

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 37, N° 1 | JANUARY • FEBRUARY • MARCH 2010 | \$3.00



To sow seeds of joy and hope



CANADA

FROM PEETABECK,
“WACHIEH, HELLO!”

VIETNAM

GOD WITHOUT FRONTIERS

IN FOCUS

CARVING THE SEASONS
OF OUR LIVES



MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

JANUARY

For the Unity of all Christians

May believers in Christ be aware that unity among Christians is a condition for the proclamation of the Good News.

FEBRUARY

For the Church's Missionary Identity

May the Church strive to follow Christ faithfully in its mission to proclaim the Gospel to all peoples.

MARCH

For the Churches in Africa

May the Churches in Africa be manifestations of reconciliation and justice throughout the continent.

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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Think it over!

When I had an important decision to make, my mother would say: *Think it over*. She was right! Similar to when a sculptor strikes into a block of wood with his chisel, each decision taken affects one's life. Whether it is a choice in a field of studies or a career, whether it is opting for a particular lifestyle or a way of life, *think it over* because life moves us forward and it is difficult to turn back.

In his sermon—The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life, Martin Luther King states: *The principle of self-acceptance is a basic principle in life...then each one of us must discover what we are called to do. Once we've discovered what God wants of our life, we should set out to do it with all of the strength and all of the power that we have in our systems.* In other words, that which is of greatest importance is to be in touch with our heart, to hear the callings that demand attention, so that God's project, which He wants to entrust to our care, be fulfilled. Each one of us has a particular mission which no one else can achieve.

Choosing a career, a way of life, is to relinquish other possibilities. Scripture gives us examples of this. Deeply moved by her encounter with Jesus, the Samaritan woman leaves behind her jug of water at Jacob's well, and hastens to go tell others about Jesus. The passionate Paul of Tarsus abdicates his pharisaic ideal in order to collaborate in proclaiming the Mission of the Risen One: *I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things* (Phil.3:8). It is the same today.

There are young adults who willingly leave behind that which they treasure most in order to respond to a loving God's call and walk in the Lord's footsteps. Some turn away from wealth and opt to help the impoverished, the needy.

This issue briefly presents some life orientations. Each one of us has a specific vocation. To commit one's self, is to find a deep inner joy... which does not mean that we will not encounter any difficulties. Trials are part of life! They bring about growth. The strength of the Holy Spirit is always present to help us through and to guide us in shaping our lives each day, that it may become a work of art. That is the reason why each decision or choice we take, we must truly *think it over*!

Marie-Paule Sanfey, 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.

Lois Duncan — Ottawa, Ontario

I was disappointed and dismayed to read your editorial in the July-September 2009 issue where you write in regard to Obama's inauguration that you "would not have missed that great opportunity". President Obama is pro-abortion no matter how he dances around with words. He favors keeping partial birth abortion legal. Why endorse him is beyond me.

**Suzanne Gervais, ASMIC
— Joliette, QC**

I just finished reading the summer issue, July-September 2009; I would have wanted the magazine to have one hundred more pages. What a joy to read! Sr. Elmire, Sr. Estelle, Sr. Nicole, three MIC Sisters I am acquainted with; your editorial and the children's story captured my interest. Bravo! A thousand thanks for sharing with us the work of the missionaries abroad and praise God for the amazing work that is taking place in the hearts and souls of so many.

Madeleine Richard — Sherbrooke, QC

You accomplish marvelously well your work as editor and directress of the magazine *Le Précurseur/MIC Mission News*. The articles contain interesting facts which I appreciate reading and have others read as well. Following the footsteps of your Foundress you *sow joy and happiness*. The Sisters who are in the mission field are to be admired for their dedication. And those who are here in Quebec continue spreading God's Mission of Love. Congratulations to each one!

ERRATUM: In our 2009-2010 calendar, the National Patriots' Day should be on May 24, 2010 instead of May 18.

Carving a Living Sculpture

Stripping a block of wood of its bark—chiseling it down to its core is a work of art. Similarly, throughout the seasons of our lives we are called to be sculptors in order to find our core, our soul, our true self.



By André Gadbois

Continuing with this metaphor, I began by visualizing the form that a living sculpture would take after many years of transformation. I found beauty in the precise handling of the sculptor's chisel in the same way I found beauty in life's circumstances; the sharp blows, each one more exact than the other, creating a personality, a unique work of art. I thought about the future and wondered what my true self would be, once sculpted and unveiled.¹ This evoking thought is noble of a man, a woman who is attentively at work, like the sculptor, trying to release from the block of wood or stone, the personality, the traits, the soul that is his or her own. It is beautiful and good like God who looks at His creation and continues creating with unceasing love and perseverance, inviting us to stand shoulder to shoulder with Him by being co-creators. It is beautiful and good as the Man of Nazareth who says: *Do you want to be healed? Do you wish to live? Here is the chisel! Get to work and eliminate the layers that prevent you being who you truly are. And do not forget that to achieve your dream, your sculpture, your work of art, you will need a whole life time.*

¹ BEAUCHEMIN, Jean-François, *This Year My Youth Soars*, Québec Amérique, 2009.

² Tirelou, Félix Leclerc, *Cent chansons*, Fides, 1970, p. 88.

¹ Guy Pierre, sculptor
Photo Credit:
M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.



At all times keep “a chisel” in hand

Yes, a whole lifetime is needed to interpret, to choose, to discard, to prune, to release the circumstances and pent-up emotions that come one's way; a whole lifetime is needed to open, to resist, to learn from solidarity and from discord, to cry, to explode with anger, to give thanks. A whole lifetime is needed to carve one's true self. Sometimes, the blows from the “chisel” fail; we must learn to do the best we can with the errors, we must learn to forgive ourselves and trust the next move. “Chisel” in hand, we must relentlessly continue working on the result, trusting the inspiration of the moment, taking time to reflect on the future and the final unveiling of the work of art which will one day be realized. The process of becoming one's true self, of finding one's core, one's soul is an art, a job, a mission. It is an essential and vital Mission.

I can see the Child, the Prophet of Nazareth, in His Mother's arms escaping from His birthplace shortly after He was born (Mt 2:13.14). At 12, He stayed behind in the temple courts, a choice He made which heralded His future, while His parents were frantically searching for Him (Lk 2:48-50). Tempted to play the game of the mighty and powerful (Mt 4:1.11) He preferred to play His own game in fulfilling God's Will (Mk 3:31.34). He questioned His future (Lk 9: 18.21), and was troubled in His fidelity (Mk 14: 34.36); all these events and circumstances were meaningful. In Jesus, the Prophet of Nazareth, I see the sculptor who used His chisel to gradually reveal His personality, His traits, His soul. His strokes were not always appreciated, understood, accepted by those who lived with Him.

Carving a society

In his song, “Tirelou”, the French Canadian singer, Félix Leclerc tells the story of a man afflicted by a great sorrow. He searches everywhere for an answer; he strikes out erratically, exploring, scrutinizing, observing, he tries to find his true self, but in vain. He considers ending it all with the rope; he confides in his friend who advises him to be practical and to apply himself in another way. I think of all the persons who have abilities to influence and initiate others to this great art: to discover the true self, to find one's soul, to be awakened to one's consciousness. In a certain way, these persons are shaping a new society and yet they are often confronted with the essential needs (or rights): dig a well, build a school, a hospital, plow the soil. But they also open the hearts of others to solidarity, help build self-confidence and trust, pluck out the injustices so that peace may prevail.

