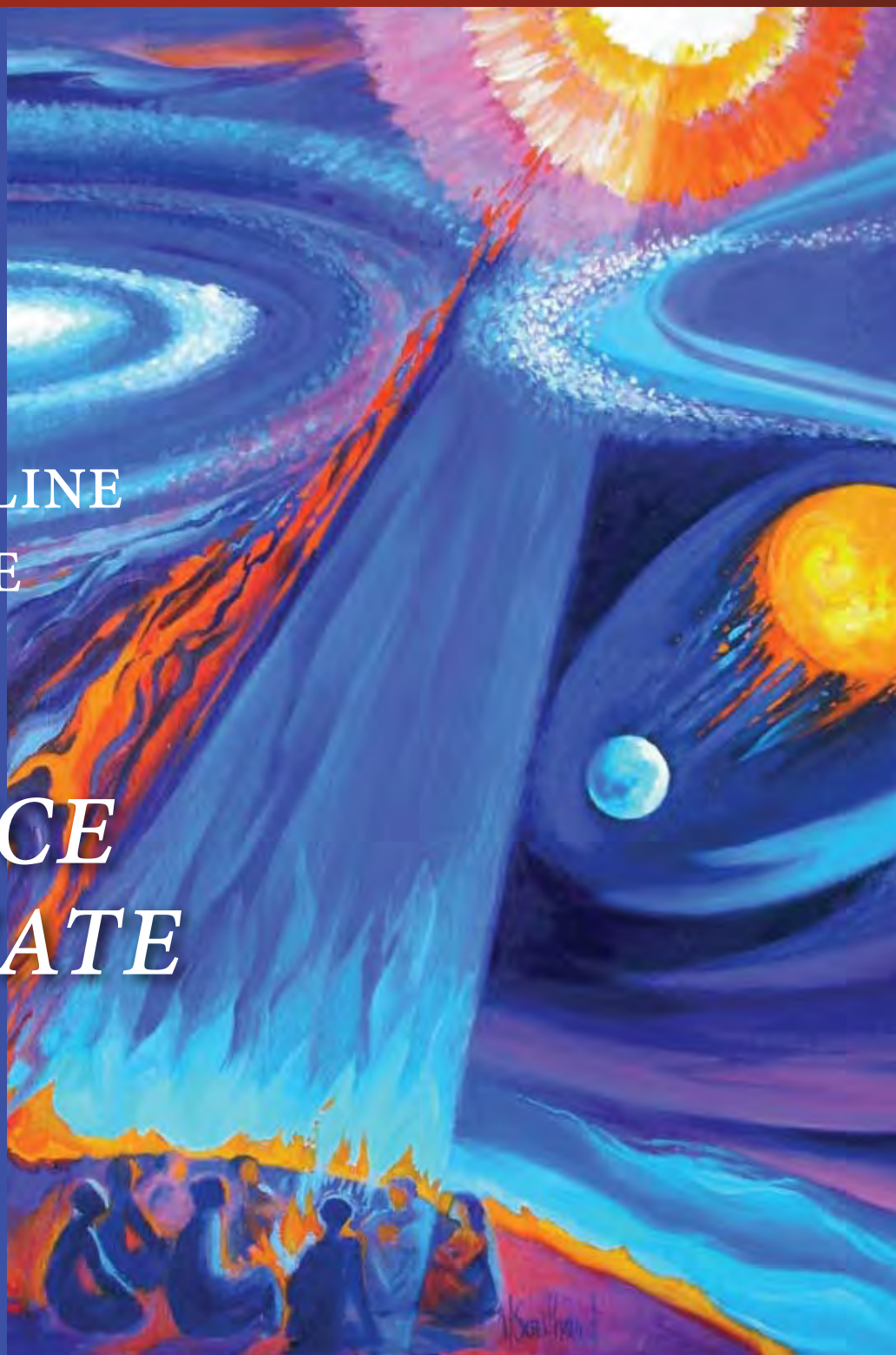
Voodoo

JERUSALEM

ALONG THE LINE OF DIALOGUE

IN FOCUS

PRESENCE INCARNATE



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

OCTOBER

For the Spirit of Mission

May the entire People of God assume their missionary responsibility eagerly and consider it the highest service they can offer humanity.

NOVEMBER

That the Name of God Brings Peace

May believers of all faiths clearly demonstrate through the testimony of their lives that God represents peace.

DECEMBER

For Universal Recognition of Christ as the Light of the World

May people everywhere be illuminated by the Christmas message and thus open their hearts to Christ, the Saviour of the world.

MASSES FOR READERS' INTENTIONS OFFERED IN THE FOLLOWING COUNTRIES:

January: *Canada*

February: *Cuba*

March: *Philippines*

April: *Haiti*

May: *Canada*

June: *Bolivia*

July: *Malawi and Zambia*

August: *Hong Kong and Taiwan*

September: *Madagascar*

October: *Peru*

November: *Japan*

December: *Canada*



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Why Not Choose God?

Every year, I am fascinated by the flamboyant colours of the autumn season. I vividly remember a trip I made to Saint-Paulin, in Mauricie, where the T.V. series *Marguerite Volant* was being filmed at Le Baluchon Domain. It was a splendid sunny day; the golden fields radiated beauty and at a far-away distance a small chapel reminded us of our ancestors who fought for their faith and language.

The splendour of this rural landscape evoked within me a thousand questions. God took quite a risk when He created humanity! He chose us to be His children and to be the caretakers of His creation; so why not choose Him as our Father and Creator? His glory bursts forth and shines through His magnificent masterpiece.

From the very beginning of the world, the human person has been seeking the divine. In Mesopotamia, it's the sun god Bel; for the Semites, it's the storm god Ba'al; in the desert the Hebrews opted for the golden calf¹; at Areopagus, Paul discovered an altar with the inscription: TO AN UNKNOWN GOD². The Samaritan woman asked the essential question: *Where must we adore, on the mountain or in Jerusalem?*³ Still today, we are searching for God: the Haitians in the Voodoo; the Bolivians with the Pachamama; and what about us, do we search for God?

The human person is not created for a finite purpose but rather for the infinite. I can still hear my nephew saying: *How I would love to speak to God face to face!* That simple statement expresses very well his quest for the infinite. We are created for the Other and this Other is the Divine.

*He is the Way, the Truth and the Life.*⁴ Saint Paul affirmed: *I know whom I have believed...*⁵ likewise, can we say the same?

This issue presents peoples in search of an incarnated presence, wishing to enter in communication with this unknown God to whom they have given many names. However, God is Love and He hears the prayers of all, no matter the manner in which they address Him.

To believe in the Infinite is to choose and trust God! It is to develop that spiritual dimension that is deep within the heart of each human person.

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

¹ Exodus 32:4

² Acts 17:23

³ Jn 4:19

⁴ Jn 14:6

⁵ 2 Tm 1:12

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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.

Laetitia Blais Thouin

— **St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, QC**

I had some free time to myself so I re-read your magazine (Winter issue 2009) and wish to congratulate your Community for its 100th anniversary of mission work in China. I love your Foundress Délia Tétreault, particularly when she says: ***Give lavishly your smiles and gentleness, sow joy abundantly—it is the bread most lacking in our world...*** Can we be Christians if we are not first and foremost human?

Bravo to all the pioneer missionaries who labored tirelessly in China and to all those who have had the courage to follow them.

I will treasure this issue and read it again. The photos are beautiful and the back cover is attractive with the Virgin Mary holding her Child Jesus.

Rosaire Lefebvre — Joliette, QC

Your issue on ***Human Rights*** (Spring 2009) has touched me deeply. As mentioned by the Editor, Sr. Marie-Paule Sanfaçon: ***Defending the human rights concerns each one of us.*** With great admiration for your work as missionaries I wish to help in promoting and establishing dignity and justice for all.

Gilda Giron — Toronto, ON

I enjoyed reading the ***MIC Mission News***. I am so grateful and I thank God for the gift of Venerable Délia Tétreault and her missionary daughters who were my educators and inspiration in Manila. I carry wonderful memories of all the MIC Sisters who taught me.



