

MIC

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Mission News



To sow seeds of joy and hope

Since 1923

TAIWAN

A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

KANYANGA, ZAMBIA

911 — HEALTH CARE EMERGENCY

IN FOCUS

THE OTHER SIDE OF...

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS

OCTOBER

We Pray for World Mission Day — That the celebration of World Mission Day may foster in the People of God a passion for evangelization with the willingness to support the missions with prayer and economic aid for the poorest Churches.

NOVEMBER

We Pray for Justice and Reconciliation in Africa — That the African continent may find strength in Christ to pursue justice and reconciliation as set forth by the second Synod of African Bishops.

DECEMBER

We Pray For Children And Young People — That children and youngsters may be messengers of the Gospel; may they be respected and preserved from all violence and exploitation.

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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EDITORIAL

The Other Side Of...

Have you ever been intrigued by the famous detective stories of Sherlock Holmes, or by the fictional Belgian detective Hercule Poirot or by Columbo? Trying to unravel the mystery gets the imagination going, but the 'snag' is always the surprising outcome.

The same goes for a written article—reading only one side of the page does not give satisfaction, to get the full picture of the story both sides have to be read. To read between the lines, to see beyond the pictures that are projected on our small or large screens helps us to enter into the reality of the events and people alike.

How many times we have been struck before pictures and stories of tragedies, earthquakes, devastating fires, but once these are gone from our screens, we forget... How many times we have heard that the stoic attitude of the Japanese people has helped them overcome the tsunami? Yet, how many are experiencing a profound distress. Sr. Louisa who lived twenty years in Japan will speak to us about their reality. And closer to home, what have been the reactions upon seeing the inundations of the banks of the Richelieu River? Thousands of volunteers were touched and gave a helping hand: cleaning up the debris, repairing homes and cellars, such actions supported and gave joy to the disaster victims. What do we say about the approximate nine thousand heroes who took up the **Shaved Head Challenge Leucan 2011** (Leucan—an association whose mission is to help cancer stricken children and their families believe in a brighter future). Bravo to everyone! These are actions that speak louder than words.

The volunteers give from the heart. These generous individuals not only read between the lines but with insight see beyond the faces that appear on our screens. To be one with all is the adage of all missionaries who uproot themselves to enter into another culture. Such an experience is currently being lived by Marie-Hélène, Stephan and their three young daughters in Bolivia. The evangelical calling can be heard in many different ways, but the important thing is to respond. *Being one with all* concerns everybody, it's an ambitious project, at times disturbing, but, oh... how rewarding! Generous hearts have the joy of experiencing this enriching reality.

Soon, Christmas will present us the Nativity scene. Our eyes of faith will be called to pierce through the image of the little Child in the manger to see the greater mystery—that of the Incarnation. Out of love, the Son of God became one of us, He embraced our human condition. Let us allow Him to guide us by His Love which goes beyond the stories and pictures on our screens.

My best wishes are sent to each one of you—may you have a Blessed Christmas and a Holy New Year.

Marie-Paule Sanfey, m.i.c.

DÉLIA'S COLUMN

PIERCING THROUGH THE VISIBLE –

1924—A biography of Cardinal Charles Lavigerie, Archbishop of Algiers was being read during meal time in the Sisters' cafeteria. At one point, the humble beginning of the Congregation of the White Sisters¹ was described as follows: eight young Breton girls, two of whom were not yet 16 years of age, had been chosen to become the first stones of the future Congregation. Hearing this, Mother Délia made this remark: *You might perhaps find it strange that eight poor girls, still very young, should have been chosen to be the foundation of a new Institute and for men who generally sympathize only with the glamorous, this may seem even absurd. But what do the instruments matter to God? He is the One who inspired Msgr. Lavigerie and led him to those little souls He Himself had prepared. These humble girls of whom the world probably had a poor opinion, had nevertheless the fortitude of the lowly and worked wonders. The proof of their humility is that upon their arrival, aware of their weakness and powerlessness, they exclaimed: "Really, if we are the only ones to begin the Work, it will be a nice mess!..." Well, it was not a mess! Something beautiful took shape and it is even more beautiful today, for the Institute has developed admirably. Humble and obedient, they allowed themselves to be guided and they succeeded in all they were asked to do because they relied on God who does not need geniuses to accomplish His designs, since He Himself is the Genius. As He can bring forth the most beautiful tree from a tiny seed, so does He take pleasure in choosing the weakest instruments for His greater works.*²

¹ (or) Missionary Sisters of Our Lady of Africa

² The First Thirty Years of the Institute, 306

TRANSCENDING THE SCREEN OF WORDS

Words often generate confusion. They can exclude, deceive, offend, lull us to sleep. Jesus transcended the screen that words can create, He clarified their meaning, He gave them life. Could we not also be called to go beyond the screen of words which we see, hear and speak?



André Gadbois

For many years, during group catechesis sessions at the Montreal Diocese, I mention to the catechumens to beware of words. In different ways, I demonstrate how they can be a trap, a pitfall, all the while affirming that they are of utmost importance for good communication and communion as proposed by Jesus of Nazareth. We are in quest of truth, searching for freedom, peace, tenderness, we want to be builders of brotherly love and we are usually glad to share our discoveries. To express ourselves we use *words* either spoken or written. Whether we like it or not, these words are reinforced by our gestures, our posture, our gaze; they too become our instruments of communication. All these means must be delicately handled because it is through them that we construe our ideas, judgments, relationships. Through these means we also express our friendship, our faith, our values, our limits, our dreams. The word that I use can become for the other person, a wall, an obstacle, a misunderstanding. There are words that exclude, others that mislead, others that keep feeding confusion in our minds.

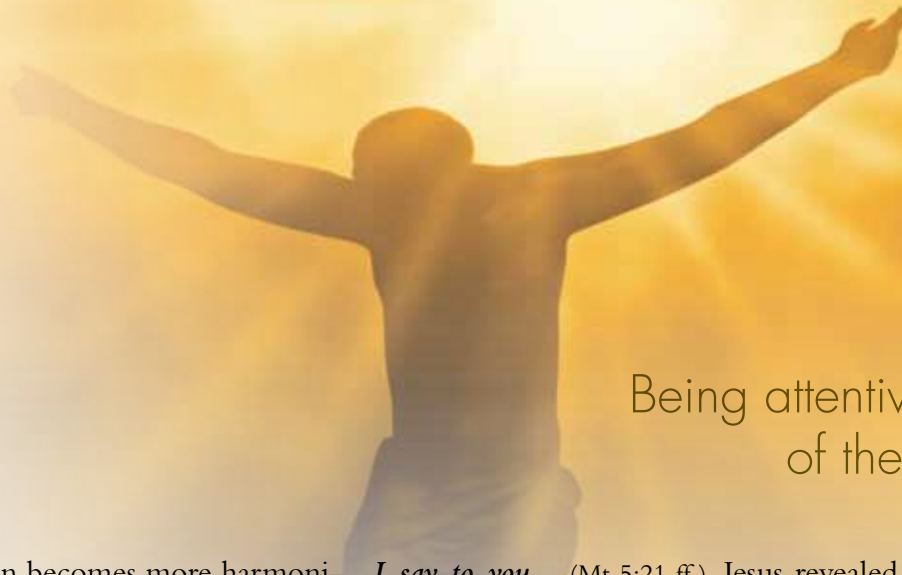
I love crossword puzzles, especially the monthly *Supergrille* of Michel Hannequart which appears in the newspaper La Presse. In June, a five letter word had to be found for <FISH>. Horizontally, I had already two consecutive letters – M and E. I cried out to myself “Hurrah, I

found it!” the word is MEROU (English: Mero). I often buy this kind of fish, it is easy to cook, it is scrumptious and not expensive. I continued building other words around MEROU but suddenly there was a blockage, a wall, I could not go any further; impossible to add other words. Hannequart must have made a mistake, not I! So, I checked the spelling, consulted the dictionaries, took deep breaths, pondered, then I decided to go for a walk in a wooded area. Upon my return, I looked for the blockage, what had gone wrong??? Why did I so quickly opt for the word MEROU? Obviously, it was because of the first two letters, also because of my knowledge and culinary experience. But what if the word could be MERLU (English: Hade)? That was it! A fish I had never tasted, yet it does exist.