There is a need to initiate reconciliation, to identify leaders who can unify, to create celebrations highlighting progress and the conquering of fear. There is a desire to be aware and to continue being attentive. There is a desire to live fully. Those who have “carving” abilities, inspired by the Resurrected One, we call missionaries; others who do so without claiming their spiritual identity, we call humanitarians. Nonetheless, they contribute in releasing the living flesh and soul in all its freshness and beauty. Is this not what the Prophet of Nazareth meant in His parable: *I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me* (Mt 25:40). 

The chisel
blows of the
Prophet of
Nazareth were
sometimes
disturbing and
at other times
they were
heartwarming.





When a person comes to a crossroad she is obliged to read the signs of the times and make a decision. Colette is not at the beginning of her career; many commitments have obliged her to travel to Hong-Kong, India, to the Canadian North and Montreal. With a generous apostolic heart, she once again recently travelled to Northern Ontario to work with the CREE First Nation.

From Peetabeck, "Wachieh, Hello!"



By Colette Soucy

Since spring of 2007, I was editor-in-chief of the *UNIVERS* magazine. I loved that work. However, besides the many questions evolving around the uncertain future of this publication, signs were telling me I had to leave. I was at a crossroads. One day, an inspiring faxed message was left on my desk. It was an announcement from the Diocese of Moosonee, Ontario, specifying that Msgr. Vincent Cadieux, O.M.I. was searching for a catechist who could teach children of Fort Albany, of Attawapiskat and of Peawanuck. I wondered if this request was meant for me personally?

At once, I communicated with the Chancery Office of Moosonee. A few hours later, I received a phone call, offering me a job. Without hesitation and notwithstanding the series of domestic obstacles I had to solve, my **YES** was spontaneous: I had to leave! At the end of August, I boarded an AIR CREEBEC plane, landed at Fort Albany, a CREE reservation in Northern Ontario. When speaking about the James Bay inhabitants and surrounding population, the fur traders would call them Kristineaux, an adaptation of the name people called themselves: "Kistanowak"—people of the North. With time, the French abbreviation became Kri which was then translated as Cree by the Anglophones.

PEETABECK ACADEMY

Upon my arrival, Fr. Serge Allard, O.M.I., informed me that I had to be quarantined for five days because of the virus A (H1N1). After that period of isolation, I went to Peetabeck Academy, the only school which has an enrollment of 150 students. However, it was designed to accommodate 333 pupils from day-care to post-secondary levels. The one-storey building was completed in 2001 and has the shape of a circle, a significant symbol in the CREE and aboriginal cultures. At the main entrance, the barrel vault roof terminates in a goose head with its wings spread out over the whole community. It was incorporated in the design to symbolize a mother goose protecting her young. Peetabeck Academy offers an all-around development of the child; the education provides the students with all they need to become good citizens and to joyfully celebrate their aboriginal identity.

The beginning of a new school year: a few minutes after nine o'clock, the Chief Andrew Salomon gave a nod of approval to Dany Metat, Director of the Parents Committee—and the powerful assembly call was heard. Children, educators, administrators sat in a circle in front of the Mother Goose. Then, according to the local protocol the rituals began. Facing east to the rising sun and at the sound of

beating drums, a solemn procession began while some of the Cree students sung incantations in their dialect. After lighting a branch of sage, smoke circles were traced toward heaven in honor of the Earth's Great Spirit. Following a pause, Mr. Metat gave a speech during which he highlighted the importance of taking pride in being a CREE. He underscored that the CREE culture is not stuck in the past; it has evolved throughout the years and it will continue doing so. While preserving the ancestors' traditions, it is good to be opened to change and adapt to the world of technology. Father Serge Allard, O.M.I., then gave a brief address to the assembly. We were all blessed by the Great Spirit of Heaven and Earth for the new school year.

Before parting, Mrs. Angela Adekunle, General Directress of Peetabeck Academy, reminded us that the values we must embrace during this new school year 2009-2010 are: respect, honesty, bravery, wisdom, truth, love and humility. The CREE nation's fate lies in the hands of the new generation and tomorrow's leaders will come from their midst. Aware of this fact, the school personnel realizes their responsibilities; the challenge put forward to each one will **MAKE A DIFFERENCE!**

To help youngsters achieve their dreams, we provide the wings: cards specifying their successes, certificates in good conduct, trophies, special outings, sugarless treats, etc. It is within this motivating and stimulating context that I assume my responsibility as catechist from the first to eighth grade. Humbly, my wish is to consolidate what has already been accomplished and make a small difference.

MY GREAT MASTERS—THE CHILDREN

When Jesus spoke about the "greatest" in the Kingdom of Heaven, He presented a little child. True greatness, He

Without words, these children
with their clear bright eyes know
how to thank God for the bear,
the moose and wild goose.



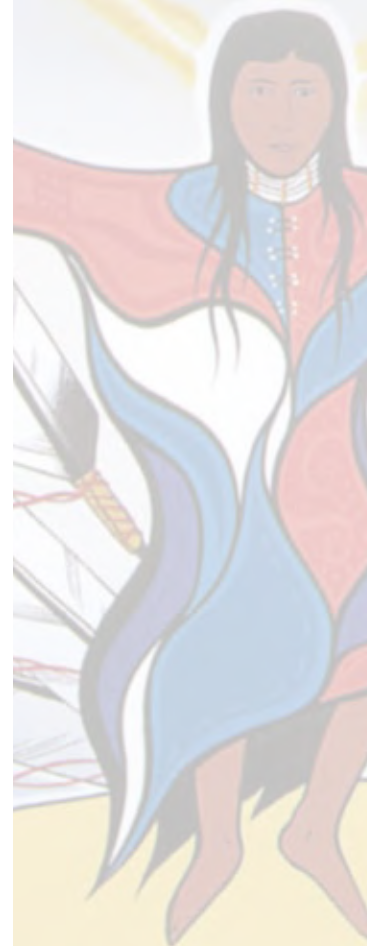
affirmed, comes from the simple, transparent heart (Mt 18: 3.4). The children's humility, trust and sense of wonderment speak to me about the Kingdom of God. Their simplicity, practical intelligence and insightful observations touch me

profoundly. Their communicative laughter and their simple way of playing with a pebble, a twig, or helping with a dog in need of attention, are signs of God inviting me to be supple in His Guiding Hand.

Each day, before entering the classroom, I keep in mind the necessity of a re-birth and the importance of letting go of my high expectations and certitudes. Without words, these children with their clear bright eyes know how to thank God for the bear, the moose and wild goose. In their own way they tell me that the Great Spirit lives on their reserve, it manifests itself in the wind, in the light of the full moon, and the heat of the sun. Thanks to them, I am recapturing the youthfulness of my heart: *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).

From Peetabeck,

"Wachieh, Goodbye!"



Painting: The cosmic Christ dancing on a drum. He invites us to be part of the POW-WOW—a cosmic dance to life.

Artist: Gelineau Fisher

ANASTAZIA, *A Woman of Compassion*



Chipata, Zambia is the place where Sr. Rita worked for many years. One day, she met Anastazia, one of her former students whom she had not seen for decades. Touched by her story, Sister relates how one woman can radiate God's loving care.

By Rita Guay, M.I.C.

One morning as I was walking back home from Mass, a lady joined me. I immediately recognized her: Anastazia, a former student of our Homecraft Training Centre in the eighties. She is now Mrs. Patel. What joy to see each other again! I had lost track of her. We took time to renew the friendship and reminisce.

FOND MEMORIES

After having taught Domestic Science in a primary government school, Anastazia married and had numerous children but only a few survived. She is very proud of her oldest son, James, who will be graduating in South Africa.

Before my departure for Canada, she came to visit me and had brought many



photos; among them were those of James. She recalled the happy moments when she taught *Baby Care Basics* to the older students at our home-craft centre. To demonstrate her lesson, she would bring her own child; both teachers and students were delighted to have a hands-on experience with a real baby.