*“Samaria—what a hostile place!
Inhabited by such dull people!”.
So wrote the author of the book of
Sirach about the Samaritans who dwell
in Sichem (50:26). In the time of Jesus,
when a Jew wanted to insult another person he
would treat him as a Samaritan (Jn 8:48).*



WHERE



By André Gadbois

The gospel writer, Luke, tells us how the Samaritans blocked the road to Jesus and his disciples who were heading for Jerusalem (Lk 9: 51.53). Yet, it was with a Samaritan woman of that region, that Jesus had a conversation revealing His true nature (Jn 4). As He was sitting by Jacob's well, at the hottest period of the day—the hour the women refrained from drawing water, one of them approaches. Jesus may have wondered why this Samaritan woman is coming to the well when all others abstain from doing so. But Jesus makes the first move and asks her: *Will you give me a drink?* She is stunned: who is this person who is so daring? Who dares to speak to a woman and above all a Samaritan woman? They have a conversation and speak about water, the bucket, the living water which becomes a spring of water welling up to eternal life. With insight she discovers in Him Someone whom she finally calls Master. She does not run away, nor hide her face, she does not seem disillusioned because He is a Jew. Leaving aside the traditions of her religion, she is open to His word: *Sir, give me of Your water!* The conversation continues in truthfulness—she acknowledges not having good morals: she is a sinner! And with this Jew who is attentive and respectful, she broaches the subject of God, her own God experience. Jesus does not lead her to the synagogue nor to another sacred place, He guides her to go within herself to discover the inner spirit and truth. By His attitude and His Spirit, she recognizes Him as a prophet.

At the moment the apostles arrive on the scene, feeling uneasy because of what they briefly witnessed, she leaves behind

Should We ADORE?

her bucket because she has been filled with His words and runs to the city to tell people about Him.

TRUTH IN THE RELATIONS

Knowledgeable of the Scriptures, the books of Moses and all the prophets, having frequented the synagogue and the Temple, Jesus was nevertheless a critic of a religion which could blur the true Face of God and impose religious laws difficult to break through. If we take time to observe the presence of Jesus in different circumstances—with the Samaritan, the woman on the verge of being stoned, Zacchaeus, Nicodemus, the blind at Siloam, Mary-Magdalene, the Centurion, Pilate, the two disciples on the road to Emmaus...and if we allow the Spirit to reveal to us the words He spoke in parables, we then discover a Jesus of incomparable compassion and mercy for His friends as well as for His enemies. With the stranger He is attentive, respectful and vigilant, He is loving yet He is capable of anger before those who falsify religious practices and impose impossible burdens on the faithful. The importance for Jesus is truth in the relations we build with the Divine and the human in each one of us. *Christ calls us to truth because He Himself is Truth. Should we turn our backs on Him to seek out truth, the road would lead us right back in His arms.*¹

THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE KNOWS NOT GOD

When I was young we would play baseball in the back alley and we would say: *Three strikes! Out! You're dead!* And I would be eliminated from the game because of my three errors. The Samaritan had three strikes against her: she was a woman, a Samaritan and a sinner. *Out!* The religious referee had decided as

such, and this was no game. Before the law, she was dead, and that was the reason she went to Jacob's well at noon time when no one else would be there. She would be alone, escaping all the gossip, she would have peace. Jesus met her, gave her comfort and brought her life. True religion should produce such an effect—authentic adoration. Jesus said to the Samaritan: *God is Spirit and His worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth* (Jn 4:24). By these words He focused on her personal awareness and her inner self, her spirituality. He spoke the truth, recognizing that He is the Way (or Voice) that leads to the Father without

¹WEIL, Simone,

Waiting for God, p. 45-46.

²Vatican II, *Non Christians*, art.5, p. 667

Photo:

Stained glass window of the Quebec National Assembly Hall
Artist: Guido Nincheri, Quebec

Jesus was nevertheless a critic of a religion which would blur the true face of God and impose religious laws difficult to break through. 

disqualifying or looking down on other ways. Jesus gave His life to reconcile differences. In the documents of the Vatican Council II, section NON-CHRISTIANS, the Fathers wrote: *We cannot in truthfulness call upon that God who is the Father of all if we refuse to act in a brotherly way toward certain men, created though they be to God's image. A man's relationship with God the Father and his relationship with his brother men are so linked together that Scripture says: "He who does not love does not know God"* (1 Jn 4:8).² On reading Matthew 25: 31-46 I can only imagine that those who love also do know God in a certain way. 



For the Husson family, a great missionary dream is being realized. Thierry and Christine with their three adolescents have landed in Bolivia. They are here to offer their services in the field of their competence. Recently, they attended a Bolivian ceremony—the *Pachamama*. Christine shares with us their missionary adventure.

THE *PACHAMAMA*

By Christine Husson

We are members of the Dominican Fraternity. My husband and I had expressed the desire to live a mission experience as a family. We were referred to the Intercommunity Program for Missions Abroad (PIFM). During our training we came in contact with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. We were looking for a concrete project to which we could bring some assistance. Sr. Murielle Dubé, M.I.C., a missionary in Bolivia happened to be in Montreal at that time. We met and she informed us of the multiple possibilities of insertion where she is working. This is all we needed—the wind was in our sails and immediate preparations for a missionary send-off began to evolve.

A DREAM COMING TRUE

The dream—to leave—has its expectations and wishes. The mission becomes a source of journeying and sharing, requir-

ing many adjustments. The dream to leave as a family can become a nightmare, create insecurities, and go as far as causing revolts. Our family mission experience has had us live all kinds of challenges; we doubted, negotiated, cried, journeyed inwardly—but above all, we continued...

First difficulty? Find a mission insertion that would accept us as a family! And two months before our departure, our eldest son experienced his first love. He, who all along had been the most supportive of the project, overnight became the fiercest opponent. How to react? We wanted our children to live such an experience, we wanted them to be open to other realities, to discover poverty, to be in touch with another world. Our third challenge? To accept that our family project be different from what we first thought it would be. We are currently working at the Institute of Rural Education (IER). For the young Bolivian women it is a surprise for them to see us serving as a family. Being in their midst is an eye-opener for reflection and

many have come to us to testify positively of our presence as a family.

THE PACHAMAMA

Shortly after our arrival in Bolivia, we were invited to a local celebration. How surprised I was to see an old lady throw on the ground a bit of *chicha* (corn alcohol) before drinking it—according to my thinking, that was a waste! Why was she doing that?

Later, I learned that in the Quechua culture, the *Pachamama* (mother earth) is a very important deity: she gives life, nourishes and provides all the elements we need to live. To throw some alcohol on the ground is a ritual of thanksgiving for creation.

I come from a world where there is abundant waste and we give our surplus; but this woman took that which was essential to her and offered it—what a lesson for me! This reminded me of the gospel story The Widow's Offering; she gave all she possessed: two very small copper coins...(Lk 21:2.4).

In Bolivia, the *Pachamama* is honored in a special way. During carnival time, at the end of February. Each person gives thanks and it is expressed differently—some have their taxi blessed, others their work place, or their home, or their school...

This tradition is so deeply rooted in the culture that the Church has integrated it into its rituals. Giving thanks (*Ch'alla*) is paying homage to mother-earth. Sprinkling each other with water during the carnival season is also traditional and is very important to all young Bolivians of the area: it is an expression of thanks to mother earth who gives nourishment.

CH'ALLA AT THE INSTITUTE

At the IER where we are committed as lay missionaries, the *Ch'alla* is organized by the students. They prepare many kinds of garlands with fruits, flowers and balloons to decorate the building and classrooms. They also decorate an altar with various offerings. When ready, they invite us to participate in the ritual of blessings, which is of greatest importance

to them. Far from leading them away from their faith, these rituals take on a deeper meaning in the light of the Gospel.