WORDS ARE SCREENS

Words can be referred to as screens. Similar to clothing, pictures, body, music, law, victories, failures, titles, temples, rituals, customs, words hide something behind them. It is important to take the necessary time to dissect them and discover the truth they hold; from that point on, authentic communication and communion can take place.

When individuals take time to clarify their own words while being attentive to the words of the other, greater understanding between them can take place; thus,



Being attentive to the words
of the other. ~

communication becomes more harmonious. It must be said that words, clothing, attitudes, style, relationships, judgments, one's personal past history are all elements that can alienate us. It is important not to cry out too quickly: "Hurrah, I found it!" because the meaning of life is to be discovered and re-discovered day after day; with vigilance and trust it is to be questioned and put in perspective and of course, we can become blocked if we build life in light of appearances, similar to my hasty conclusion with the Supergrille!

WORDS HAVE A PRICE TAG

In the Gospel of Luke 4:16.30 and Matthew 13: 53.58 it is written that Jesus went to His hometown synagogue in Nazareth and read the well-known words of the Prophet Isaiah. But Jesus went beyond the written words, he transcended them to the point that Matthew writes: *And they took offense at him* (v.57). St. John, the Evangelist, refers to Jesus as the WORD. Throughout His lifetime, Jesus took time to transcend social categories (Samaritan, Roman, stranger, tax collector...), He went beyond the religious legal rules (washing of hands, remembering the Sabbath, offering of lambs, healing of lepers, forgiving of the adulterous...), the ideologies of His time (titles, an eye for an eye, status of women and children) did not deter Him from His teachings—*We have told you this, but*

I say to you... (Mt 5:21 ff.). Jesus revealed God as greater than words, near and concerned about the maximum development of each man and woman on earth.

Of course He paid the price. There is always a price to be paid when words liberate and bring about greater awareness of one's responsibilities, instead of perpetuating consumers who are submissive and indifferent. Jesus revealed a *God with us* who is always at work, trying to open our eyes, ears and hearts not on a religion but on our fellowmen. If we want and wish to know the depth of God's love for His children, we must contemplate the Crucified, Resurrected Christ.

On the third day, the disciples were confused about the words they had read in their book, the First Testament. Their dream had collapsed; Jesus joined them on the road and without blaming or scorning them, He took time to journey with them, helping them to go beyond the screen of words and their usual interpretation. He suggested that they now continue the work He had begun. They left and filled with His Breath they understood, there and then, Isaiah's words which Jesus had proclaimed in the synagogue. Immediately, they went, reached out and spoke to the HEART of their contemporaries without judging or blaming so that all may have life...and life in abundance. ☺

More Than a Dream



The missionary life which mobilizes more than five hundred MIC Sisters around the world also attracts lay people who desire to share and collaborate in their mission projects. They bring humanitarian aid to the people to whom they are sent and this they do in the name of their faith.



Agathe Durand, M.I.C.

The MIC Sister, author of this article, is a committed member of the International Mission Formation Team. She has had the experience of living the mission with lay missionaries in Madagascar and in refugee camps in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Fascinated by the “other world” and willing to leave all behind, a young woman named Lise, joined the MIC team in La Paz, Bolivia. The children were the happy beneficiaries of the years she was there for them. Myriam, uprooted herself and gave five years of her time in Taiwan; she learned Mandarin and served within the capacity of her profession in geriatrics. Michel and Monique with their two daughters left their homeland and settled in Madagascar for three years; they responded to a call which came from the local Church and which responded to their talents and desire to serve abroad. Carole still wonders how she came across the challenge of serving in a country where she had to learn the Arabic language and the Muslim customs; this kind of courage only comes when the person is capable of relying on the One who sends and believes in the mission of Jesus. Dominique and Kateri did not have enough of two years in Cochabamba to

become better acquainted with the youth and the underprivileged families; more time to share with the missionary team the joy of serving and sharing the Good News would have been appreciated.

Nurses, namely: Angèle, Lucienne, Caroline and Pauline still vividly live by their enriching experiences which they had in Bolivia, Lebanon, Malawi; the medical care they were able to provide to those whom they loved became “Good News” for both the patients and the nurses. Gabrielle, gifted in the line of teaching and catechetics, actually observed her personal life being transformed by the friendly contact she had with the Peruvian people. Huguette, mother and grandmother who gave years of her time in Africa, is now rejoicing to see her grandchildren take part in mission projects overseas. When we hear Nathalie speak about her work with the handicapped children and their families in Madagascar, when she tells of her encounters with people of other

cultures and religions, we realize that her mission experience has left an impact on her life. For Nicole, who flew for years as an airline hostess, there can be no comparison to the three years she spent in Hong Kong, working with the children and the MIC Sisters.

Each story is unique! When these lay missionaries come together for days of renewal, all are unanimous in saying that a new source of vitality has come about from having served abroad and having been at the heart of other cultures.

A DREAM GRADUALLY UNFOLDING

Mission is sometimes contagious. Julien, a teenager whose parents served, in collaboration with the MIC Sisters, in Cochabamba, Bolivia, has no doubt that speaking to his neighbors about his experience abroad reached the heart of Marie-Hélène and Stéphan who, with their children, are dreaming of a project overseas. The two couples have met; Christine and Thierry enthusiastically shared with their neighbor the information they inquired about and encouraged them to pursue their dream. Marie-Hélène and Stéphan are currently preparing for the great adventure after months of training.

Marie-Hélène Beaulac and Stéphan Marier, from Laval, Quebec have been intensely preparing in order to accomplish a missionary commitment as a family, with their three daughters: Mathilde, Alice and Florence. The couple has been attending the Intercommunity Mission Formation Program one or two week-ends per month for group workshops, lectures, and various sessions. They are doing all that is necessary to become more aware of the realities they will have to face once they arrive on foreign soil—culture-wise and faith-wise. Their commitment as a couple and family, their dedication to share the Good News are part and parcel of their project. Marie-Hélène and the girls have already begun learning Spanish, as for Stéphan, he has already mastered the language.

In Bolivia, the intercultural MIC Community of six is prepared to welcome the family on a long term basis, to

help them integrate into their new milieu and value their competence as well as their availability. At the Institute of Rural Education (IER) where young adults learn to become future leaders in their remote villages, Marie-Hélène, while caring for her family, will take time to be regularly present at the Institute's lodging especially during sports activities. She is delighted to be able to collaborate in baking bread for the financial aspect of the establishment. The girls will have a normal life and will go to school as usual. While being attentive to his family, Stéphan will give the students a helping hand in their school work. His artistic talents in music, song, theater, will enhance the students' knowledge and potential in the art field. For the couple, this will be a complete change of life style, far from the well-known professional way of life.

To take up such a project demands courage and plenty of enthusiasm; however, the support and solidarity of the people around them somehow consolidates the hope and intensifies the joy of realizing such a dream.

A SEND-OFF

Reuniting parents, friends, lay missionaries and MIC Sisters, a mission send-off was celebrated on May 29 at the MICs Mother House. Father Pierre Murray, Episcopal vicar of Laval and friend of the Marier family, presided over the ceremony. The long-awaited dream is unfolding in an atmosphere of Thanksgiving; in Quebec as well as at the Institute, all are grateful for this privileged calling. Parents and relatives search for ways they can contribute in this mission send-off, and in Bolivia at l'IER all are waiting to give the family a most heartfelt welcome.