A COMFORTING COMMITMENT

Anastazia's children are now grown; therefore, she has more time to be involved in her community. As a psycho-social counselor, she reaches out to the AIDS patients in Chipata. She has 300 patients under her care. Zambia, in southern Africa, has one of the world's most devastating HIV and AIDS epidemics. More than one in every seven adults in the country is affected with HIV. Some victims live at home; they come to the hospital during the last phase of their sickness. Anastazia visits her patients in their respective areas. The *Home Base Care* was initially begun in parishes and then was extended throughout the country. All volunteers follow a training course so that they understand not only the HIV infection and the necessary physical care but also the psychological needs of the patients and their families.

Anastazia is qualified and well-known in her local community. She travels extensively to seek out the AIDS patients who live secluded in unfavorable conditions. She finds them in abandoned huts or barns, in isolated areas and village slums. These victims who live in poverty are rejected from society and lack in basic health care. Not only does Anastazia visit her patients but she provides them with the proper medication hoping that their immune system, destroyed by the illness, will be somewhat restored; she also gives her clients valuable emotional and practical support and makes sure that their diet is nutritional. It is not an easy task; where to find the funds to feed, clothe and provide minimum comfort for these patients? The cold rainy season can be extremely difficult for them.

THE AIDS ORPHANS

What to say about the orphans? When relatives can afford taking them in, the children remain within the family circle. In villages and on farmlands grandparents try to keep the young ones. However, many cannot provide the care. Thus, throughout the country, parishes have created and organized centres for these abandoned children; orphanages and host families have also come into being. Anastazia spoke to me about an eighty-five year old lady, Bernadet Phiri who keeps many orphans. However, questions come up: How to feed all these little ones? Where to find the nsima (basic food consisting of flour and water)? Where to go for money in order to clothe them? At her age, Bernadet no longer has the strength to cultivate her garden and the children do not have the capacity to work...It's an appalling situation without answers and her case is not unique.

My friend, Anastazia, often helps these people financially and takes personal initiative in finding solutions. For her and her colleagues the task is heavy; she is obliged to request help from the international Christian community and from other surrounding groups.

Before parting, I assured her of my prayers and asked her for photos to show my friends in Canada. A very grateful "thank you" to all those who willingly would accept to help this valiant, compassionate Zambian woman, Anastazia Patel, who is a mother and a relentless instrument of God's love for all the AIDS patients of Chipata. 

Donations may be sent to:
MIC Mission Procure
Project: Anastazia
121 Maplewood Avenue
Montreal, QC
Canada, H2V 2M2



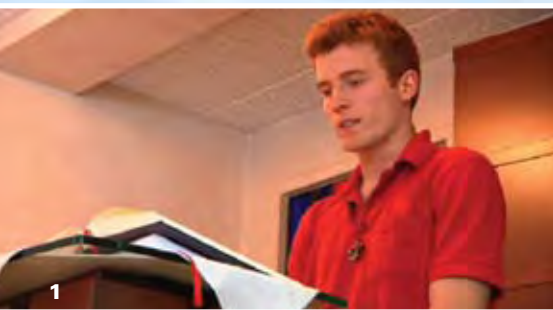
Qualified and well-known, Anastazia travels extensively to seek out and treat the AIDS patients.

¹ Anastazia and Sr. Rita Guay, M.I.C., Zambia, Africa

² An AIDS patient (being treated with the help of Anastazia Patel)

³ Orphans

Photos credit: Rita Guay, M.I.C.



I AM THE WAY

On the road to Compostela, Sébastien encountered himself, others and the Other. From this inward and community experience, he relates his discoveries and especially his profound realization that walking has the virtue of bringing us back to the essential.

By Sébastien Gendron

Life is a pilgrimage. Although human wisdom has proclaimed this maxim for millennia, the pilgrimages God gives us to experience will never stop reminding us of its truth. In our world, where the fleeting and the illusory are king, in which humanity is all too often reduced to a function, and daily life to a disconnected mechanism, walking, a defining characteristic of the human species, has the virtue of bringing us back to the essential, or to our roots. Yet what distinguishes the steps taken in daily life from those of a life *in movement*, is the heart's sudden openness to an Other than oneself, to the Presence of He who is always present in the depths of silence but who never forces Himself upon us.

DIALOGUE OF THE PILGRIM

This, at least, is the experience that the pilgrims of Compostela have had for many centuries. God, who enters into relationship with man through all sorts of mediations, establishes his dialogue with

the pilgrim through the path he has taken. The Lord in fact says, *I am the Way* (John 14:6). Yet He calls us to live His Life and to discover His Truth in so many different ways! Through a friend, a brother of Saint Dominique, the itinerary of the ministry of Saint James the Greater in Spain was opened up to me last summer, as well as to eighteen other traveling companions.

The peaks of the Pyrenees mountains, the wheat fields, the lush and varied farmland rising up the mountainsides, the fluidity of the rivers and the sturdiness of the bridges, the countless villages and their belfries, the great cities spreading out as far as the eye can see and their flamboyant cathedrals, but also arid deserts and ways of the cross.... All of these speak of the Creator's bounty and of the gift of His Work to those He loves.

THE EFFECT OF THE GROUP

In six weeks of walking, group life did its work. The moments of solitude along the way were only intervals between waking up at six for the Lauds prayer and our arrival at the next stop in early afternoon, with all that it entailed in terms of commitments and obligations: showering, washing clothes by hand, running errands, making bagged lunches, celebrating mass, saying Vesper prayers, having supper, washing dishes, group sharing, etc. But even if this structure weighed heavily at first, the cohesion of the group and the habit of daily chores ultimately meant that we had more free time for, among other things, the traditional siesta in the hottest hours of the afternoon.

And it's true that the advantages of walking in a group were numerous, even if doing so couldn't offer all the freedom of the solitary wanderer. The accompaniment of three Dominican priests from our community was precious indeed, and provided the additional advantage of allowing us to have daily mass in French. We were able to help each other get through the tougher moments and to share amongst us our prayer intentions. We ate well at low cost, without even having to always make the food ourselves!

THE GAZE OF TRUTH!

Still, beyond the comforts and advantage of community life, the main fruit of this lack of privacy, helped by fatigue, was that for more than two weeks, it became just impossible to keep up the subtle mask of a personality that didn't correspond totally with what we really were. For the first time in my life I was able to identify in a tangible way my deep desire to be loved, and I became aware of the unconscious detours that my life had taken in an effort to please, seeking recognition in the gaze of others and looking for some kind of confirmation of who I was. The benevolent gaze of God lets his Spirit of Love act through those who allow themselves to be docilely led by Him.

And so wonderful friendships were able to develop in truth between us. While, after two weeks of walking, I still saw a simple group of pilgrims walking together, to my great joy I was able to contemplate a united Church, growing in

fraternal love, cross the threshold of the Saint James cathedral.

THE UNEXPECTED ALONG THE WAY

If, as Saint Paul says, *The spirit alone can sound the depths of being* (1 Cor. 2:10), the route teaches us that we never know perfectly well what to ask God for ourselves....and so a single phrase suffices: *Let your Will be done*. Because the Way really does provide everything, and it reaches each of us precisely at the point we find ourselves along our personal path, which moves forward in time yet in reverse within us. *He who is* touches us like a good Father, according to the needs of each of his children. Many have spontaneously had the experience of encountering Him on the route.