We who live in a so-called “developed” society, have long forgotten to respect the earth that feeds us, we are actually destroying it. The native traditions are reminding us that God has entrusted mother-earth to our care that it may be fruitful. With great respect for what she offers us, we should give praise and thanksgiving.

IS THE MISSION EXPERIENCE WORTHWHILE?

For our children who did not receive a formal training before leaving, and who had to leave behind their friends, their way of life and their world, the experience is difficult. The culture shock, the Bolivian daily routine, the life with young women from remote villages and also being with religious women—we have asked a great deal from them. Though they do not have the same kind of commitment as we have in this missionary project, and they are more observers than actors, the time in mission will probably remain engraved in their spirit.

It is too soon to contemplate the fruits of this beautiful adventure. In two months we will return to our country, enriched in so many ways that it will take time for us to reflect and understand the profound meaning of this experience. For us, as parents, it has been very positive and without hesitation we would be ready to start all over again. For the children, a small seed has been planted. With time, we will see the results. 

Native traditions are reminding us that God has entrusted mother-earth to our care that it may be fruitful.



¹ Husson family

² Students at IER celebrate the *Pachamama*

³ Gracefully thanking mother earth

Photos Credit: C. Husson



The Breath in Awa's Ear



1

Very committed to her Catholic faith, Carole receives an unexpected invitation. In a friendly way and also with a bit of curiosity, she accepts to be Godmother to her longtime Senegalese friend's child. Yes, it is a baptism, but in the Islam religion. With Carole, let's open our hearts and take part in this ceremony.



By Carole Guévin

Contractions! Contractions! I am hastily walking the streets of Montreal towards the hospital. It's Friday the 13th – do I believe in superstitions? My friend keeps calm! A few hours later, Khousséynatou gives birth to a charming little girl. It's a happy day for this baby; it's a day of luck and joy for this young Senegalese family of the Muslim religion. For them, Friday is a very special day—it is dedicated to Allah, to prayers at the Mosque and to fraternity.

A few days later, the family asks me to be the Godmother of this little one. What a surprise! I, a Christian, can I accept such an honor? My scruples rapidly vanish; I do not allow the old stories about divisions in beliefs spoil my joy. Actually, I feel privileged and proud to be part of this extended family.

M'BHÂ¹

At birth, the Moslem baby is initiated into the religion by the father. It's at the

family home that the religious ceremony takes place. The priest, the Imam, dressed in a white bubu arrives first.

The Imam declares that all new-born babies have a right to be baptized on the 7th day after birth. I take the child and place her in the arms of the Imam. He gently breathes her surname in her right ear and then begins reciting the first sura of the Koran, *Al Fâtihat*. The breath and whispered prayer confirm the baby's entrance into the Islam religion; it professes that the child be raised and die in the faith. The name is chosen by the father with the mother's consent. The little one will be called *Awa*, which means Eve, the paternal grand-mother's name.

Once the name and prayer verses have been whispered, the Imam recites l'*Iqamah* which is a call to formal prayer. The men are gathered in the living room to hear the instructions. In another room, the women meditate on the Word they hear.

OPENED TO THE UNKNOWN

The Imam then asks the assembly to say prayers that the child be protected from all harm and that she may have a long and good life. Thereafter, the hair of the new born is shaved as a sign of purification. It is said that wealthy families must give in gold the equivalent weight of the hair to the poor.

Two days before the ceremony takes place, the women prepare the lamb and chicken for an unlimited number of guests. Everyone is invited! For the occasion most of the men wear the traditional costume, the African multicolor bubu; the women wear a long tunic and a scarf (chador) which covers most of the hair.

Another ritual is performed and that is the sacrifice of a lamb for this special ceremony. The meaning of the sacrifice is to become closer to Allah by the blood that is shed; it is to wish happiness to the newborn and ask for protection from all evil.

Very early on the morning of the baptism, Ousmane, the father of the baby, presents himself to the butcher's shop *halâl*. For the meat to be *halâl*, a deep incision on the neck of the animal must be performed on the same day, in the name of Allah, and according to the *dhabihah* which is a method of ritual slaughter of all the animals prescribed by the Islamic law. Once done, the father returns to his house with the cut pieces of lamb. In fact, lamb meat must be divided in three parts: the first portion is to prepare the food intended for the visitors and neighbours, the second is kept raw and is destined to be distributed to the poor, and the third part is reserved for the family.

MEETING WITH TRADITION

Men are served first; they are seated on the floor around large bowls full of rice, lamb, vegetables and hot sauce. With their right hand they serve themselves and take delight in these traditional savoury dishes.

Later, as I look over this religious ceremony taped by a cameraman, I hear the words Issa and Myriam, Jesus and Mary. Instantly, I am brought back to my own



¹ Meaning "father" in M'Deigne, Senegalese dialect.

Photos:

¹ Awa, on her Baptism day

² Ousmane is proud of his daughter.

Photos Credit: C. Guévin

This baptism has led me to experience an encounter with a great spiritual tradition.

Catholic faith. This baptism has led me to experience an encounter with a great spiritual tradition. Contrary to what some may think, in no way do I feel the danger of apostasy when sharing this time of celebration with my Muslim friends.

Such a festive spiritual ceremony makes me realize the Infinite Intelligence of God who manifests Itself in ways that we, as humans, cannot grasp nor understand. Moreover, the first sura, *Al Fâtiha*, speaks of God the Absolute; a word concludes the prayer, *amine*. It is the same word that comes at the end of my Our Father, *amen*. ∞

She was a young career woman—personnel manager of a multinational business corporation. Her social status and circle of friends were the envy of many. Then came a gentle whisper, deep within her heart, and to Cindy Ko's surprise it changed her life around. She relates what happened.

AMAZING GRACE

— *Indeed!*



By Claudette Bouchard, M.I.C.

The twists and turns of life are unpredictable. In Hong-Kong there are the government schools, subsidized schools and private schools. I had chosen to attend a government secondary school when my longtime friend decided to enroll in a private Catholic school. How could we separate after so many years? I looked her way and followed her. Some courses offered at this Catholic school were unfamiliar to me—bible study, religious education, Christian faith sharing, all these were new to me. I didn't know what they meant, but I thought they must be important since they were part of the curriculum. The school year began with a Mass; it was my first time to see the unfolding of such a ceremony. Not only was I curious about what was going on but I was especially impressed. When people went up to take communion, I wondered what they were doing and why they were

eating what they were receiving. I started questioning and taking interest in religious education courses. Two years later I asked to be baptized in the Catholic faith. My mother who adheres to the Chinese Popular Religion reluctantly approved my request. As for my father, he went along with my decision because all he wanted was my happiness.

After high-school graduation, I started working and became increasingly frivolous. I never had enough of parties, outings, and of whatever was worldly. Gradually I drifted away from Church; for some twenty years I never gave God a thought.

MEETING A FRIEND

After so many years, I met one of my former Protestant friends. Her faith-filled convictions impressed me greatly. She was involved in many of her church's activities and her sense of belonging was inspiring.

Something within me started stirring... and questions welled up: What about me? Where am I in my faith? Where am I in my commitment to Jesus and His Church? What have I done with the religious knowledge I received in high-school? At the office where I worked, some colleagues were Catholics. I approached them and asked if there were Catholic Churches in the vicinity; with joy they showed me the way, and all this happened just before the Lenten season.

Entering the church after some twenty-years seemed like a miracle. I met a priest and during our conversation tears of joy appeared as I could hardly believe what was happening to me. I became a member of my local parish community in the New Territory. With spiritual books at hand I became an avid reader and re-discovered God in my life. In the parish, Sunday school for children was a priority. One day, the person in charge asked me if I would accept teaching the younger ones. My immediate answer was negative because I did not have enough religious knowledge; however she convinced me that one important factor to be a religious education teacher was to love children, she then added that all R.E.T. receive a training. She convinced me and I accepted to give it a try. I never regretted my decision! Preparing the content for each week's class helped me tremendously to grow in faith... I was so enriched and enlightened that I felt God was the potter and I the clay. The more he molded me in the faith the more I felt and knew He was preparing me for something special.