From one generation to another, lay missionaries are actualizing God's holy plan for his diverse human family. In ways unknown to us, He inspires people who are willing to endorse and take the road of the Beatitudes proclaimed by the Lord. His unfailing promise *I am with you always until the end of time* (Mt 28:20) is true for everyone. 

¹The Marier family
Photo Credit: MIC



A Breath of Fresh Air

By Marcelle Paquet, M.I.C.

THE MIC COMMITMENTS IN TAIWAN

The City of Taipei on the Island of Taiwan is the political, economic, and cultural center of this country. It is one of the most bustling cities in the world. The many motorcycles are seen and heard everywhere; it is the means of transportation most citizens use. The traffic is dense and very noisy; the sidewalks have become the parking space for these countless motorcycles. Tourists are both astonished and amused. In this agitated, colorful city where bright neon lights flash day and night, the MIC Sisters walk to their respective apostolic works. One goes to the retreat center where she meets groups of Christians who wish to grow in their faith. The other Sister goes with youth groups to the Eucharistic Movement Center; she is their animator and spiritual guide. Most of the MIC Sisters in Taiwan are now involved in a new mission in China, they are happy to perpetuate Délia Tétreault's dream. They wish to be authentic evangelizers. They present pastoral oriented workshops and activities to the youth; they journey spiritually with the women and men who wish to learn more about their Christian faith.

TAIWAN IN THE 21st CENTURY

Politically as well as environmentally, Taiwan has taken center stage on many issues. The natural disasters such as typhoons, earthquakes, floods confront the Taiwanese population; conscious of the environmental issues, they deal with these creatively. The country is in full expansion and blossoming.

TAIPEI'S INTERNATIONAL FLORA EXPOSITION

Every Sunday, this bustling, big city opens its flower markets to the public. The breathtaking colors leave the on-lookers in awe. The Taipei's International Flora Exposition is held here. Fourteen pavilions of flowers and horticultural exhibitions are a delight for the eyes and hearts that appreciate the beauty of Mother Earth.

THE MICS TAKE YOU ON A GUIDED TOUR

The City of Taipei offers us the beautiful and unique opportunity to visit this colorful exposition. With you, we would like to take a brief look at the creative art work of the Taiwanese people.

The Flower Wall—At the entrance of the Yuanshan Parc, there is a six meters high flower-themed wall consisting in a variety of plants and flowers on both sides. The pattern and night lights are one of the features of this landscape wall. Walking through the designs all made of flowers, we marvel before the beautiful sea of colors and textures. Color combinations are stunningly eye-catching. Every month, qualified personnel replace the flowers and themes are created around rivers, plants and new horizons. Four interconnected parks, cover 2,471 acres of land. Twenty-five million plants of which 90% are imported, are used to exhibit the different species of plants or flower families. Buses bearing the sign: **EXPO-The Greatness of Beauty** are at the disposal of all who want to visit. It is to be noted that the Expo Dome is located on what used to be a soccer stadium; it has been creatively redesigned and is the only pavilion

where the city exhibits flowers and floriculture art competitions.

At a distance, we can see the movable *New Fashion Pavilion*—a sleek three storey *EcoARK* made entirely out of 1,5 million recycled plastic bottles, which have been transformed into *POLLI-Bricks*. These transparent converted plastic bottles are full of air; they maintain a comfortable temperature inside the Pavilion without the use of air conditioners. *EcoArk* is considered as the world's lightest, movable, breathable environmental structure and it can withstand earthquakes and hurricanes. The committee of architects had only one goal in mind: *reduce waste, reuse and recycle matter*. It had the same ideal as the MICs who state in their Chapter Acts: *Through our simple lifestyle of community sharing, we present to the world an alternative in the way of living out the values that define the relationships among persons and nations, between the abusive use of the common wealth and a durable development concerned with protecting the environment, as well as in the equitable distribution of wealth.*¹

The *Fine Arts Park* area and the *Gardens of the World* welcome us to exquisite beauty. The colorful, pure fragrance, international flower displays are breathtaking. We marvel before such cultural diversity and creativity.

The construction workers who built the five pavilions in *Xinsheng Parc* were cautious not to alter the park's appearance. No trees were cut down and these offer



shady areas very much appreciated by the visitors. Materials used to build the pavilions were all from recycled matter; waste was thus minimized.

The most popular pavilion is the spectacular *Pavilion of Dreams*. Here, the spectators experience the stunning collision between the real and virtual worlds of flowers. They explore the natural world, while interacting with nature by some impressive technological displays of sound, light and movement. We are plunged into the unreal—a world of dreams.

Approximately, thirty to forty thousand visitors come daily to visit the green and colorful oasis. At the end of February, three million people had already seen the Expo. Numerous are the volunteers to guide and inform the tourists.

The main goal of the exposition is to sensitize the public of the importance of protecting the environment and safeguarding Mother Earth. Parks and public areas are always clean, notwithstanding the crowds of visitors that come and go daily.

Such magnificent beauty leaves us with a sense of wonder and to the Author of Creation we give praise and thanksgiving. Enthralled by what surrounds us, we wish to come back again and again. ∞

PHOTOS

¹ Sr. Marcelle Paquet and Sr. Eulalia Loreto

² Yuanshan Park

Photos Credit: MIC



¹ MIC Chapter Acts, p. 4



The Prince's Clothes



Véronique Martel

About the author:

Véronique Martel has a BA Degree in linguistics and French literature. She is also interested in cultures and visual arts. The author is a literary chronicler on the Radio Ville-Marie station.

Photos Credit: Farah François

You have heard the proverb: *Appearances can be deceiving* – but have you ever experienced this saying to be true?

Though we must not allow appearances to get in the way, they are often a measuring rod in our relationship with others. Unfortunately, our perception of a person relies on what the individual looks like.

AN EXTRAORDINARY REVELATION

A few months ago, I met a man whose physical appearance was less than appealing. He was short, hunchback, looked older than his age. He walked painfully with a cane. The unpleasant cigarette smell which emanated from his skin made me feel nauseous. His clothes were colorless, tattered and dirty; not a very flattering description of this man. Because of my work I had to approach him on a friendly and professional basis. One day, in May, I braced myself with the best Christian intentions possible; I decided to put aside my prejudices and to take lunch with him. Our initial conversation went from shy smiles to the weather forecast and gradually it evolved around more personal issues. I was taken aback to hear myself speak with this man about my studies, my fiancé, my mother's house. He, in

turn, talked about his past as a comedian, as director of famous theatrical productions which he enumerated; he went on saying that he played parts with the best known actors in Quebec and even taught them some tricks. When he spoke to me about his collections of poems, I felt my heart stop a beat. I, a lover of poetry and literature, read some of his compositions and I realized that I had almost missed the chance of meeting a great poet. Besides his many talents, he is a philosopher, a great thinker, a man of wisdom. During our conversation he often expressed simple maxims but which were highly spiritual. The biggest surprise: the external condition of this person reveals nothing of the inner wealth that dwells within him.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAUTIFUL

As I wanted to be honest with him, I shared my initial apprehensions about his looks. He smiled and admitted that he was not surprised. He was not angry at me, he simply said: *The difference between beauty and the beautiful is immense, very large, it is vast*. I must admit that such profound wisdom left me in awe and I took some time to comprehend the whole meaning of his words. Reflection led me to think that BEAUTY is not based on pre-established esthetic criteria, while the BEAUTIFUL is.

A work of art or certain persons might come across as beautiful because they correspond to our society's criteria. We cannot deny the fact that when an object or person exhibits perfectly such a standard, positive feelings arise within us. But our sentiments will never go beyond a certain measure or scope. Why? It is simply because our sentiments as well as the criteria are limited. They cannot be extended infinitely because they are delimited; the beautiful is only within that space.