Inward healing, profound repentance, painful crosses glorified, fears overcome, important realizations, unexpected changes of direction... and now my projects for this year have changed completely, after an unmistakable call by the Spirit. My route has turned from Montreal to Quebec City for the next phase in my studies in theology. I have also collaborated as a cinematographer with the Catholic Church's distribution network in the Quebec City Diocese. It involved producing reports about the experiences of the group for the people here. *These videos are available on the Internet site www.ecdq.tv.*

When the storms of daily life threaten our still unsure foundations, it's good to know that Christ calls out to us, *Walk pilgrim! Ultréia!* ☞

¹ Sébastien Gendron,
student in Theology

² iStockphoto



Faithfulness

She is happy with life though she has had a fragile health and has had to struggle with illness.

According to my knowledge, Miss Regina Rock, who will be celebrating her 106th birthday on December 7, 2009, is the oldest of our subscribers.

By Ida Brochu, M.I.C.

She could tell us many stories about the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception because she knows them since her childhood years. The MIC Sisters would come to her family home to offer their mission magazine. One day, without warning her mother and to be courteous, she invited the Sisters to stay for dinner... Later, as a young woman, she and her friends from Sacred Heart Parish would go to 314 Cote Ste Catherine Road for their monthly one hour adoration. Upon invitation, they would attend many missionary departures; these were always emotional events. Miss Regina still remembers the hymns that were sung.

The magazine brings her much joy

Miss Regina has always loved *Le Précurseur/MIC Mission News*: she is especially interested in reading about the Sisters' apostolic works in the missions. Today, her eyes no longer allow her to peruse the magazine but good friends come and read the articles for her. Throughout the years, she has remained faithful to herself, she loves to tease, to laugh, and is happy with life though she has had a fragile health and has had to struggle with illness. With joy, she confirms: *I think I have always been happy*. She owes much of her happiness to her family—their sincere friendship, support, help and frequent visits

have been a balm to her soul. Miss Regina now lives with her niece Bérengère. Twice a week, two of their friends, Claude and Denise St-Antoine, also subscribers to our mission magazine, drop by to give them communion. These are privileged moments which are greatly appreciated. Other volunteers do their groceries on a weekly basis; the mutual help they receive is considered as blessings.

A unique chance to celebrate

Notwithstanding the shortage of priests, the Eucharist is celebrated at her home; it is presided by Father Roger Brisson, O.F.M. This is a tradition since December 8, 1988; fifteen people gather to pray, sing, and share their stories; good humor lights up the atmosphere. A generous niece, Ghislaine, whom Miss Regina calls *her angel* prepares the food that is to be served on that occasion. Father Jean-Baptiste Son, former vicar at their parish, St-Vital, comes to join the group.

Miss Regina is perfectly content and her daily joy comes from her great trust in God and her spirit of thanksgiving for all the blessings she has received throughout the years. Her heart is close to the Lord. At each Mass celebrated at her home she says: *Thank you for the many graces I have received. I trust you will continue blessing me with many more*. Her hearty laughter, full of confidence, touches all those who are around her.

¹Miss Régina (1st row, center);
Sr. Ida (2nd row, 3rd to the right)
Photo credit: MIC

TO CHOOSE —WHAT A CHALLENGE!

Nowadays, it is not easy to choose to be a religious Sister. When one hears the inner Call and has a profound desire to give one's self to God and to be at the service of the Lord's Mission, responding is a challenge beyond all human understanding.

God is Someone: He is present, He is close and truly alive, He shows us signs... A religious vocation is evident when a person deeply yearns to live a celibate life for the sake of God's Kingdom, wants to respond with a generous heart to the suffering and needs of the poor; wishes to live community ecclesiastically.

It's a preference which is also manifested by a love for the Eucharist and prayer. God is Love. This mutual love between God and the chosen one is intensified when the encounters become more frequent. Fundamentally, God wants us to live happily. But it is true that to choose this life style means excluding others.

However, if the desire to consecrate one's life to God, no matter the price, brings about joy, serenity, peace and if the Church confirms the Call, then it is quite clear that the Lord is calling.

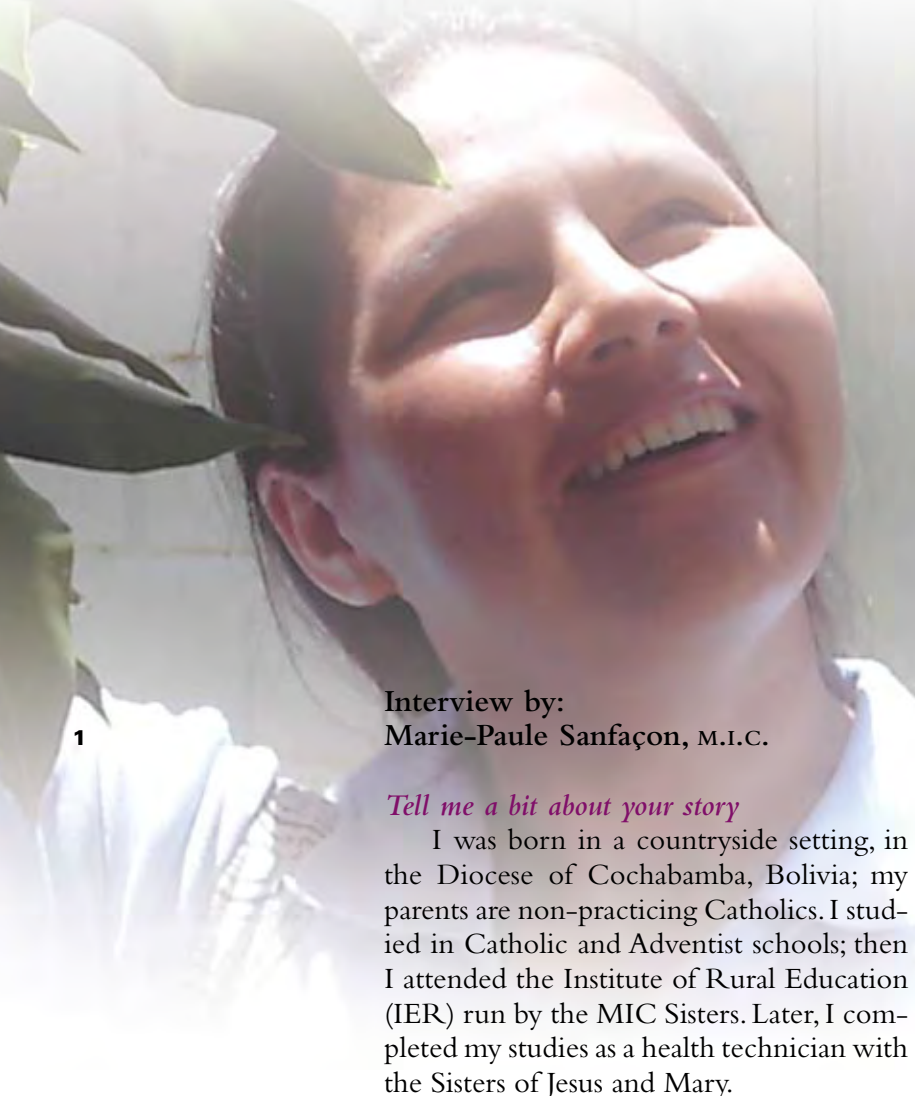
Photo:

Sr. Encarnacion Martinez, M.I.C.

Photo credit: MIC



A REFRESHING BREEZE



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Interview by:
Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Tell me a bit about your story

I was born in a countryside setting, in the Diocese of Cochabamba, Bolivia; my parents are non-practicing Catholics. I studied in Catholic and Adventist schools; then I attended the Institute of Rural Education (IER) run by the MIC Sisters. Later, I completed my studies as a health technician with the Sisters of Jesus and Mary.