TASTE AND SEE

On a certain occasion I met Sr. Pauline Yuen, M.I.C.; I didn't know she was a religious sister but her joyfulness attracted me—I found her different and I felt called to hear more about her and her community. I personally had never thought of religious life and never knew what it entailed. I was invited to come see what community and religious life was all about. Without leaving my work, I decided to give this experience a try for

six months. I took the risk; I knew God would take care of me.

Having tasted this new way of life I had a desire to carry on, to go further in my search. I decided to leave my career behind; after ten years working with the same colleagues it was difficult to say farewell, but I had the inner strength to do so, because God's love was leading me.

I had been independent for so long, I had controlled my life for so many years, how could I adjust to this new way of life? Letting go of that power was a struggle; however, God's Call was intense and heard. Gradually, I learned to yield to God's loving will.

TIME TO MOVE ON

My formal training in religious life took place in Baguio, Philippines. It was the first time I had left Hong-Kong to embrace another culture. At the Novitiate, three different nationalities were represented; we all had different backgrounds and mentalities. For me, the language was a problem—however, this was a good test to see if I could adapt.

Shortly after my first religious profession, I taught at our Good Hope Primary School for one year. I was then transferred to Japan where I brushed up my Japanese language. Though not fluent, I was able to take a course in the Montessori school teaching method. The practicum sessions were enriching as I was sent to various kindergartens and had first-hand experience in observing how Montessori schools operate.

I am now in my third year as a junior profess. What God has in store for me is a mystery, but I trust that He is leading me and helping me to grow in faith. Perhaps I do not understand His plans at this time but one day I will. Writer and philosopher Soren Kierkegaard once wrote—*Life is lived forward but understood backward*. This is precisely what my current life experience is telling me; however, the Spirit of Thanksgiving which is the Institute's spirituality gives me wings to continue responding to the Call. 

Something within me started stirring...



¹ Cindy at Good Hope's Primary School in Hong Kong

² Cindy with her parents

Photos Credit: MIC



David's Flute

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

When I was young, I loved Christmas stories. My mother had a special way of reading them, she would always add some spice to the tale that kept me intrigued. The story I preferred the most was—David's Flute.

It happened a very long time ago in Israel. The inhabitants lived in harmony with nature. The boys would keep the sheep in the fields and in the mountains. David, a young shepherd, would take this time of solitude to play his flute. Actually, he had two of them: one for daytime—he would play happy tunes and fill the air with melodies people would hear from afar. The other flute was special. He would play it at night when only the angels would hear and many came to his concerts. David knew he had quite a few friends among the angels.

One night, after the concert, all the angels left except one. He came close to David and had a SECRET to share with him. He gently whispered in the shepherd's ear HIS BIG SECRET...the one he cherished in his heart.

David carefully listened to the angel and the following night, he tried to convince other shepherds to come with him. As they walked through the valleys and

hills, angels were there with them, but only David could see them. They finally arrived at a small, humble stable; they saw far inside a new-born baby whose parents were in deep admiration. The father invited the shepherds to come in. They all hurried inside to see the Infant. What Joy! David bowed deeply in adoration. The father looked at David and said: *I see you have two flutes, would you play for the Infant? Oh no*, David answered, *I cannot! This flute is for the humans and the other is for the angels*. The happy father smiled and replied: *You don't know who I am. I am Joseph, a carpenter like my father. One of our ancestors was a shepherd like you. He used to play the flute; but when he became king he stopped playing. After he died, we found his precious flute. We passed it on from one generation to another...What a precious memento! So, please play—it's for the GOOD SHEPHERD*.

David took his flute and began playing all the lovely melodies he knew. Everybody heard him—humans and angels; and the Child listened with delight.

At this time of the year, David would want to give his flutes to other young shepherds. Do you want one? You can choose the one you want—the one for the humans which you play during the day to bring comfort to all the people who suffer and are unhappy on earth. If you choose the flute for the angels, they will become your friends. But you must know that this unique flute is special because you will be able to play it only at night and the humans will not hear it. However, your new friends, the angels who keep watch over all the humans will guide you on the road to their hearts. Therefore, whether you choose the flute for the humans or the one for the angels, you will become the young shepherd who will help the Good Shepherd in His mission of love and peace on this earth, especially on the beautiful Christmas night. ♡

Watercolor: Geneviève Dick
<http://creincarnation.com/contact>



PRESENCE INCARNATE

BETWEEN DREAM AND REALITY

A reflection between dream and reality:

Myself, the earth, humanity and “the One who created all”.



By André Sanfaçon

Planet Earth is round, we go round and round, we live in a circle and often times even our thoughts go round. Where is the beginning? Where is the end? What is the goal? What is the end?

In this text, the “I” and “me” includes you; we are all of this Earth, of the same essence, united in hope.

FROM PERSONAL TO UNIVERSAL: THE I TOWARD THE OTHERS AND THE BEYOND

I have a name, a family, an address; I live on a street, in a district, in a city, in a province or state. I have a homeland, the country where I was born or I might live in another country, the one I have adopted. I have a right to possess a birth certificate and a passport. I can cross borders, sometimes with a visa and other requirements.

Though I can travel legally, I still need to cross the cultural barriers which have been defined over the centuries: other mentalities, other visions of the world. To travel is to go beyond my own boundary to reach others—it is a way of discovering our differences but also our similarities. It is not necessary to go to the ends of the earth to note and recognize that we all have a desire for freedom, even though we may live it differently.

And what about God, *the One who created all*, as the early Native people called the Creator? If there is a God, there is only ONE—no matter the Name, no matter the way we approach the Divinity, at the end it is always the same One. All the rest is a combination of cultural expressions which define the religions. There are vari-

ous ways of praying to the Almighty who is always the same One, whether we are on earth or somewhere in the Universe.

FROM UNIVERSAL TO PERSONAL: THE BEYOND AND THE OTHERS TOWARD THE I

From a bird’s-eye view or looking down from a very high altitude, peoples, cultures, frontiers, economic and political systems seem to even-out. In an instant, I can feel I am a citizen of Planet Earth, so small in the infinite Universe.

From above, barriers, prohibitions, quarrels all seem so ridiculous; while reconciling, accommodating appear so easy. I dream of a united humanity. Ecumenical relations—the spiritual inter-faith dialogue and activity are obvious and necessary; our human condition draws us to the one and same obligation—that of speaking with one another to ultimately speak with one voice to the Almighty, even though there are differences in our languages and cultural expressions. If God has created us as such, then He understands us all. And if God is everywhere He is where certain people do not perceive Him or see Him either only in nature, in beliefs, in rituals, or in a multitude of divinities. At the end, we always find *the One who created all!* There is no divisive matter. We are all humans, dependant on each other in our needs and aspirations; therefore why not find common ground?

Some seem to have found it. Certain men and women have a world vision and sincerely feel they are citizens of the world, respecting freedom and differences. They love, forgive and shine by the ideas

they put forward and the goodness they personify. From their universal consciousness emanates a serene attitude, a joy they can hardly contain, a deep inner peace, a sentiment of security no matter where they are or what they do. They believe in Mankind. They are humanists—they don't think themselves unique although they are; they share the human condition, mortal, fragile, a life that is incredibly beautiful to be respected in all its phases.

No matter our condition, it is above all human. If at all times we could be consciously aware of the present moment, of the beauty of life, there would be more space for true dialogue, sharing, openness, ecumenism, in short humanism.

I am aware that this universal vision is both real and utopian—it encompasses a human being dreaming of equality, freedom and fraternity. I also remember that life is such that I must defend my condition, my rights, my language, my earnings. Again, I am confronted with a desire to possess, I am inclined to withdraw into myself in fear of the other—yet, I continue wishing that my dream will come true. I hope and then I despair; I am capable of soaring aspirations and then of despicable acts. Is this not part of the human condition?