Beauty has no requirements, no demands. It surprises us, it strikes us. It corresponds with nothing we have seen before or known or waited for, or with any kind of stereotype. Beauty obliges us to wake up from our comfort zone and find the strength to contemplate what IS. The Beauty that transfigures comes from where? Could it be the OTHER? Perhaps! But not the OTHER external to us—it is rather the OTHER which seems to be a total stranger because it dwells deep within the sacred space of our soul which is unknown to us unless we have been awakened consciously to its presence and existence. The Essence of Beauty can only be found in that which is intrinsically pure—in God alone. To perceive Beauty and understand it as different from the Beautiful requires a profound faith.

According to my understanding, absolute Faith and Beauty share common elements. Apparently both are terrifying, destabilizing, supernatural, and immutable. It corresponds to nothing we know; it is beyond our human consciousness. Absolute Faith and Beauty is a state of complete astonishment, breathless amazement, of positive fear which implies both distance and familiarity. However, once you have been touched by such an experience, you are dazzled and transformed. Life can never ever be the same again. It seems to me therefore that the one I believed to be terribly ugly and repulsive turns out to be inhabited by an immense Divine Beauty. The seemingly 'least' revealed himself to be the *Little Prince*. ∞





Passing on the Flaming Torch

By Claudette Bouchard, M.I.C.

While we were working in some remote areas of Malawi and Zambia, Africa, reaching out to people in the mountains, in villages, teaching children and adults, caring for the sick in dispensaries, sharing the faith, initiating self-help projects in agriculture and construction, little did we know at the time the impact we would be leaving behind. As we went about our daily tasks, students, teachers, villagers, the sick, and the poor, all observed us, some more closely than others and everyone greeted us warmly with their usual *Monire Amayi, muli uli?* (Hello Sister, how are you?)

As years went by, we envisioned and witnessed a gradual change taking place. The MIC schools, dispensaries, domestic science centers and pastoral ministries were handed over to the local African nuns, namely the Sisters of the Holy Rosary. This flourishing Community which was founded in Malawi in 1951 by Msgr. Marcel Saint-Denis, M. Afr., has become a beacon for the Catholic Church and its population.

Some time ago, we received a letter from one of the Sisters who celebrated her Golden Jubilee. Most touching and revealing, we share with you excerpts of her letter.

Dear Sisters,

It is with great joy that I write this letter to you today as memories flash back in my mind of my former days at Katete. Your missionary work changed my life and the lives of many of my people, girls and boys alike.

Out of the many things that you did, as MIC Sisters, and that inspired me, I recall one which stands out very clearly and that is—sharing the Catholic Faith with me. You remember that I was baptized as a young girl. If it were not for you I don't know what could have become of me, especially with our cultural practices of that time.

The desire to live a holy life like you propelled me even more to become a Sister so that in turn I could help others to come closer to God as was my case. Truly, my Baptism was my turning point, just as it was for St. Paul when he converted. I must say that my education and nursing career were also inspired by you. Many of us, in my village and in all the places where you worked, owe our success stories to you Sisters.

On a larger scale, the family of the Sisters of the Holy Rosary greatly appreciates all the support rendered to us. The hospitals and the schools that you passed over to us have brought great relief to many of the people we serve. The population appreciates coming to our facilities because of the values and ethos we demonstrate and stand for. We still believe in the holistic approach that you taught us. As is the case with our hospitals, our schools still offer a comprehensive education which enables the child to grow both in mind and soul. The demand for this approach is even greater these days because of the lack of morals in our society among the youth. As a Congregation we are still keeping strong the legacy which you the MIC Sisters have left us.

Finally, I convey my very special heartfelt gratitude to all the Sisters. I owe all my apostolate to God and to you. Working at the Nkhamenya Community Hospital is a Blessing from God. If I had not been Baptized, I could not be doing His ministry.

With Love,

Sr. Margaret M. Nyirenda, S.H.R.

The gift of Faith has been passed on. The Lord's mission of Love keeps on through His chosen ones. How can we not be thankful..., how can we not believe in God's steadfast Love within us and among us!? His shining Presence is for those who have eyes to see. 

FOR A BETTER WORLD

A world in which money and power dominate human and social interaction is a world that is numb. Such a world does not hear the cry of the poor and does not sense the pain of all who suffer; it is a world that is not touched by what is happening on the other side of its self-sufficient walls.

'Metta' is a word from the Pali language which evokes within a warm-hearted feeling of fellowship, sympathy and love which grows boundless with practice; it overcomes all social, religious, racial, political and economic barriers. The 'Buddhist hymn to love' invites us to reflect:

*Cultivate an all-embracing
mind of love,
For every human being
and for all the world.
Whether visible or invisible,
And those living far or near,
The born and those seeking birth,
May all beings be happy.*

*In all its height and depth
and broad extent,
May love be unrestrained,
without hate or enmity.
Then as you stand or walk,
sit or lie,
So long as you are awake,
Pursue this awareness, this goal,
with all your might.
It is known as living here
a life divine.*

THE OTHER SIDE OF...





A Tattoo on the Heart

By Louisa Nicole, M.I.C.

What holds true for a missionary who comes back to her native land after so many years of dedication abroad? Some memories? Yes and no... above all, it is love, that kind of love that will not die. It is a tattoo on the heart. Whatever happens in Japan, where I worked for over twenty years, does not leave me insensitive. My heart oscillates like the land that trembles and shakes with the rhythm of earthquakes. And I worry, and I pray for those I know and love. When happiness knocks at their door, I rejoice with them. For months, following the major earthquake and tsunami which hit the Japanese people so hard, my heart often returns to the country I love. Apart from the thousand apocalyptic images that have been presented to us on T.V. and the Internet, I can see the invisible.

BEHIND THE FAÇADE

The “dignity” of the Japanese people has been praised and with good reasons. Because of their culture imbued with Buddhism, the Japanese are stoic: they support their hardships and their pain with courage, and this without any signs of emotions.

As a young missionary, I would get lost in the maze, in the complexity of their thoughts and actions. One day I opened up to a lady in whom I had great trust. And this was her reply: *For us Japanese, the most important remains in the depth of*

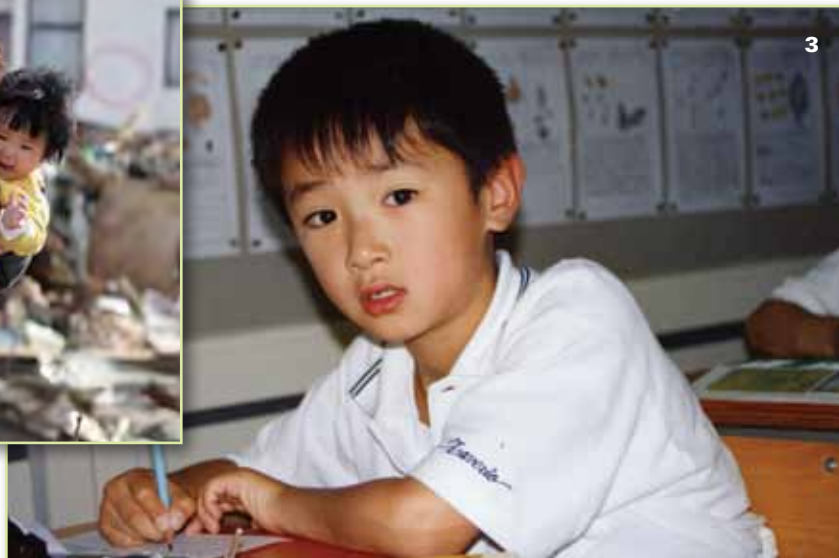
our heart; you must read it on our lips. The Japanese have deep emotions but do not manifest them openly. Harmony with its surroundings is of prime importance. If a trustworthy friend appears, the unbridled feelings speak abundantly; it is then that the invisible is felt.

Do we truly understand what the Japanese have been living since the 11th of March of this year?

AT THE HEART OF A DISASTER

Sister Ana Alvarado, M.I.C., Peruvian missionary in Japan, speaks to us of her experience.