After my studies, I went to the mountains and trained some agents in first-aid medical treatments. This work opened my eyes and heart to the great needs of the population. I felt the Lord was calling me, asking me to give my life to God.

Why have you chosen the MIC Sisters?

While I was at the Institute, I had the opportunity to read the life of Délia Tétrault and I felt I had an affinity with her. Délia's universal heart corresponded to my desire; I also wanted to have a heart as big as the world. The international aspect of the MIC community and the joy of the Sisters impressed me deeply. When I observed them praying, I felt drawn. In 1999, at the age of 21, I decided to enter

A life-long commitment! Is that possible today? Yes, of course, it is! Wilma Jaldin, a young Bolivian MIC Sister is about to take that step. What motivates her to do so? In an interview, Wilma, with her brilliant eyes and radiant smile, reveals some of her secrets.

the convent, and I was sent to Chile for my training as a postulant.

How did you react when you heard that you had to leave your family and your country?

Oh! At that time I was willing to give up everything for the Lord. I was ready...

Today, is it not the same?

Today, I am more realistic: I realize that even though we give all our life to the Lord, we remain very human. However, with God's grace we can take up the challenges of community life... I keep my ideal alive and I am open to whatever may come my way: I am ready for anything and willing to share all my talents, all that I have. Every day, I continue learning about what it means to live fully, to be welcoming, and to give.

What have you done since you entered religious life?

At first, my mission work was in Peru, at Cajabamba. For almost three years I was in the mountains giving health-care training sessions to the local people. In our parish, I worked with the youth and I was involved in the vocational program. Later, I came to



Canada to pursue my formation at the international scholasticate in Longueuil, QC.

You also went for a brief stay in Haiti and Cuba; do you want to talk about your experience?

Haiti! A country rich in faith but materially very poor! The nation suffers from many difficulties. However, the people's hope and moral strength can help them conquer their desperate plight. They are close to God and are thankful for what they have. They are joyful in spite of their misery; they love life and work very hard from morning until evening time. In Bolivia, we also come across such great poverty.

With the Sisters I have lived a very enriching experience. Their prayer life sustains their dynamism in the fields of education and health care. All of them are committed one way or another. The Sisters are courageous, good works fill their day. They want to respond as well as they possibly can to the urgent needs of the people.

In terms of spirituality, the training is different from that of Bolivia: it is more controlled even at the level of Church. The Haitian people call upon the Almighty God, the Great Master, He who hears their prayers and blesses them. He is the One who gives, they expect everything from Him; the people struggle with the help of God. What has touched me deeply is their joy notwithstanding their great difficulties.

You then went to Cuba, what are your impressions?

In Cuba, I somewhat felt at home because the people speak Spanish, but with an accent which is very different from ours; within a short time I adapted... In Cuba, I felt a Church that is a bit weary. Notwithstanding government restrictions, the image that comes to my mind is the one where much is done to extinguish the

burning flame of faith... but the sparks keep shooting up from everywhere. The people are particularly heartwarming; after Mass, the elderly gathered and they came over to speak with me, to tell me their worries, their anxieties, but their coded language left me perplexed. Their greatest suffering is the lack of freedom. The generations that grew up during the revolution never heard of God. The people live in misery, meat and the basic foods are very rare. In order to survive people have to be ingenious.

For the Sisters, fraternal life is very important because church oriented activities are limited. They visit the families, encouraging them and sustaining them in their Christian faith. The life of the Sisters in Cuba is one of great simplicity. Their togetherness is their strength. Their loving God who is all mercy and tenderness brings them comfort. I also met our Madagascan and Filipina Sisters whose mission is in Cuba: they are happy to be among the Cuban people.

Soon you will be returning to Bolivia. What are your future projects?

Next February, I hope to take my final vows and to live a few years as a missionary in my own country. Then, I will be totally open to go where God will want to send me. But if I can make a wish, I would like to live my missionary life in Cuba. Why? Because life is very simple, there are no big schools like in Haiti. I want to live close to the people, I want to listen to them and encourage them in whatever ways I can. The adaptation would also be easier for me. However, I do not put on any restrictions. God can send me anywhere He wants; I will spread His Love wherever I happen to be.

Thank you Wilma for your simplicity and spontaneity! Your youthfulness and dynamism touch our lives like a refreshing breeze which brings us much joy and hope. ☺

^{1,3} Sr. Wilma in Cuba

² Sr. Wilma in Haiti

Photos credit: MIC

We, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

Jesus has called us each by name.

From different countries, He has brought us together, in fraternal communities, according to the Gospel, to live the charism of Délia Tétréault in a common project of evangelization.

CONSTITUTIONS MIC No. 18

Like Mary on the day of the Visitation, we shall promptly set out to reach those to whom we are sent. Inspired by Mary's faith in action, we too shall accept to leave, day after day, for other shores, by opening ourselves to our brothers and sisters, in order to live in missionary communion within any new culture or social situation.

GENERAL CODE MIC No. 3.7



MALAWI



HONG KONG

ption,



MADAGASCAR

Photos credit: M.-P. Sanjaçon, M.I.C.



HAITI



PHILIPPINES



JAPAN

GOD WITHOUT FRONTIERS

The book Women Without Frontiers tells the story of more than a hundred years history of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Reading through the content, Sister Lorna's dreams and memories were re-awakened. She too has followed the footsteps of those pioneers and has had the privilege of treading a path which has led her to great discoveries in mission territories. She lived seventeen years in Japan and has now been called to move on—where to? Vietnam!

By Lorna F. Erickson, M.I.C.

In the Philippines, during my primary school years I was fascinated by the MIC Sisters who spoke to us about the missions in Africa. I would dream that someday I would be like them and would take care of the sick children. When I entered the MIC Institute, this dream finally came true. However, Africa was not meant for me; rather, Japan was the country to which I was assigned—I was then thirty-six.

IN QUEST OF MEANING

I had to study three years before mastering the Japanese language. I had already learned English, French, Spanish but none of these languages were comparable to the Japanese. Though difficult, I relied on my determination and the grace of God. Living the Japanese life-style for seventeen years, I became very familiar with their ways of doing. I handled the chopsticks very well, I drank tea according to their custom, I ate raw fish and seafood. I thought, sang, wrote and taught in Japanese. The four seasons, the beauty of nature, the peacefulness and clean environment attracted me to the point of thinking of becoming a Buddhist nun. My attraction did not come from mere fantasy; the Zen practice, the Buddhist temples surrounded by lush gardens deeply touched me. The calm and beauty made me realize I had a profound thirst for intimate communion with God. I had the sentiment that I was busy working for God but not giving time to God to

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transform and empower me. In an atmosphere of stillness and meditation, God reclaimed His Servant. I experienced a deep communion, one that nourishes and is fruitful. This inner quest deepened my relationship with God. A friend of mine, a Buddhist monk, said to me one day that after this experience I seemed more fulfilled. He was right; that's the way I now feel.

ANOTHER DEPARTURE

This time I am sent to Vietnam. This was a desire I had had much before receiving my mandate. However, when the "Annunciation" came and required a response, I felt fear. How would I cope being in a Communist country? It was with mixed feelings and emotions that I left for Vietnam. At fifty-three, I had to begin learning a new language which is somewhat similar to Cantonese. The Vietnamese language is written with alphabet letters, it has six tones and at least twelve vowels. Though difficult it is easier to learn than the Japanese language.

One year has elapsed and up to this day I am most thankful to God for each day I am given to live here. The Vietnamese are a generous and warmhearted people. Every day, I rise, though sometimes with difficulty, at four in the morning to attend Mass at five o'clock. Before and after the Mass, people stop before the statue of the Blessed Virgin and they pray in silence. It is impressive to see their great devotion to Our Lady. Also, every day, their liturgical hymns and the way they celebrate the Eucharist makes one feel in heaven.