I have a name, a family..., in fact, a very large family on a world wide scale. Becoming more aware of this reality obliges me to think of the consequences my

daily actions might have on others. I must think in terms of: myself and the others, with the others, for the others. This magnificent ascent is not easy. At the same time these shifts move me to pause and reflect. May God help me in my incoherence and contradictions.

In the light of what I have written, how can I describe my understanding of internationality, of interculturalism, of ethnicity, of pluralism, of ecumenism, of humanism, of my faith in Humankind and in God?

I begin to understand what Jesus was proposing when he said: *Love your neighbor as yourself* (Mk 12:31). I would like to answer: *But, Lord, He is so different from me!* In fact, this is a life-long program because it is through humanity that we reach *the One who created all!* ☺



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No
matter
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¹ Bright Wings

Artist: Mary Southard, csj

Courtesy of:

www.ministryofthearts.org

LaGrange Park, IL 60526-1721

TSO-DRANO IN THE LIFE OF THE MALAGASY PEOPLE

Tso-Drano (breath of water) is a special blessing unique to the Malagasy people. This symbolic ritual calls upon the presence of all invisible living souls that they may pass on their sacred life onto their beneficiary. At their perpetual vows, the young Malagasy nuns receive from their relatives the blessing of their *razana*, their ancestors.



By Perpétue
Razafindrahaingo,
M.I.C.

After many years of religious training and academic studies, Sr. Erika Jeanne Hanitrarinina is admitted to her perpetual vows. An evening of prayer precedes the ceremony. Sr. Erika speaks about her vocation. Her parents and relatives give an account of her early childhood years, her adolescence, her choice for a life-long commitment—a video complements the stories. The next day, at Ambohibary, Sister's birthplace, bells are heard and are calling people to the ceremony which will be presided over by Msgr. Joseph D. Leo Pelletier, Bishop of Morondova where Sister Erika is currently working. Ten priests have joined the Bishop and will concelebrate.

The solemn blessing *Tso-Drano* precedes the Eucharist. With pride, Sister's father takes a cedar branch, dips it in holy water and sprinkles his daughter who is kneeling to receive this holy blessing. Her mother, aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters repeat the same ritual. Thus, family and friends express their wishes of happiness and confirm her choice—the religious life.

SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN THE VISIBLE AND THE INVISIBLE

According to the Malagasy tradition, the blessing is of utmost importance when one is making a lifetime choice. I asked a friend Alfredo H. Ramanandraibe, c.s.sp. to explain the meaning. According to him, the *Tso-Drano* points out the symbiosis which exists between the visible world and the invisible one. The person who blesses, calls upon the presence of the invisible living souls that they may transmit the *hasina* (sacred life) to the beneficiary.

RELIGIOUS AND POLITICAL ROLE

In the invisible world, the Supreme Being, *Zanahary*, the divinities, followed by the great ancestors, all govern the universe. *Zanahary* is the principle, the source of life and existence; the divinities, ancestors transmit the *hasina* the sacred vital energy. The visible world, the elderly and parents, as well as group leaders whose authority comes directly from the ancestors' *hasina* are considered as responsible in the political and religious arenas. This visible world assures the protection of the com-



The success does not come from having a superior position within the group, but rather from each person being well-integrated in their function, whatever it may be.



mon good and harmony among the living and non-living in daily life. The consensus is governed by social interaction, sharing and hospitality.

The parents and elderly endorse a religious role: they have the responsibility of connecting the visible world to the invisible one. They pray the *kao-drazana* and the *tso-drano*, they establish a dialogue between the great ancestors and their descendants. The elders transmit the *hasina* via the *tso-drano* to the living members of the group.

The economy, the sharing of good and the exploitation of the natural resources are under the control of wise parents and the elders who assure a harmonious co-existence among the visible living beings and the non-visible ones, all of whom are conveyors of the vital energy to the society meant to be well blessed.

WELL INTEGRATED WITHIN THE SOCIETY

The harmony and peace of a society depend largely on a well-integrated dynamic fully lived by each member and a sound relationship with God. The success

does not come from having a superior position within the group, but rather from each person being well-integrated in their function, whatever it may be.

When a couple gets married or a young woman pronounces her religious perpetual vows, the parents bless them, praying that they will be well-integrated in their new way of life and this according to the good will of the ancestors. Such a blessing calls forth happiness to be experienced in the family circle and also in society.

At the moment of the Eucharist, Sr. Erika who is calm and recollected comes forward to the sanctuary in presence of Sr. Louise Denis, Superior General. She pronounces her vows of poverty, chastity and obedience which she promises to observe according to the Constitutions of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. The congregation shares the emotion and jubilation of the chosen one. After the Mass, a festive meal is served followed by dances, songs and entertainment.

We wish deep happiness to Sr. Erika who chose to give her life to God in the pursuit of Jesus' Mission in the world.



¹ *Tso-Drano* ritual

² Sr. Erika and her parents

³ Sr. Erika, Sr. Louise Denis, Superior General (center), Sr. Jeanne Marthe, Superior Provincial

Photos Credit: Lucie Gagné, M.I.C.

VOODOO IN A CATHOLIC COUNTRY

The Republic of Haiti has a population of 8,821,709; more than a million and a half live outside the country. If 80% of the inhabitants are Catholics, why do they still take part in *Voodoo* practices? Sister Mésina has researched this question to better understand the soul of her people.

Religious identity is considered as one of the main facets of a person's cultural identity. It is therefore impossible to consider the life of the Haitian people without mentioning Voodoo. This religion is intimately linked to its culture and its African origins.

THE ISSUE

Being a Haitian missionary, I've had occasions of criss-crossing my country. My visits to the *houmtforts* (a place where Voodoo rituals are performed) located in rural areas and even at the Capital gave me the incentive to learn more about the Voodoo tradition. As a youngster, I never had permission to pronounce the word Voodoo, much less to speak about it openly. It was forbidden by the Catholic Church who identified Voodoo with fetishism or idolatry. The education we received taught us to turn away from Voodooism.

Laennec Hurbon, a renowned Haitian scholar and writer, once said: *Shadows of Voodoo churches and temples cover all of Haiti's countryside*. When asked about his religious adherence, he responds that he is a Christian Catholic even though he is a Voodooist. As we often say in Haiti: *we must be Catholic to practice Voodoo*. Is this not the reason why Catholics continue to adhere to their religious tradition? It encompasses an important place in their cultural heritage.

A BIT OF HISTORY

In the seventeenth century, after the discovery of America, a labour force was in great demand. To fill the need, a treaty: *Traite des Noirs* was issued; from the African coasts, 14 to 20 million Black people were expatriated. Slavery was a solid, well established institution among the powerful colonial countries. The French colonialists did all in their power to negate the slaves' cultural past: their cults were forbidden and they all had to become baptized Catholics.

Stripped of their language and their religion, being without resort of any kind,

the slaves rose in revolt and retaliated against the oppression: they created a common language—Créole—and a common religion—Voodoo, fermenting signs of cultural cohesion and political resistance.

Voodoo means god, spirit or sacred object—within a larger context it signifies a collection of practices and beliefs, it is an amalgamation of African spirit, religions and Catholicism. On the one hand there are the sacred performances and behaviours; on the other, witchcraft and aggressive, criminal magic are included. According to the traditional Créole, the magical word Voodoo signifies a mystical power, a supernatural force. The Voodoo priest, *houngan*, is weak but his magic is powerful. In practice, the people say he serves the *loas*, the spirits.



By Mésina Paulémon, M.I.C.

Shadows of Voodoo churches and temples cover all of Haiti's countryside.

THE HAITIAN VOODOO

One of the most basic concepts of Haitian Voodoo: there is one God—Trinity—Father, Son, Holy Spirit. This ineffable entity is the Great Master, the unique Creator of all—totally distant from man. However, this God has created spirits, *loas*, who dwell on earth and whose nature is more subtle than ours. These spirits protect and guide humans; they lead them closer to the divine and help them solve their daily difficulties.