With a small group of volunteers I left Tokyo for Yumoto, a city located south west of Fukushima, approximately 40 kilometers from the damaged nuclear power plant. Here, we gathered at the local church which had lost its roof during the earthquake; however two rooms at the rectory were available: the kitchen and the toilet area; this was our shelter for a week. The dangers of radioactivity excluded all young volunteers from that region; only those in their forties and older could be admitted. Travelling at night, and frequently jolted about by the tremors, we finally reached Iwaki and Onahama, two parishes that were badly affected by the tsunami. Believe me, what we saw were not pictures on T.V. but the reality: we were mute! Even after a week, we still could not express with words what we had seen and felt.



A CRY FROM THE HEART

Sister Ana continues writing: *The next day, we were introduced to the centers where the refugees were kept. Doctor Ishii presented us as “the listening volunteers”; this introduction helped people feel confident. Finally they could speak out, tell their stories: the sadness of having lost their family, their house, their piece of land, their fishing boat, all their possessions. They could express their anguish, their uncertainties about the future; their guilt of having survived while other members of their families or neighbors perished. It was obvious that they were nerve wrecked by their deep pain. Other individuals were angry at the thought of their powerlessness, some others spoke of the stress living in refugee centers where intimacy is impossible. There were long periods of silence, and then came some words of gratitude for the life they still had.* Sister Ana saw on those weary faces the suffering of Christ; she felt He was within her to bring them comfort and consolation: *Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.* (Mt 11:28)

THE MUTE BURDENS OF THE LITTLE ONES

Koriyama is a city of 300,000 inhabitants and is located 60 kilometers from the central nuclear plant which has been damaged. This city where we worked for 78 years in the educational field has also been touched by radioactivity. Experts have come to take samples of the soil from the recreation grounds but no results have been published. However, out of fear, 10–20% of the children have deserted the city among

which a hundred of them have left Saint Francis Xavier School. On the other hand, eighty youngsters from the radioactive refugee centers have been welcomed to our twin school Aizu-Wakamatsu, where MIC Sisters still collaborate with the laity.

Karen Lajon, a correspondent from France for ‘Le Journal du Dimanche’ wrote: *In Koriyama, the children know nothing of what has happened, but their mothers don’t leave them a minute. No more walks! For all trips the car is used. The hands and throat are washed dozens of times a day. The arms can never be bare, the head is covered with a hood and a mask is worn over the face.*

Children are instructed to be ever so careful of the rain and the food they eat. More so, early July, the government announced that 35,000 dosimeters would be distributed to all the children of the Fukushima region. All the youngsters will have to wear the device that will inform the parents on the quantity of radiation that enters their bodies. A first in the world, but of what utility can it be if the source of the problem is not eradicated?

Earthquakes, tsunamis, eruption of volcanoes are all natural catastrophes and the Japanese know that very well. However, the invisible, colorless, odorless nuclear enemy is the worst inhuman menace there is which has been created by humans. A Japanese proverb says: *After three years, a misfortune can teach us something.* Will the world finally understand? ☹

¹ Sr. Louisa’s Godchild in Japan on the day of the baptism

Photo Credit: Kobayashi

² Victim of the earthquake

³ Student at Xaverio School in Japan

Photo Credit: MIC



Léonie Therrien, M.I.C.

What Is Your Song?

If we could see beyond the visible and capture the essential, what would be the song of the Autumn Season, of November and December? A voice is heard...

Autumn says: **Thanksgiving is my first song**

Awesome autumn that I am, I don a coat of many colors; my red, yellow, orange, brown maple leaves are gorgeous. I have a sense of completion and accomplishment: My trees laden with a variety of fruits are sweet songs of nourishment and all my fields of grain are ready for harvest.

Welcome is my second song

Year after year I welcome families and groups of people who enjoy apple picking in my orchards and who take delight in choosing my best pumpkins. Nature lovers walk in my wooded areas and admire my lovely decor while collecting my wild berries. I love to see all those people who come for picnics in my colorful forests. Every year they hear my call.

The summer season is the one who prepared me for this maturity and delightful beauty. I invite you all to take time to visit me, to experience the ebb and flow of life. Come admire the richness of our

land, I take pleasure in welcoming each one of you.

November says: **Gratitude is my only song**

I come after the most colorful season. The bright colors of autumn are fading; the leaves are making their final descent. My nature seems to be dying; however, you must look beyond my appearance. Moments of death are promises of life to come—transformation is taking place. Theilhard de Chardin understood me very well when he wrote his Hymn of the Universe/Mass on the World.

Dusk time comes rather early. I invite you to move into your inner self—ponder the part of your life that feels fulfilled, somewhat like my autumn harvest. This moment is the perfect time to self-reflect, to adore, to be thankful for what has been, for what is, and for what will be. Though invisible, this is the guarantee for a wholesome personal spiritual growth.

This is my wealth... it is unique and I am most grateful.

December says:

Thanksgiving is also my first song...

OH! The first snow is falling! Finally, we see some light... the tender fragile snowflakes cover my soil. For how long will the snow stay on the ground? Children gather outside to feel my texture... it is winter! It is my first gift to mother earth.

But for the adults, I am generally seen otherwise. They know well the challenges of this mysterious season and already they dream of spring time.

What is hidden beneath that white coat which covers the earth? Renewal! My soil needs time to pause and have its spent energy renewed. Of course, not many people like my chilling winds and snowflakes, my bone freezing temperatures, my terror-inducing blizzards, the life-threatening car accidents. However, thanksgiving is nevertheless my song, why?

Look at the hopeful people whose jobs consist in snow removal, who clear household pathways and garage entrances. What a relief to have such workers who help people get to work on time. Look at those who enjoy skating, skiing, bobsledding. My season is long, and when my snowflakes fall I give thanks because even though my nature appears dead and void of movement, there is quiet growth taking place.

I have another motive to be thankful... While light is giving way to darkness, another LIGHT comes to brighten our

darkness. Love Incarnate came as Light radiating compassion, a Torch bearing truth, a Beacon offering guidance. A Savior has been given to us and I love to celebrate His birth.

All this happens at a time when nature seems lifeless, yet piercing through this lifelessness we discover LIFE. Sent by the Father, the Savior is announced by the angels, welcomed by the shepherds and recognized in a manger, symbol of His gift to us and prefiguring His words: *Take and eat, this is my body* (Mt 26:26).

I consider myself as being the most important month in your agenda; of course, this is so only if you have discovered the Essential, the Emmanuel among us. My season is truly one of thanksgiving, a time to sing glory and praise to the Holy One, the Savior.

*The last months of the year have expressed themselves; they have described their realities, their respective pride in what they have to offer us. It is up to us now to capture their message from within and together join in their hymn of praise and thanksgiving as we consider the beauty, the grandeur, the tenderness, the love and even the suffering which is inevitable in our daily life. The heart stores memories, the seasons invite us to ponder upon each month of the year and in so doing recall Antoine de St-Exupéry's statement: **It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.*** ∞

A Dream and a Profound Experience

With delight, I accepted the invitation to share with you a bit of my mission experience in South America. This is a wonderful opportunity for me to express my gratitude as I am celebrating my Golden Anniversary this year and I am also beginning a new mandate here in Quebec, Canada.

By *Thérèse Lebeau, M.I.C.*

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute final way without ever looking back.



How to translate forty years of mission work with so many peoples who welcomed me in Peru, Chile, Guatemala, Bolivia and in Honduras? It is not easy to choose one specific experience from a span of time that dates back to 1970. I will therefore touch upon the years 2000–2009. In the midst of a variety of mission oriented activities, one that seemed most important was responding to a spiritual quest expressed by couples who wished to live their Christian commitment in the spirit of Saint Ignatius of Loyola.