COUNTRY OF THE NINE DRAGONS

Can Tho City, where I live, is the centre of the Mekong Delta where the Mekong River flowing all the way from China and Cambodia branches-out into nine big rivers, thus called the nine dragons. This river makes Vietnam a very fertile land and it is the second biggest rice exporting country in the world. At four o'clock in the morning, it is exciting to go to the floating markets: the river is filled with boats loaded with fruits and vegetables; traders gracefully jump from one boat to another to buy their supplies. Fresh food is abundant. At times I miss the Japanese cuisine; however, the Vietnamese diet also has noodles and rice served with a variety of sauces. I continue eating with chopsticks as I loved to do in Japan.

The Vietnamese dress called *ao dai* (pronounced as *aw yai*) is truly lovely and elegant. High school students wear it as a white uniform; it is also worn in some offices or department stores and at all kinds of special events. On their way to school, the students wearing their *ao dai* look like angels as they hurriedly ride on their bikes everywhere in the area. Nuns also wear this dress but it is black and not as fitted. I like wearing it also.

A FUTURE FULL OF PROMISES

Having lived here for some time, I often feel the restrictions typical of a Communist regime. After almost three centuries of revolutions and wars, to be a free and united country with all its loss and reward, the Vietnamese people have emerged resilient, enterpris-



ing, hard-working, gracious, and fervent in their faith. They are intelligent and talented people. This century and the next will surely be their age to become all that God has in store for them.

A religious sister can come across as being a menace particularly if she is not well-known. But God is at work and the Vietnamese people know that a nun does not come to destabilize the established order, but to simply journey with the people and support them through their trials and tribulations of life. I vaguely feel that my relationship with God will be enriched by this experience. With time I gradually discover that I am becoming more contemplative and more loving. My mission experiences are teaching me that *God is without frontier* and that He dwells within the heart of each human being. This is essentially why I feel I am a *woman without frontiers*. ♡

¹ Sr. Lorna in Japan

² A castle in Japan

³ Sr. Lorna in Vietnam

Photos credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

THE DELUGE



AND GENEROUS HEARTS



September 26, 2009, a tropical storm strongly hits an important section of Manila, Capital city of the Philippines. In one day the city is almost submerged underwater. Consequences—houses crumble, hundreds of persons are killed leaving more than 250,000 homeless. Certain areas are covered with more than twenty feet of rain. Very quickly, a city can become a lake.

This disaster leaves millions of people without food and clothing. Millions are victims! Two of our MIC Sisters who are at a meeting come back to the convent using the only means they have—swimming through the waters. At Gagalangin, the first floor of ICAM School (Immaculate Conception Academy of Manila) is flooded by the torrent—it's a run for your life situation.

Here and there, people try to rescue each other. Some hold hands as they attempt to cross the streets that have become rivers with floating garbage and pieces of furniture. Children and elderly are escorted to safer areas. For others, electric wires have become bridges to which they hang on in order to reach a more secure area. What desolation! But also, what solidarity!

S.O.S. VICTIMS

The nation is called upon to give a helping hand. At Greenhills, the MIC Sisters, the teachers and students of ICA (Immaculate Conception Academy) a school with an enrollment of 3,800 students, ask all parents to take part in the rescue effort. The Délia Tétreault Sports Centre becomes a warehouse where all the food and clothing for the victims are stored. The students sort out the goods and fill the bags with food, clothing, medical supplies. Within a short period of time 21,625 bags are ready for distribution.

Other volunteers organize the transportation. Without delay, the goods are delivered to the victims scattered throughout the metropolitan. With one heart and one soul, all want to bring comfort to those poor afflicted people.

Pictures speak a million words! See here how the photos speak for themselves.



ICA Chronicles
cf. www.icagh.edu.ph

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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*Joy is the
best thanks
we can offer
to God.*

Délia Tétreault

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COMMITTED ASSOCIATES AND ALUMNAE

By Claudette Bouchard, M.I.C.

They are involved in all areas of the MIC mission works. Side by side with the Sisters, they reach out to the poor in the remotest villages—teaching, treating the sick, journeying and encouraging all who are in need.

Who are these committed Associates and Alumnae? They are men and women who have fallen in love with the corporal and spiritual works of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. They are Filipinos with grateful hearts who express their gratitude in tangible ways. They are career men and women who offer their expertise wherever they are needed.

Thinking in terms of future generations, wanting their children and grandchildren to learn and know about the history of the MIC Sisters, Mrs. Marietta Co Chin and Miss Annie Dee of Class '72 from ICA in Greenhills, Manila, had an inspiration. Having visited Délia Tétreault's Oratory in Pont-Viau, Quebec, the two alumnae mulled over a dream. They decided to contact a renowned architect, Mr. Vincent Pinpin, and they presented their plan. Miss Dee who owns a marble factory had a block of statuary marble which she had bought from the most famous Carrara quarries near Florence, Italy. This fine stone was used by the famous great sculptors: Leonardo de Vinci and

Michelangelo. With the help of the architect and Vox Bustinera, a young sculptor who works at Annie Dee's factory, the marble block was carved and transformed into a beautiful white statue of the MIC Foundress, Délia Tétreault.

May 26, 2009 – two trucks hauling the statue, three slabs with inscriptions plus the equipment, arrived in front of the school. The ever smiling statue was installed at the entrance of Délia Tétreault Arts and Sports Center. The MIC Sisters and some alumnae joyfully witnessed the installation of this piece of art.

The current students attending the Immaculate Conception Academy and those of the future will be welcomed by a smiling missionary whose life and works are an inspiration. Mrs. Marietta Cochin and Miss Annie Dee have found a way of fostering a greater awareness of Mother Délia, Foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Not only did her missionary zeal reach out to the Chinese in China but as well as to the Chinese in the Philippines. She will be an inspiration for the students who attend ICA—inviting them to become missionaries in their own little way. Such a memento will go a long way in the minds and hearts of those who come across this model. ☺

When the Wind Blows

(part 2)



By Louisa Nicole,
M.I.C..

Somewhat
hanging
between the
earth and the
cold sky of
the winter
season, my
strength
diminishes.

RETURNING HOME

September 22, 2004—My emotions are indescribable when I see all those familiar faces welcoming me at the Dorval Airport. Never had I thought of coming back home so soon and in such a poor physical state. The next day, I am hospitalized at the Montreal Neurological Hospital. No longer are the waves rocking me; my canoe has been replaced by a gurney that rolls me from one examination room to another. No prior illness had prepared me for such a trial. Sometimes I recall the Japanese neurologist's statement: *With this sickness, you will struggle for the rest of your life.* These resounding words move me to tears; I hope he made a mistake...But no, his prediction was right! After a few days of investigation, the verdict is confirmed: Chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy (PIDC). Why such a high-flown name to identify my disease?

THE FLIGHT OF A DOVE

A 52 year old woman shares the hospital room with me; she is beautiful like an angel but aggressive like a demon in holy water. Taken aback by her disease, lateral sclerosis, she has but a few weeks to live—a difficult predicament to accept. Though separated by the curtain stall, I hear the conversations that go on with her family. What a struggle! What despair! One calm evening, I dare invite her to join me in praying the Compline. For her, I adjust the psalms; gradually the peace of God seems to take over her troubled heart. One sunny morning, in early October, when she can hardly move because her muscles do not respond, she says: *Talk to me about God.* I am deeply touched by her request—I begin gently, with all my heart, all the while praying the Holy Spirit to inspire me and speak through me the words that will give her hope.