In certain regions of the country, these spirits are called: *angels, mysteries, loas*. The Voodooist describes himself as a servant, he does not adore the *loas*—only the Great Master is worthy of adoration. However, the Voodooist must adequately serve the spirits. The priesthood of Voodoo contains both men, *houngan*, and women, *mambo*. They assume the responsibilities of their community and are con-



¹Grand-Bassin, Artibonite, Haiti

²Erzuli, a resemblance of the Virgin Mary

³Ceremony at Bois-Caiman



sidered as servants of the *loas*. The latter lead them to knowledge of the world and of the cosmos. We speak more of knowledge than belief.

The *hounforts*, the *peristyles* (places where public ceremonies are held) have a temporal society who help them defend their interests. They have their own police, and a band of *rara* who are initiated in Voodoo particularly during Lent. This society does not identify with the religious community though it does have connections.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

Closely linked to slavery, the history of the Catholic Church in Haiti began with the French colonization. She was submitted to the political power of the time and went through multiple hassles induced by a non-cooperative administration. The challenge was how to evangelize in a proslavery context without dealing with the system? Thus began the preaching of the gospel, centered on “resignation”: a Christianity tailored to suit the interests of the oppressors.

Black slaves were then obliged to attend Sunday Masses, celebrated uniquely for their category/condition. Beliefs and Voodoo practices were consolidated. The slaves utilised Catholicism as a simple mask.

In contact with this false Christianity the pantheon Voodoo grew and was enriched. We therefore find in Voodoo, rituals that are similar to those of the Catholic religion. Certain similarities are so striking that observers are astonished. In Voodooism as well as in Catholicism we find an almighty God, a Supreme Being, omniscient, who transcends man but at the same time bears the human dimension. Another remarkable similarity between these two religions is the belief in intermediary beings between the Supreme Being and man.

SYNCRETISM—LOAS/SAINTS

In a church it is not easy to know if the Vodooist praying in front of the statue of Our Lady is truly invoking the Virgin Mary or *Erzuli*. Erzuli-Freda-Dahomey is a *loa* representing beauty and grace and whose love life is woven with hardships—she corresponds to the Mater Dolorosa.

Here are other examples of syncretism *loas/saints*:

Legba: Master of the barrier who separates men from the spirits; he is identified as Saint Peter, and often represented with keys in his hand.

Dambala Wedo: the *loa* who presides over the sources of water and rivers; his symbol is the rainbow and grass snake. His counterpart is Saint Patrick.

Ajda Wedo: the wife of Dambala who provides wealth and fertility; she bears the traits of Saint Elizabeth of Hungary.

From these few examples, the observer notes the vitality and capacity with which Voodooism can adapt.

In practicing Voodoo, the Haitians search for protection and liberation from evil which is disguised in so many forms. Voodooism has a social function in the Haitians’ every day living and for this reason it permeates all levels of society. The Haitians are overwhelmed with long-lasting suffering; they thirst for a better life which they seek for and hope to find in their Voodoo practices. ☪

Echoes Across Time

By Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C.

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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YESTERDAY: What was the weather like on September 8, 1909 when six missionaries of the Immaculate Conception were leaving Montreal for Canton, China? The young women in their twenties left for a lifetime mission. That evening, the Institute founded by Délia Tétreault in 1902 saw its first missionary departure taking place at the Cathedral in Montreal. The chronicles of that particular day do not speak about the temperature, but highlights the importance of this event. Somewhat like the newspaper *La Presse*, it states Bishop Bruchési's words: *It is the first time that Canada witnesses a departure of missionaries who are from a national Institute and whose exclusive goal is: missions abroad.*

TODAY: September 8, 2009 on a magnificent sunny afternoon, the centennial event is commemorated publicly. In the presence of public officials and guests, Mrs. Marie Cinq-Mars, the Mayor of Outremont, unveils a commemorative plaque erected at Délia Tétreault's Square located between Maplewood and Springgrove Avenues.

Approximately two hundred people attend this historical event. Sister Louise Denis, Superior General of the MIC Sisters, welcomes everyone and expresses her thankfulness to the authorities of the city and to all the collaborators who generously responded to this event in honor of our Foundress.

Mr. Pierre Craig, presenter at Radio-Canada and former student at our MIC school invites the dignitaries to the podium: Mrs. Marie Cinq-Mars, Mayor of Outremont; Msgr. Pierre Blanchard, representing Cardinal Turcotte; Mr. Raymond Bachand, provincial deputy in Outremont; Mr. Thomas Mulcair, federal deputy in Outremont; Mrs. Danielle Tétreault-Bouthillier, member of the Tétreault family. Each one acknowledges Délia Tétreault's Institute which had its beginnings in the Outremont area and the MIC Sisters' presence and works here and abroad.



¹ (left to right) Sr. Louise Denis, Superior General; Mrs. Cinq-Mars, Mayor of Outremont; Mr. R. Bachand, Provincial Deputy of Outremont

² The commemorative plaque

At the center of a square surrounded by flowers and small shrubs stands the copper plaque on a steel pedestal. Authors of this art work are: René Brault, Julian Lucin and Claude Desmarais. Mr. Brault describes this piece of art as follows: *The gracious lines opened and reaching to the sky represent the silhouette of a religious person dedicated to serve in faith and reaching out to the underprivileged peoples of the world.*

TOMORROW: The echoes of yesterday and today have been heard; but what about tomorrow? Could we say that it is providential that on this same day, September 8, 2009, the City of Laval was actually approving a new name to the embankment of La Rivière des Prairies in front of Place Juge-Desnoyers. In the near future, it will no longer be called *La Berge du Marigot* but rather *La Berge Délia Tétreault*. To this effect a plaque will be erected along the bank. Echoes of this event will come to you shortly... you will be listening? ☞

Along the Line of Dialogue

In Jerusalem since August 2008, Sr. Pauline Boilard relates her experience as secretary at the French Biblical and Archeological School located near the Damascus Gate and the Old City of Jerusalem. She also describes other facets of her life in Israel: her interest in *The Interreligious Dialogue for Peace*, her visiting tours, and the happy encounters with friends and acquaintances who travelled to Israel.



By Pauline Boilard, M.I.C.

¹Matteo Crimella hands over his doctoral thesis to Sr. Pauline.

When I arrived I was eager to meet once again the friends I had met during my first trip to Israel, when I participated in The Interreligious Dialogue which had been organized by the University of Montreal. But my secretarial responsibilities caught up with me as soon as I arrived. That's life!

VISAS

I soon understood that the element of *interreligious dialogue* would be directly experienced between the School and the Ministry of the Interior when I had to obtain entry visas for students, teachers, Dominicans, volunteers and then again for the renewal of all these visas. It's a never

ending job. In Israel, we do not become residents, instead we renew our visas annually. For the workers, we negotiate the permits. These are more difficult to obtain for the employees who come from Ramallah and Abu Dis, two occupied territories. Respect, patience and mutual understanding are obligatory. I would have much to write on this subject.

An anecdote: Within a span of two weeks, I had been to the Ministry of the Interior four times in order to obtain a permit for our Palestinian cook. Every morning she would be stopped at the frontier gate. At one point, as I was speaking with the representative, I admitted that without the precious help of our cook, our household was getting upset with a diet of sandwiches. This statement re-

ceived a reply—the representative looked up and said: *What do you want? That I go make the sandwiches?* The first reaction was a silent pause, then we looked at each other and began laughing. Two days later, our Palestinian cook was happily back with us and since that episode, the representative keeps inquiring if we are still eating sandwiches.

INTERRELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER

In October, I had the joy of meeting the friends I had met during my first trip here. Rabbi Eliyahu McLean invited me to the Center which he directs; it is a one hour walk from the Damascus Gate. Eliyahu is the assistant director of the interreligious group *Peacemakers*. That evening sixty people gathered at his place. After a half-hour of mutual greeting between Palestinians from various allegiances, Christians, Muslims, Jews and foreigners, Eliyahu introduced the evening with a wish—to find a surplus for the spirit and the stomach, so as to help *heal Abraham's family*.