Deeply influenced by the Ignatian Spirituality, particularly in Peru, I responded to the call of the Jesuit Fathers. After receiving some training at the Manresa Spirituality Center in Quebec and also at the Ignatian Spirituality Center in Lima, I committed myself to the members of a Basic Christian Community (CVX) mainly composed of couples and along with some celibates. It is within their respective milieu: family, work, social and ecclesial life that the members witness their faith, follow Jesus and seek God's will in all circumstances.

A WAY OF LIVING

The people who endorse the Ignatian Spirituality want to fulfill the Evangelical project proposed by the Lord Himself: ***To be yeast in the dough*** (Mt 13:33)... ***salt and light of the world*** (Mt 5:13). Therefore, whether they are involved in schools, in hospitals, in business or in government affairs, they want to be living witnesses of Christ the Liberator. Families who learn to focus on prayerful reflections and discern on priorities, greatly influence the

children who in turn also want to be witnesses of the Resurrected Lord.

In May of 2007, the Fifth General Conference of the Bishops of Latin America took place in Aparecida, Brazil. The official title of the Conference—***Disciples and missionaries of Christ, so that in Him all may have fullness of life***, led us into profound reflections. As assessor, I journeyed with the members of one of our Basic Christian Communities, Holy Family (Sagrada Familia); the document was read and studied in the light of the Gospel and also in keeping with the Ignatian Spirituality.

These communities' commitments go beyond their specific groups who come together to pray, share, renew their spiritual energies. In many occasions, I have accompanied the CVX Members at important national rallies to defend the rights of the voiceless, the poor, or to intervene for the victims who have been caught in the crossfire of terrorism. Most enriching are the week-ends consecrated to personal and community renewal which enhance living-out their motto: ***In all things, LOVE AND SERVE***. These gatherings helped us to discover and integrate the Word of God in our lives as well as delving into the lives of many Jesuit priests who marked history by their unwavering faith, such as one of the General Superiors of that Order: Father Pedro Arrupe. How many times we prayed and meditated together this one very special word: ***Enamorate!*** (Become lovers!)

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than falling in love in a quite absolute final way without ever looking back. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in

Basic Christian Community (CVX):

¹ Group Gathering

² Christmas Celebration

³ Animators: Manuel, Nico, Victor

⁴ Sr. Thérèse Lebeau, M.I.C.

Photos Credit:

Manuel Alomia (CVX)

the mornings, what you will do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything. (Pedro Arrupe, S.J.)

WITNESSING THE HOLY SPIRIT'S ACTION

Today I can say that those weekly meetings were demanding because they were held late in the evening, according to the participants' schedules and who often came without having had their meal. I have seen the Spirit's action transforming the heart of each one, transforming the life of couples and their families as well as their respective ministries. Solidarity was strong—together we rejoiced, together we struggled, together we faced problems. At the loss of a family member we were a support group; when Mr. Alejandro de Orbegoso passed away we were behind Louise, his spouse, and tended to her needs. The contact with so many families allowed me to reach out to other family members of the group and especially the children.

The above mission experience was for me a childhood dream come true. But to this I like to mention the years I lived at Espinar, Cusco, south of the Andes. Msgr. Albano Quinn, O.C. , a true Pastor who headed the Territorial Prelature of Sicuani, an impoverished rural area in the Andean highlands, allowed me to work with the Lord's favored ones—the poor. The most fulfilling moments cannot be kept in silence; with committed families from Lima's rural area, the family catechetical program was launched. By the power of the Word of God who is the Way, the Truth and the Life, we experienced Him and we were united in Him; His Presence never failed us. Those were unforgettable moments!

As I go about my new assignment, which is promoting mission awareness in my home Province of Quebec, I hope to sow generously the fruits of all those beautiful years which I lived in mission territories and which still nourish my faith. With God's gaze on today's world, I wish this mission to be full of hope in spite of the many challenges that are out there. ☪





¹ The departure from Pont-Viau

Photo Credit: H. Turcotte, M.I.C.

It is one thing to express one's gratitude in words, but quite another to express it in action. Six Chinese ladies from Manila, all former students of the *Immaculate Conception Academy (ICA)* decided to organize a pilgrimage to Montreal as a way of saying 'thanks' to our Foundress, Venerable Délia Tétreault, who sent so many of her missionaries to the Philippines and who began the very first small *Immaculate Conception Anglo-Chinese Academy* in 1936. During the school's 75th Anniversary celebrations the young women wanted to visit Délia's birth place, and the houses where she lived. In a prayerful and grateful attitude they prepared themselves.

Billie, Miren, Charlene, Ann, Kathryn and Janice began their pilgrimage with a visit at Pont-Viau, a property that was given to Mother Delia by the Quebec Bishops who founded the Foreign Mission Seminary in 1921. Here, they visited the enshrined tomb of Délia Tétreault and her well preserved heart, the beautiful pastel colored chapel, and the green landscape surrounding the area. They also saw and spoke with the many retired Sisters who worked years in the Philippines. The group then travelled to our Mother House on Cote St. Catherine Road in Montreal where they visited the *Délia Tétreault Center*. This is where history is at our fingertips; the museum and its many artifacts tell the story of the past—custom and religion wise.

Back in Manila, Philippines, the pilgrim-visitors wrote to Sr. Delia Regidor, M.I.C. who is currently at our General House in Montreal. But at the time when they planned this pilgrimage, Sister was the Provincial Superior in the Philippines and wholeheartedly supported their project. The six pilgrims expressed their 'thank you' as follows:

Gratitude in Action

By Huguette Turcotte, M.I.C.

Dear Sr. Delia,

I want to thank you for the very warm reception we received in all the MIC houses we visited in Montreal. It truly felt like coming home... The ICAAA (Immaculate Conception Academy Alumni Association) officers had long planned this trip and we are overjoyed that it finally pushed through! Miren, Charlene and the others still talk about our wonderful experience with all of you and our visit to Mother Delia's home. To actually see the room where she stayed, the land she envisioned to be the MIC home, to touch her tomb and her heart... were very special moments that I will remember forever. It is one thing to read about her and to hear her stories from you and our teachers back in school but it's definitely a different experience to "be" in the space she lived in.

Mother Delia was a true visionary -- not only did she have an eye for real estate, but she also promoted the spirituality of thanksgiving that people like Oprah Winfrey used as a byword. I've even come to realize, upon reflection after our encounter that "joyful thanksgiving" may be redundant, because when one is grateful, it will follow that she will also be joyful... As the latest batch of ICAns to have made it to the Mother House, we hope to live up to the example of Mother Delia and all the Missionary Sisters in embodying the spirituality of thanksgiving.

Thanks to you, Sr Delia, and to all the MIC Sisters we met (and even those we didn't meet) for your sacrifice, your commitment and your love for Mother Delia's children. My faith is largely due to many years of formation at ICA, and for this I am certainly grateful, because it is my faith that has helped me withstand many trials and kept me within God's loving embrace. Thank you for welcoming these ICA pilgrims, and we hope to be instruments of God's love and Mother Delia's spirituality, as you are.

In Christ,
Kato on behalf of the group ☺

*May the spirit of this Sacred Season
bring you Peace and Happiness;
may the Luminescent Star within your heart
guide and direct you each day.*

*These wishes are offered to you with our sincere gratitude
and may you, with all your loved ones, have a*

BLESSED CHRISTMAS!

*One in His Mission,
The Staff of the MIC Missionary Press*



911 – Health Care Emergency

Unlike the dying process which occurs in many of our wooded areas during the Fall Season, vegetation in Kanyanga, Zambia is year round. We could also say that there is continued growth in the seasons of Sr. Jacqueline Vachet's mission work.



PHOTOS:

¹ Our worn-out ambulance

² A section of the
Kanyanga Hospital

Photos Credit:

Sr. Jacqueline Vachet, M.I.C.