I am given one week off away from the hospital. When I come back for a treatment I make sure to go visit my friend. Her whole family is around her bed, her final departure is near. Her husband comes to me and says: *What have you done to her? Since the day you have shared the room with her, she gradually changed and has become so serene. Look at her, she is so peaceful, so serene, and smiling!* I come closer to my angel and whisper a few words in her ears. I feel we are both shrouded in the eternal mystery. The next day, like a dove freed from his cage, she returns to the Father's house, leaving me a message: *Louisa, the Lord still needs you.*

THE STRUGGLE

With all the good care I receive at the hospital, I am back on my two fragile feet. However, every week I must return for a treatment and go for physiotherapy to reinforce my muscles. With joy and full of hope I follow the instructions. Throughout the beautiful and colorful autumn season, I take a daily walk; though laborious it gives me energy. Then comes the deception. The treatment which seemed to be effective at first, no longer suits me. Somewhat hanging between the earth and the cold sky of the winter season, my strength diminishes. Springtime seems to hesitate, the sun and its rays are hidden behind the clouds, and my physical condition is now worse than the preceding one—nailed to my bed, incapable of any kind of movement. At this point I think of the blind man in the Gospel of Mark who is led by Jesus outside the village (Mk: 8:22)—this image helps me to 'let go' and trust. Two more hospitalizations follow after which there is a long process of rehabilitation. For months I use a walker for support. Confident, I find strength to struggle.

THE BEGINNING OF A NEW MISSION ORIENTATION

On a regular basis, I have treatments at the Neurological Hospital. Here, I meet many young adults who have chronic illnesses. The chairs closely lined up in the room and the length of the treatment fa-

vor conversation and often times patients confide their anxieties. The solitude of so many saddens me, their perseverance amazes me. I listen and I pray, feeling powerless before so much suffering.

One day, I lay hand on a flyer: **SELF-MANAGEMENT WORKSHOPS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH CHRONIC PAIN:** *training sessions are given to those who suffer from a chronic disease and have abilities in animating groups.* Overseen by Stanford University, this program is serious; I decide to register.

Spring 2007, my missionary life takes on a new orientation. The *ABC of Chronic Pain Self-Management* is a workshop given in two and a half hours, once a week, for six weeks. With a partner I facilitate the sessions to groups of ten to twelve participants—people with chronic illnesses acquire techniques to deal with their pain, manage their health and maintain an active and fulfilling life. The classes are highly interactive, the patients are encouraged to talk about how their chronic pain affects their daily life; the mutual support and success stories help build confidence. What a marvelous program! And what courageous people we meet! Though physically limited, they have hearts that know how to listen to the other and be attentive to the signs of life. They teach me so much!

DANCING IN THE RAIN

In her French novel, *TOUS LES FLEUVES VONT A LA MER*, Belva Plain writes: *Life does not consist in waiting for the storm to pass, but to know how to dance in the rain.*

I owe much gratitude to McGill Health Centre that not only provides good care but gives me the opportunity to use my formation in reaching out to so many people who are in need of help. My illness remains, and that of the others as well. However, I have the certitude that together we are dancing in the rain, reaping the rewards of our efforts, somewhat like collecting beautiful shining diamonds which the sun offers us as it filters through the clouds. ☺



¹ Lisa-Anne Elvidge, coordinator of the program and Sr. Louisa, master formator;

² Group participating in a session

³ Volunteers at a training session
Photos credit: D. Radcliffe-Brack

FROM MELBOURNE TO MONTREAL

A story of gratitude—the author specifies three dates which marked the life of a Filipino musician and of his Canadian teacher.

By Huguette Turcotte, M.I.C.

OCTOBER 29, 1953

The China Mail ship enters the Port of Manila. Two Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception disembark; it is the beginning of an intriguing story. Sr. Cécile Kirouac goes south to St. Michael's Academy of Padada and I take over the Music Department, as Directress, at our Immaculate Conception Academy of Manila (ICAM).

Some days later, I welcome a Filipina mother with her five-year-old son. She wants to enroll him for piano lessons. According to me, he is too young; though I firmly discuss the matter with Mrs. Quirit, she insists: *His father is a violinist and he has detected that his son Julian has musical talent.* A bit unsure, I decide to try the experience—it would be a mistake to refuse my first student in the Philippines.

I soon become aware that I have before me a child who is gifted with a perfect pitch ear. Julian has barely learned to read the notes and a few pages of the piano method when he starts transposing in other tonalities his small pieces in the key of 'C' all on white keys. Without hesitation he places his fingers anywhere on the keyboard and slides them on the black keys according to the melody. For him, the sounds, the rhythm, are like a game. I promise myself never to discourage this little prodigy and to make him love music even though I need much patience in obliging him to read the notes instead of improvising as he wills. One month later, on November 22nd at the annual Saint Cecilia Concert, Julian stands on the podium directing with great assur-

ance the *Toy Orchestra*; he looks like an experienced conductor.

After two years, Julian leaves ICAM and attends another school where he studies violin. His remarkable success is laudable and he is commended for his extraordinary talent. We keep in contact; whenever he has news about his concerts and achievements he sends me photos with his signature: *Your Little Julian*. In 1965, while I am in Canada, I learn that he has obtained a grant from the First Lady of the Philippines, Mrs. Imelda Marcos. Therefore, he is continuing his music studies at the Juilliard School in New York City, one of the world's most prestigious performing arts conservatories. I then lose track of him.

JUNE 2, 2007

A former ICAM student, Vivian de la Rosa, who migrated to the United States, decides to produce a DVD of her Alma Mater; for this purpose, she asks me to lend her some old photos. By chance, I include a 1953 picture of Julian Quirit conducting the Toy Orchestra. Vivian knows of his fame and career; she therefore writes me: *Do you know that he has become a well-known international violinist and he is the conductor of the Philharmonic Orchestra in Melbourne, Australia? I will inform him that I have found his first music teacher.* A few days later, I receive a love letter via my E-mail address. It is my little Julian of yesteryears, now a well-known artist expressing his joy of knowing that I am still alive in Canada. He writes: *I always dreamt that one day I would be able to tell you that I owe my career to you because you have taught me to love music.* He goes on describing his music and career paths since my departure from his country and concludes his letter with a pleasant surprise for me. He projects coming to Montreal in the course of the year 2008.

SEPTEMBER 19, 2008

Julian's intention is to come give a violin recital in homage to his first professor. The program—eight classical masterpieces which I receive by E-mail from Melbourne. Returning from a trip to

Europe, Julian and Minerva, his wife, make a stopover in Montreal. It is September 19—I have the great joy of welcoming the couple at our convent in Pont-Viau, Laval. In 1953 Julian knew me as a young Nun, wearing the religious habit and known as Sr. Marie-Pia. Would he recognize the elderly woman whose hair has become white and is now called by a new name? And what about little Julian who is now at the dawn of his sixtieth year? It is an incredible emotional encounter, difficult to describe...

In the afternoon, Julian presents himself and Mr. Balan, my Romanian friend, pianist, to the audience. He explains the goal of his visit to Montreal: that of being an expression of gratitude to his first music teacher and to thank all the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception who established schools in his country. He then begins his recital during which the silent atmosphere becomes a sacred space. The audience is deeply moved by the beauty and clarity of the sounds, by the artist's capacity to transmit his feelings; with his eyes closed he is visibly drawn into another world, one of harmony and grace. Emotionally touched, tears well up more than once as I listen and reminisce over his long music journey—from the time his mother begged me to take him as a young boy in Manila, followed by years of intensive training which led him to the summit of his international fame. Upon his request, I accompany him for a last piece. Mrs. Quirit records this unique concert which she will later send me on DVD from Melbourne, as a souvenir of the special event. At the end of the recital, pointing out to the audience the photos which are on a table, Julian states: *As you can see, I was destined to become a maestro and I had my first lesson at 5 years of age with Sr. Marie-Pia.* He was recalling his early concert experience at ICAM when he conducted the *Toy Orchestra* in 1953.