This theme guided the assembly in songs, speeches and sharing; the participants spoke about their social involvements. Among others, two Muslim Palestinians from the Mount of Olives insisted on the following concept: *This land is for the two nations: Israelites and Palestinians. We must live this reality and bring it to the whole world.* A Jewish lady continued: *All the people are not with the government and many in Israel want Peace. We are all children of Adam and Eve, as well as of Abraham.* A painful subject, but full of hope!

Then Myriam, a Jew originally from Russia, sang songs that touched the hearts of everyone. The first: *Song for the two Jerusalems—the heavenly one and the earthly one.* It was followed by: *All nations will clap their hands...* as we also applauded after each refrain. This Center reflects the hope of a population where Palestinians, Jews and Christians could come together.

SATURDAY OUTINGS

I have the privilege of accompanying a group of French Consuls guid-

ed by two Dominican experts from the Biblical School. These outings take place in Jerusalem and also outside the City. It's a time to unwind, relax and socialize but also a way to learn more about the Country: Bethlehem, Ein Karem, Ramallah, Ein Gedi, Massada, Qumran, Jericho, Caesarea, Hebron, Beit She'an...

Other pleasant meetings take place. Mary Olga Lam, M.I.C. and her family whom I knew from Hong-Kong, Flore Savignac, M.I.C., Roland Laneuville, P.M.E., Msgr. Bertrand Blanchet, Adèle Gauthier and others; most of them are here for a period of renewal and the timing is right for they bring me a breath of fresh air from my native country.

²Place of the Nativity
in Bethlehem
Photo Credit:
Father Daniel Boivin

Respect, patience and mutual understanding are obligatory. 

WOMEN'S SITUATION

Lately, a second ecumenical group, whom I had met during my first visit to Jerusalem, responded to a wish of mine—that of meeting young Palestinians for a shared conversation. Four young women in their twenties responded but remained anonymous. One of them is studying nursing and is currently doing her practicum, the other is completing her master's degree in Clinical Psychology. The third is studying English literature and the fourth is working in a Center with children who have limited abilities. After this job, she hopes to get her B.A. Her earnings help provide an education for her brother and sisters.

Because of their country's situation (Palestine), they often feel oppressed and imprisoned. They acknowledged that—*Treated as inferior, we begin to believe that we are so.* However, they do not aspire to live in another country except for a short while in order to study. With them, I continue to pray for the local governments, that they may courageously recognize and resolve the conflict that has existed for too long, at the expense of an industrious, brave population who nonetheless loves its country. 

When the Wind Blows (Part 1)

My canoe is calmly drifting on the waters of Baies Lake in the Lanaudiere region. A slight breeze is felt; in the beautiful blue sky, the sun shines brightly and sparkles like diamonds on the placid lake. Surrounding the edge of the shore, the rays of light pierce through the trees creating long shadows, I am fascinated—for they are an image of my life. Suddenly, the water becomes agitated; the wind picks-up, the sky turns grey and an impending storm menaces. In a moment's time, that wind swirls in circles and then seems to bring back the lake to its calm state. It is time to head home. Tossed by the rising waves, memories of my past emerge.



By Louisa Nicole,
M.I.C.

IN THE COUNTRY OF THE RISING SUN

The gong of the Shinto Temple, calling to prayer, breaks the early morning's silence. It is the beginning of a vibrant life. I cannot forget: I am in Japan! After a lengthy apprenticeship in the language, and years of studies in Theology at the Jesuits' University of Tokyo, I am appointed to Koriyama, a city located north of the capital, in the Fukushima Prefecture. I live with two Japanese Sisters at the orphanage which had been opened by our missionaries during the last World War. The bike ride to reach the nursery school which I am responsible for gives me energy to begin the day. How lovable those 240 tots are who range from 3-6 years of age. In

the evening, at the orphanage, I pamper the young ones who are deprived of a mother or of a family. It is with all these little children that I begin my first missionary experience—with them I learn the simple facts of their culture!

A SMALL PARADISE

In April 1988, I am entrusted with the supervision of Saint Francis Xavier (Xaverio) campus in Koriyama and also with the direction of the primary and secondary sections. I had previously been teaching Biblical knowledge and religion there. Now, I inherit a brand new modern school, with spacious grounds, built in the middle of green rice-fields. However,

there is a challenge that somewhat dampens the enthusiasm of newness. We need to attract a clientele willing to come to a region outside the city. But thanks to God and my predecessors, the school's reputation is still vivid in people's minds and during my twelve years there, the students continued to flock to their school.

Of course, education can be quite demanding. But what joy I have working with people whose ideal is to bring happiness to the children. Wholly dedicated to their mission, the Japanese teachers do not spare their time, nor their efforts to reward the students' studiousness. Along with well-prepared courses, sports are added as well as art exhibitions, calligraphy, music and song festivals. Theatrical plays include all the children; there are no exceptions. The annual bazaar prepared by the parents is a much appreciated activity. The summer festival, the Christmas celebrations and the beautiful Marian month of May are also well highlighted.

Our children are not all gifted, nor are they all from affluent families. Some have handicaps, but they are loved and respected like all the other students. The scholars learn to share with the less fortunate: generous checks are sent to Africa, Madagascar, Bolivia, Philippines and Haiti. Not only does it suffice to open one's purse but the most important is the gift of self in fund raising projects.

THE WIND BLOWS AND SWIRLS

In the year 2000, I am called back to Canada. The school direction must be given over to the laity. My heart is torn apart: my homecoming seems to be definite. In charge of planning and executing the activities for our Community's Centennial, I work full-time in order to respond to the many demands until the year 2002. In the fall, I register at Manresa's Spiritual Center in Quebec City to specialize in the field of spiritual guidance; this, therefore, allows me to continue my mission here in Canada. In the second year of my studies, my health gives way. I attribute this to an extreme fatigue. At the same time, Japan asks me to return. I hesitate... Spring season comes along and

Not only does it suffice to open one's purse but the most important is the gift of self in fund-raising projects. 

I seem to feel better, capable, I think, of responding to the call of Japan. In August 2004, with great joy and confidence, I fly to the country of the rising sun.

THE STORM

Deep in the mountains of Aizu Wakamatsu, the summer season stretches on. It is September, the shrieking calls of the cicadas take over the discreet chirps of the crickets. With this very hot, humid temperature, no breeze, no wind can be felt; the primary school of which I am taking over the direction is becoming as active as a beehive. It's Japan—there is plenty of life...all is well! However, my body does not follow my enthusiasm. What is the matter? I recall that while at Manresa, during the winter months, I had felt weakness in my arms and legs as if they wanted to abandon me. Now, it is the same sensation but at a much higher intensity—from day to day my strength diminishes.

Struggling, with my head held high, I walk to work. My Superior, a native from the Philippines and the other three Japanese Sisters worry about my physical state. I decide to go for a consultation. The verdict is pronounced—it is unexpected and cruel: a rare chronic disease, serious and degenerating, it has no name. I am given two alternatives: to be immediately hospitalized in Japan or return to my home country without delay. The doctor suggests the latter. It seems as if I am dreaming. Pinching myself, I wonder: is this really my condition? Within six weeks, so much has happened; a period of time needed to re-adapt and to accept. What a mystery!

Similar to the water of the lake, I am brought back to my calm state, but this time in a wheel chair, having been tossed by the wind and waves. Sun, come back, yes, quickly come back!