*By Suzanne Lachapelle, in collaboration
with Suzanne Leclair, M.I.C.*

In our magazine, January-March 2011 issue, an interview with Sr. Jacqueline was written, giving an overview of the Rural Hospital of Kanyanga where she has been working for the past 25 years. Sr. Suzanne Leclair, M.I.C. who has also been a member of the staff gives us more details about an urgent need.

SOS—AMBULANCE

Our rural hospital is located 36 kilometers north of Lundazi, Zambia and it serves a population of 17,800 inhabitants. Since 1998, we have an ambulance that transports seriously ill patients to the larger hospital in Lundazi. Two, three, four times a day, nighttime as well as daytime, 365 days a year, in all kinds of weather, this vehicle has been rolling on wash-board roads, dirt paths that are unsuitable for motor vehicles. Last December, the ambulance went through major repairs which cost some thousands of dollars. The bill is still partially in waiting...

In the year 2010, we drove 819 patients to the district hospital; 183 of them were pregnant women who were to give birth, but were complicated cases. Many of these women were picked up along the road or in their village or at small government health care centers where patients who are critically ill are sent to

our Kanyanga Rural Hospital. The percentage of children we transport is high; 90% of them suffer from severe anemia caused by malaria attacks which destroy the red blood cells. These children need an immediate blood transfusion otherwise they do not survive. We are not equipped for transfusions at our Center and emergencies are frequent. It is therefore of great importance to have an ambulance that is in good condition so that it will not leave us stranded on the road before reaching our destination.

Many requests have been sent out to different organizations, describing the important need to have either an ambulance or a simple truck with a removable top but success has not been at our door. As I confide this request to the Lord, I also turn to friends, to generous individuals or groups who would find joy in contributing to this project.

GROWTH IN THE SEASONS OF OUR MISSION WORK

Sister Jacqueline always wants to give the best she can provide to the patients who come to the hospital. To better serve the population, she inaugurated a new building consisting of forty-two small rooms for the women who have given birth. Some of them have to remain one or two months. Prior to this new addition, the mothers had to sleep on mats on the floor in three different tiny quarters.

In the near future we hope to renovate the maternity ward. It needs to be more spacious thus giving the nurses the adequate area to tend to their patients.

Among other projects, there is need for a conference center that would accommodate twenty to thirty people. A good number of non-profit organizations could give the population sessions on various topics, such as: how to take care of Aids patients; how to reduce infant mortality by giving a sound training to midwives; how to decrease incidents of malaria or tuberculosis by training control agents. Because of long distances and poor roads, the participants would have to lodge at the center and this must be considered when the plans are drawn up. Here, it is important to note that collaboration between the various Christian denominations is very good; we all work together with the same goal.

The hospital also serves as a place of learning and on gaining experience for nursing students. A rural milieu has its own particularities, so nursing schools send their students for some time, thus giving them an idea of how a rural hospital is run. This internship is precious and very promising for the future.

AIDS—A CHALLENGE

Zambia has one of the world's most devastating HIV and AIDS epidemics. More than one in every seven adults in the country is living with HIV and life expectancy at birth is 39 years. However, multiple HIV/AIDS education sessions are offered to the population, as well as outreach programs and proper medication. Affected individuals now feel less rejected and with good care the patients can live fifteen more years. This precious life-span gives them time to see their children grow and educate them to become more autonomous. At Kanyanga, people can come to the hospital and be tested without paying a fee. If the result is positive, they can immediately begin receiving treatments and have a greater chance of survival.

Young adults and older children whose parents have died from the illness come to the medical center where they



2

receive instructions on how to cultivate the land. Seeds are provided and they have hands-on practice which enables them to learn well; if the harvest is good, they are able to feed their younger sisters and brothers. But it must be said that the soil is poor, therefore harvest is scarce particularly during the dry season. Cultivating cotton is the most profitable business but updated equipment and better knowledge are needed for a grand scale production. The roads' infrastructures are almost non-existing and energy resource is in chronic shortage. In general, the economic situation is not a shining one.

When parents are sick or have passed away, sometimes grandmothers have to take over the responsibility of raising the children. They also need help. We invite them to come once a month to the health center to verify the well being and growth of the little ones. The extended family can also be counted on.

Challenges are an everyday thing. No matter the difficulties, the personnel of the health center have at heart to treat with great care the patients who come to our hospital. Together, we work for their recovery and hope that the Divine Healer will help them along the road.

Sister Jacqueline gratefully expresses her thanks to all the staff members for their courage and dedication. She prays God to bless and guide each one in his/her healing ministry. 

Donations may be sent to:

Mission Procure
PROJECT: Kanyanga ambulance
 121 Maplewood Avenue
 Montreal (Quebec) H2V 2M2 Canada

 Approximate cost: \$45,000



The Lovely Red Brick Convent

By Suzanne Gervais, AsMIC Joliette

In the small town of Joliette, Quebec, a unique little red brick convent was built in 1930. Along an attractive avenue, this little convent stood out with character. To protect it from the winter storms and bad weather, tall pine trees and a cedar hedge once surrounded it. At the entrance, a magnificent smiling Virgin Mary welcomed all the visitors.

Who occupied this unique and lovely little red brick convent? They were adventurous messengers of God, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Following the example of their Foundress, they had at heart to give God many children who would praise Him. They countered winds and tides, sailed the oceans to reach the children of God who were hungry, thirsty, sick or imprisoned.

For many years this was a place where great and small alike were welcomed for retreat days of prayer and reflection. The whole structure had become part of the family, and life within its walls was peaceful no matter the seasons and the years.

One morning in August 1948 the “Total Refusal” known as an anti-establishment and anti-religious manifesto ruled that modernity had finally arrived in Quebec and that its population no longer needed its pastors, its priests. The “Quiet Revolution” then followed; it seriously modified the religious practice in this part of the country.

From that point on, the lovely convent saw a gradual decline. The faithful people who had been coming to retreats, to pray the rosary, to celebrate the Eucharist, no longer came and it became empty.

This alarming fact within its walls brought about some emotional reactions. A search for religious vocations was deemed the right thing to do. But nowhere were they to be found to repopulate the little red brick convent. Times had changed. Big families were no longer in style and the faith had considerably lessened in this Christian country.

However, to shut its windows and to lock its doors was not a thing to do.

It therefore decided to welcome some senior Missionary Sisters who were coming back to their homeland after years of work overseas.

As young adults, each one had had a dream which fascinated their imagination to serve abroad. Fifty, sixty, seventy years had already gone by and after their mission work in various parts of the world, that dream was still very much alive. Their dedication to God, their selfless commitment to share the Good News propelled them to discreetly continue His work, right here in their own milieu, reminding people that *man does not live on bread alone* (Mt 4:4).

One morning, in 1996, "SOMEONE" whispered in the ear of a Sister who lived in the lovely red brick convent; it was a sweet secret which she shared with her companions. *Form a group of affiliates who would formally associate themselves to the charism, spirituality and mission work of the Community. They would walk the journey with them and continue awakening the hearts and souls to the beauty of a faith-filled life; these associates would be opened to the realities of the developing countries where their MIC Sisters were still working.*

The news quickly got around and unanimously received approval. Everyone prayed for the success of this project. Rosaries were said, hearts were hopeful and happy. The waiting period kept every missionary in suspense; who will the Lord send us, where will the people come from...?

While waiting, the Foundress' great friend, the Holy Spirit was already at work gliding over the region, instilling in the hearts of individuals a desire to grow spiritually, to become committed lay people, to be involved as Christians in mission works. The Spirit of Jesus was awakening the hearts to a special calling as associates.

The harvest was abundant! From year to year, the lovely red brick convent welcomed "new sisters" who wished to live with the Missionaries their Marian spirituality of Thanksgiving.

The unique little red brick convent could not believe what it saw. It still had many beautiful children no matter the age. The years that followed were wonderful and fruitful. Friendly ties developed and both the Sisters and their associates became one large spiritual family. Hand in hand they journeyed together with Mary on the road of faith, sharing their lives in the light of the Gospel.