Such an expression of gratitude toward his former teacher, whom he says influenced his orientation in music, was for me an unforgettable tribute. To you, *Little Julian*, a wholehearted THANK YOU. 🌸



^{1,2} Julian Quirit and Sr. Huguette

³ Julian practicing with Mr. Balan

Photos credit: M. Chavarria-Quirit

The audience is deeply moved by the beauty and clarity of the sounds...



Letters from here and abroad

Gyoda, Japan

A Spanish Retreat in Japan

More than 10,000 Spanish-speaking immigrants have come to Japan to find work. Most of them have received their permanent residency and are adapting to their new culture. Sr. Ana, Peruvian, works with them at Gyoda's parish.

Last May, I and a Mexican nun who is a Missionary of the Blessed Sacrament of St. Claire, organized a week-end retreat for the Spanish-speaking men and women who are single and are in search of their vocation. Eight young men and women participated. The parishioners brought their collaboration: they prepared the rooms in the rectory, the meals and especially prayed for the participants. The retreat ended with the Eucharist celebrated in Spanish. For the parishioners it was their first time to attend a Mass in Spanish and they were exuberant. Of course, with joy, the Japanese joined them in the celebration.

What was the outcome of this prayerful gathering? The participants expressed their appreciation: it was a time for them to reflect upon certain decisions that needed to be taken in their lives; it gave them a certain sense of direction; another retreat would be needed to go further in their reflection. This was a positive step, very much appreciated by the Spanish-speaking community living in a Japanese culture.

Ana Alvarado, M.I.C., Japan



Japan

Sr. Charity Zimba, M.I.C., a Malawian, visits Japan

During her training years in the Montessori teaching method, Sr. Charity had the opportunity of visiting our schools in Japan to see how this method is applied.

A dream comes true! A Japanese MIC Sister, Mika Inoue and I leave Malawi to go to Japan.

In Tokyo, we spend two days observing the pre-school Montessori method that is taught to the children. Sr. Catharina Hongo, M.I.C., Directress, shows us the classrooms and teaching materials. I also have the opportunity of meeting with some parents who are preparing a bazaar, and are happy to tell us that the proceeds will go to the children in Africa. I gladly speak to them about our culture and the African

way of life. Early March, we leave for Aizu-Wakamatsu. Along the way I notice the mountains, plains and rice-fields. I wonder how the train could possibly climb those high mountains. Surprise! Suddenly, I see myself entering inside the mountains. Incredible! How marvellous!

At Aizu-Wakamatsu, we are warmly welcomed. Here we visit the nursery school; it is similar to the one in Tokyo. I think to myself: It is Montessori everywhere! The little ones are beautiful and attentive. I speak to them of the African culture and show them some costumes of my country. They are very interested and intrigued. In the afternoon we visit the high-school classes where English is taught. For these students, it is their first time to hear the African dialect, the English language spoken with a different accent and someone from Africa animating them about the missions.

At Koriyama, what impresses me the most is the dedication and generosity of the primary-school students. They bring to class: aluminium cans, plastic cartons, and cardboards. They sell these for pennies that they will send to the African children. I am deeply touched. I also notice that they have excellent teachers!

*At Fukaya, I am surprised to see such a small house for the Sisters. I then remember the words of Mother Délia: **Happiness does not come from a big house, but...a big heart!***

Charity Zimba, M.I.C., Japan



YOU ARE *MY WITNESSES*

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



SISTER PAULINE BRODEUR M.I.C.
Saint-Théodosie, Quebec

Sister Pauline's departure for Mzimba, Malawi, does not come to her as a surprise. This is the country she knows well and she is ready to serve the people she loves.

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



SISTER JEANNINE FORCIER, M.I.C.
Springfield, Mass., U.S.A.

Following a brief stay in Quebec, Sr. Jeannine is happy to return to Malawi. She will teach English and the history of the MIC Institute to the young African Sisters.



SISTER AGNÈS BOUCHARD, M.I.C. (1ST LEFT)
Petite-Rivière-St-François, Quebec

The Peruvian people won the heart of Sr. Agnès. Having had a fruitful mission with the miners in Peru, she will now work at Cajabamba where the people and their simple way of life attract her.

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for your solidarity!*

DO YOU BELIEVE IN ANGELS?



I don't
know if you
believe in
angels...
but I do!

Photos:

¹ Promoting the magazine

Photo credit: Mary Wong

² (left to right) Paula Cheung,

Cecilia Ying, Brenda Mok,

Mary Wong, Jane Young

Photo credit: MIC

By Ditma Luz Trocio, M.I.C.

Whether or not you believe in angels, our experience tells us that they do exist. Last April-May, Jane Yung and Paula Cheng took the initiative of contacting ten of our former students from Hong Kong who came to our rescue. We were scheduled to present our MIC Mission News magazine in six parishes in the Toronto Archdiocese. The angels planned and organized for us the three weeks accommodations and transportation to and from the churches. They helped us promote our mission magazine in three Chinese parishes and in three English parishes. What motivated these former students to stand by our sides as angels? Gratitude! It was a way for them to express their gratefulness for the education they received at our Good Hope and Tak Oi Schools in Hong Kong.

Following the three weeks of promotion in the Chinese parishes, we moved on to the English parishes. What a pleasant surprise for us to see, once again, our angels: Cecilia Ying, Brenda Mok, Mary Wong, Jenny Lo, Patricia Cheung, Bianca Chan and Vivian Lee. Every Sunday, they were by our sides promoting the magazine and speaking to the parishioners with all their hearts. In turn, the churches' assemblies welcomed us wholeheartedly and we were most grateful to all who were

present. Two other angels from the Philippines came to help us: Brother Paul Pillerin of Padada offered us hospitality in Scarborough, Ontario for the span of time that our project lasted. Ms. Rosario Gulluagan, an MIC Associate from Montreal also assisted us with her precious help.

In Quebec, we are more visible: it is the Province where our Institute was founded by Délia Tétreault who was born and raised in Mariville, QC. In all the parishes, we are warmly welcomed by the pastors and the parishioners; with graciousness they open their doors to us. Each year, we have many lay collaborators who collect subscriptions from people living in their neighborhoods. The Mission is at the heart of numerous dedicated Christians who respond generously to the needs of the less fortunate where we work in various parts of the world. This solidarity is a great support to us as missionaries and we are deeply grateful to all who assist us, one way or another.

Our experience tells us that angels do exist in our midst. We praise and thank God for these generous and enthusiastic souls whom He sends on our paths. To all the *ANGELS* we say: *Thank you and may the Lord bless you a hundredfold.* ∞

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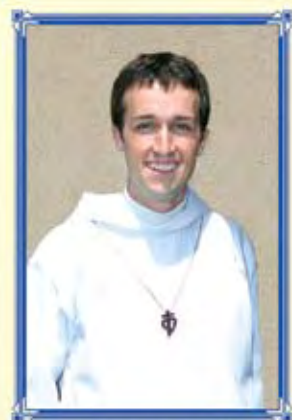


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*I need your weakness
that I may become your strength.*

*I need your poverty
that I may become your richness.*

*I need your darkness
that I may become your light.*

*I need your sadness
that I may become your joy.*

*I need your hands,
to serve my sisters and brothers.*

*I need your silence,
that I may become the Word in you.*

*I need your "yes",
that I may come dwell in you.*

*I need your heart,
that I may become prayer in you.*

I need you...to need Me.

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