(to be continued) 



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3



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¹ Graduation trip in Hokkaido

² Youth camp

³ Mika decorates the bamboo for the feast of the stars

⁴ Sr. Louisa (center) with two professors

Photos Credit: MIC

Letters from here and abroad

Canada

World Mission Sunday

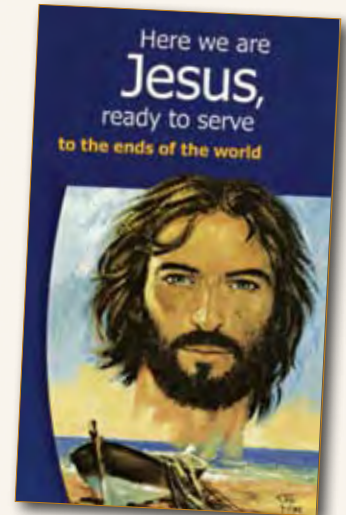
Jesus, we are here ready to serve...to the ends of the world!

For the past eighty years, the third Sunday of October has been consecrated to the Universal Mission of the Church. It is through the proclamation of the Gospel that Christ will transform humanity. The Word acts like yeast in the dough; a new humanity comes forth...the beloved family of God. When the Gospel is accepted, men and women become servants of others because of their love for them. That's the secret of the Gospel: to serve others is to find happiness; it is to experience God because God is at the service of humanity. Christ is Love and serves because He loves. As baptized Christians we are called to be like Christ who knew no boundaries because Love has no limits, no frontiers.

Love does not tolerate indifference. Love makes us disciples and missionaries responsible for the present and the future of the world.

Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many. (Mk 10:43.45)

O.P.M. Colette Soucy



Tsaramasay, Madagascar

World Mission Sunday



The Eucharistic celebration highlights the theme for this special Mission Sunday: I AM SENDING YOU, RADIATE LOVE! I take this opportunity to have a commissioning ceremony for the catechists of our parish. In Tsaramasay, they assume the responsibility of this Sunday's liturgy. To show the importance of World Mission Day, five of the catechists wear the national costume with colors representing the five continents; four others carry the Bible and the globe to signify the universal solidarity—the communion among all Christians. The parishioners participate with great fervour and enthusiasm—the missionary spirit is truly present.

In Morondava there is a commissioning service for twenty-four laity of the parish who also will be volunteers in teaching religious education to the youth.

The celebrant gives each one a special blessing. Tsaramasay and Morondava—two parishes wholly dedicated to spreading the Good News, the Gospel of Jesus.

Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C.

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

*May the Spirit
dwell in you
and give you
a heart as vast
as the world,
ever joyful
in hope!*

*May He
inspire you
to bring the light
of Christ to
the world with
the apostles'
eagerness!*



CARMEN MÉNARD, M.I.C.
Côteau-du-Lac, Québec

Spiritual psychology is Sr. Carmen's passion. In Lima, Peru, she will continue giving PHR sessions (Personality, Human Relations). Such workshops help individuals find meaning in their life.



LORRAINE FALARDEAU, M.I.C.
Loretteville, Québec

After her successful experience on the formation team in Bolivia, Sr. Lorraine has been assigned to Lima, Peru, where she will serve as Provincial secretary.



PERPÉTUE RAZAFINDRAHAINGO, M.I.C. (right)
Antsirabe, Madagascar

Back from her native country, after a brief stay in Madagascar, Sr. Perpétue has been entrusted a new responsibility as accountant at our Generalate in Canada.



NANCY PAZ RIVERO, M.I.C. (2nd to the right)
Santa Cruz, Bolivia

She has had a rich and dynamic experience with the Bolivian youth at IER (Institute for Rural Education). Now, Sr. Nancy is committed to community and immigrant services in Canada.



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Dawn of a New Life

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

Délia Tétreault



Clémence Caron, M.I.C.

(Sr. Saint-Jean-de-la-Lande)

1916-2009

Saint-Jean-Port-Joli, Quebec

In a family of seventeen children, Clémence had a peaceful and pious childhood. During her studies, she wondered about her future and after years of hesitation she finally decided to enter religious life. As a missionary she worked 30 years in Africa. She dedicated herself in the fields of education, catechesis as well as promoting the status of women. She also served within the community as superior. Sr. Clémence loved nature and admired the fauna of Malawi. She summed up her life in one word: HAPPINESS! In sickness, she demonstrated her spirit of faith and patiently waited for the Lord's coming.



Alice Magnan, M.I.C.

(Sr. Saint Jean-de-Brébeuf)

1908-2009

Quebec City, Quebec

Born prematurely, Alice always had a frail health. However, she had a good education and received a teaching diploma from the school run by the Ursuline Sisters. During a retreat, she heard the Lord calling her to religious life and responded generously. After her training, she taught the classical course to young men in Rimouski; from there she was appointed to Haiti. Sr. Alice recalls that her best years were in Rimouski when she returned to serve in a prisoner's facility. In May 2008, she celebrated her centennial with her family. Throughout those long years, Sr. Alice showed love for her Lord and gratitude for the gift of life.



Marguerite Dumont, M.I.C.

(Sr. Marie-Théophane)

1916-2009

Mont-Joli, Quebec

The eldest of ten girls and four boys, Marguerite was raised in a family where Christian values were dominant. At a young age, her mother subscribed her daughter to the MIC Mission News. In 1931, Marguerite followed her inspiration and entered in our missionary Institute. As a nurse, Sister worked for the Chinese Community at Mount Saint Joseph Hospital in Vancouver, B.C. In 1964, she left for Haiti. Then, in 1980 she worked at Royal Victoria Hospital in Montreal; her department—the Medical Archives. When Sr. Marguerite's health began to deteriorate, she accepted serenely her condition and patiently waited for her return to the Father.



Céline Trudeau, M.I.C.

(Sr. Céline-de-Jésus)

1925-2009

Saint-Constant, Quebec

In a family of seven children, Céline was the fourth born. Though she studied with the Sisters of the Congregation of Notre Dame, her desire to be a missionary led her to enter the MIC Institute in 1944. Sr. Céline was a professional artist. In Guatemala, she used her artistic talent to approach and help prostitutes out of their way of life. In Cuba, she experienced the Revolution but with determination she continued teaching catechesis. In Bolivia, she worked with the poor and organized an orphanage for girls. Sr. Céline never boasted about her good works and she was just as discreet about her cancer which quickly brought her back to her loving God.

COAT OF MANY COLORS

The award winning artist, Thomas Blackshear, describes his artwork: *According to the Word of God, Jesus was born into the Jewish race. Jesus Christ is now the Risen Lord. We can have no concept of how He actually looks; therefore, I have not clearly indicated His features in Coat of Many Colors, Lord of All. Because He is Lord, He represents all the people of the world. On His coat are the flags of the nations and fabrics of the cultures of the world. All the colors of the coat represent the sin that He took on Himself on our behalf. The white robe under the coat represents His pureness, His being totally without sin. The golden sash is referred to in Scripture as being worn by royalty. He is truly Lord of All!*

The Christian tradition celebrates the birth of the Infant-God on December 25. However, in our daily lives, the Risen Christ who is Lord of all the nations walks with us as we tread the path of life. He is PRESENCE INCARNATE in today's Christmas.



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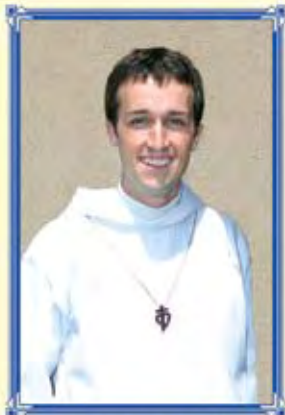
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WAITING...

*I am waiting, said the Emperor
Caesar Augustus,
for the result of the census;
I am eager to know the number
of citizens in my empire.*

*I am waiting, said Mary
with some anxiety but with great
hope, to give birth
to the King of the world.*

*I am waiting, said the shepherd,
to see the Lamb of God and
to speak to others about Him.*

*I am waiting, said the sheep,
to know that famous Shepherd
whom God sends for all peoples.*

*I am waiting, said the angel,
to sing "Glory to God"
and to announce to all
the Good News.*

*I am waiting, Jesus said,
to see come together, in one family:
the emperor and the shepherd
man and woman
angel and beast.*

God awaits them all!

Father Pascal Daniel



Photo: Robert Young