Peacefully, life went on with daily activities until one autumn morning. An announcement was made: the lovely red brick convent had to be sold and the Sisters had to be relocated in other houses. What shocking news for the whole population! The month of May 2011 saw the saddest days ever lived since the beginning of the century when a fire had devastated Joliette's Seminary.

One by one the Sisters left the little red brick convent. When Sister Monique definitively put the key in the door, the last prayer books folded and left. The following nights, this unique convent shed many tears, crying for its scattered daughters.

But sadness did not last... someone would take over; a group of people would get involved in the milieu. What a relief for the lovely convent!

Of course, renovations would have to be made and some kind of face-lift would be needed with fresh paint to give it the spark it once had. Soon it would be ready to display with pride its new vocation.

Thank God, within the walls of the well known red brick convent, the evangelical mission would continue. It would welcome other friends of Jesus: the sick, those suffering from all kinds of ailments, the dying.

The walls which have retained so many *HAIL MARYs* during the little convent's holy years of existence will continue to watch over the population of Joliette. As it begins a new chapter of its presence in our milieu we express the following wish: *May it live happily under the sweet gaze and protection of the Virgin Mary.* ☪

Letters from here and abroad

A MIRACLE FROM THE VIRGIN OF CHARITY, CUBA

We have received from Sr. Amelia Mejides, M.I.C. a moving account of the visit of the Virgin of Charity in the parish of Nuevitas. This statue of the Blessed Virgin is actually going around all the parishes of the Island to highlight her discovery which occurred four hundred years ago. History tells us that in 1608, two Indians and a boy were gathering salt on the coast near El Cobre when they saw floating on a board this small statue of the Virgin Mary, carrying the Christ child and a gold cross; she bore the inscription "I am the Virgin of Charity".

The years of preparation for the Jubilee had a theme: *To Jesus, by way of Mary, charity unites us.* After so many years of hardships and difficulties, the Spirit of God is at work in the Church of Cuba. When the statue of Mary arrived at Nuevitas, the whole population came to meet her. The streets were overcrowded with people, shoulder to shoulder, they pressed against each other to walk. On large cardboards we had written the *Our Father* and the *Hail Mary* which the crowd prayed together. Song sheets were distributed to everyone, hymns were sung with fervor and enthusiasm. It was marvelous to see the children, teenagers, adults, professionals, government officials, and others taking part in this jubilee. So many came to us asking: *How can I pray to the Virgin Mary, I don't know how to do this anymore?* Another would say: *How can I make a promise?* Others would come to us because they wanted to relate how Mary had intervened in their lives and they wondered how they could express their gratitude to her. Many asked us to speak to them about Jesus.



The following day I met a professional, who is a non-practicing Catholic. He said to me: *Yesterday, I came to see the statue of Mary, I wanted to see her closely but was unable to get near. I couldn't believe what I was living and experiencing. This afternoon, I am coming back with my daughter to ask Mary to bless the children.* He then continued: *This morning, I asked one of the government officials what he thought about yesterday's life experience when the Virgin Mary arrived in our midst and he replied: "The population is in need of HOPE."*

Those who know the history of our people and of the Cuban Church can better understand what it means to us to be able to sing and pray publicly in the streets and express our faith without fear. Our Lady's pilgrimage, throughout the Island of Cuba, will have been a turning point in the history of our Church.

One phrase could sum up this unique experience: *The Virgin Mary is reclaiming her children, her people—and her children, her people are reclaiming their Virgin.* So many times during this unforgettable experience, I recalled that sentence of Mary's Magnificat: *All ages will call me blessed!* (Lk 1:48)

Sing with us the *Magnificat* for this time of grace.

Amelia Mejides, M.I.C.

YOU ARE *MY WITNESSES*



Madeleine Patenaude, M.I.C. (1st left)
St-Alexandre, Quebec

After a few months of rest, Sr. Madeleine is returning to Haiti. Besides responding to the various needs of the local people, she will assume the responsibility of bursarship at Port-au-Prince.



Véronique Rasoanirina, M.I.C. (2nd right)
Antsirabe, Madagascar

Talented in research and precision, Sr. Véronique will come to Canada to help in the Archives Department of the Community located at Pont-Viau, Quebec.



Charity Zimba, M.I.C. (1st right)
Rumphi, Malawi

Every experience is enriching. Sr. Charity is mandated to come to the MIC International Scholasticate in Canada. She will be a team member responsible for the initial and continued formation according to the new program.



Cécile Ménard, M.I.C. (1st right)
Beaucanton, Abitibi, Quebec

After eighteen years of rendering community services in Canada, Sr. Cécile is returning to Haiti. She will have the joy of giving a helping hand to the many projects which are currently underway in Port-Salut, Haiti.

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your solidarity!*

Dawn of A New Life

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

— Délia Tétreault



Jeannine Proulx, M.I.C.
(*Sr. Marie-Aurore*)
1924-2011
Rivière-du-Loup, QC

Though Jeannine's childhood years were peaceful, she often felt sad on account of her mother's ill health. At the age of fourteen her beloved mama passed away. During her boarding school years she met the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception; their message impressed her. At nineteen she entered the MIC novitiate. Sr. Jeannine excelled in education, in parish ministry and music. As teacher, directress, animator, she accomplished her tasks with enthusiasm. Cuba, Bolivia, Peru were the countries where she served with joy. Upon her return to Canada, she worked with the immigrants at the MIC Center in Quebec City and in Montreal, she set-up two choirs at Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish. Sister Jeannine's missionary life was most active and fruitful.



Cécile Labrie, M.I.C.
(*Sr. Marie-Simone*)
1916-2011
Saint-Mathieu, Rimouski, QC

The life of Cécile was enriched by her five brothers and sisters. She had a great affection for her twin sister who supported her at all times. Prayerful, Cecile was inspired and felt called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus. With the approval of her parents, she entered the MIC Institute where her missionary life took root. Sr. Cécile served in Quebec and then in Haiti: Limbé and Port-au-Prince. Her talent in culinary art was greatly appreciated and with admirable devotion she dedicated herself to this task. Sister's special love for the poor led her to be especially close to families in their daily struggles; she brought them relief and hope. Her humble and compassionate life has now been crowned with eternal glory.



Marie-Lorencia Cantave, M.I.C.
(*Sr. Saint-Crispin*)
1935-2011
Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti

Steadfast in her work in the Lord's vineyard, Sr. Lorencia heard the Lord's invitation at a young age. Relentlessly, she stood for the poor and with them struggled against the injustices so many were victims of. Everywhere she went: La Boule, Port-au-Prince, Les Cayes, Hinche, Trou-du-Nord, Les Côteaux, Port-Salut, Chantal and Dubuisson, Sr. Marie-Lorencia shared the joys and sorrows of her people. Her great dream was to give everyone a good education even within difficult conditions. Sister's inner joy and dedication inspired many who surrounded her. She passed away the year of her Golden Jubilee; fifty years dedicated to the Lord and to her native people. She will be remembered for her faith-filled life, and determined energy to serve the poor.



Pierrette Quevillon, M.I.C.
(*Sr. Françoise-de-Chantal*)
1931-2011
Montreal, QC

Coming from a devout Christian family, Pierrette soon learned to be of service in her own milieu. Among other things she enjoyed were reading, attending retreats and taking part in parish activities. Her desire to become a missionary became a reality in 1952. Shortly after her vows, Sr. Pierrette was assigned to the promotion of our magazine and to mission awareness in schools. In 1959 she left for Bolivia where she worked during twenty-five years and later went to Chile for another fourteen years. She quickly learned Quechua which enabled her to reach out to the peasants. Sister attracted crowds with her talent in music. The Magnificat she sang so many times continues resounding as she rests in the Peace of her Lord.

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*A true story
portraying the persons
who shaped our heritage.*



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THE SHINING STAR

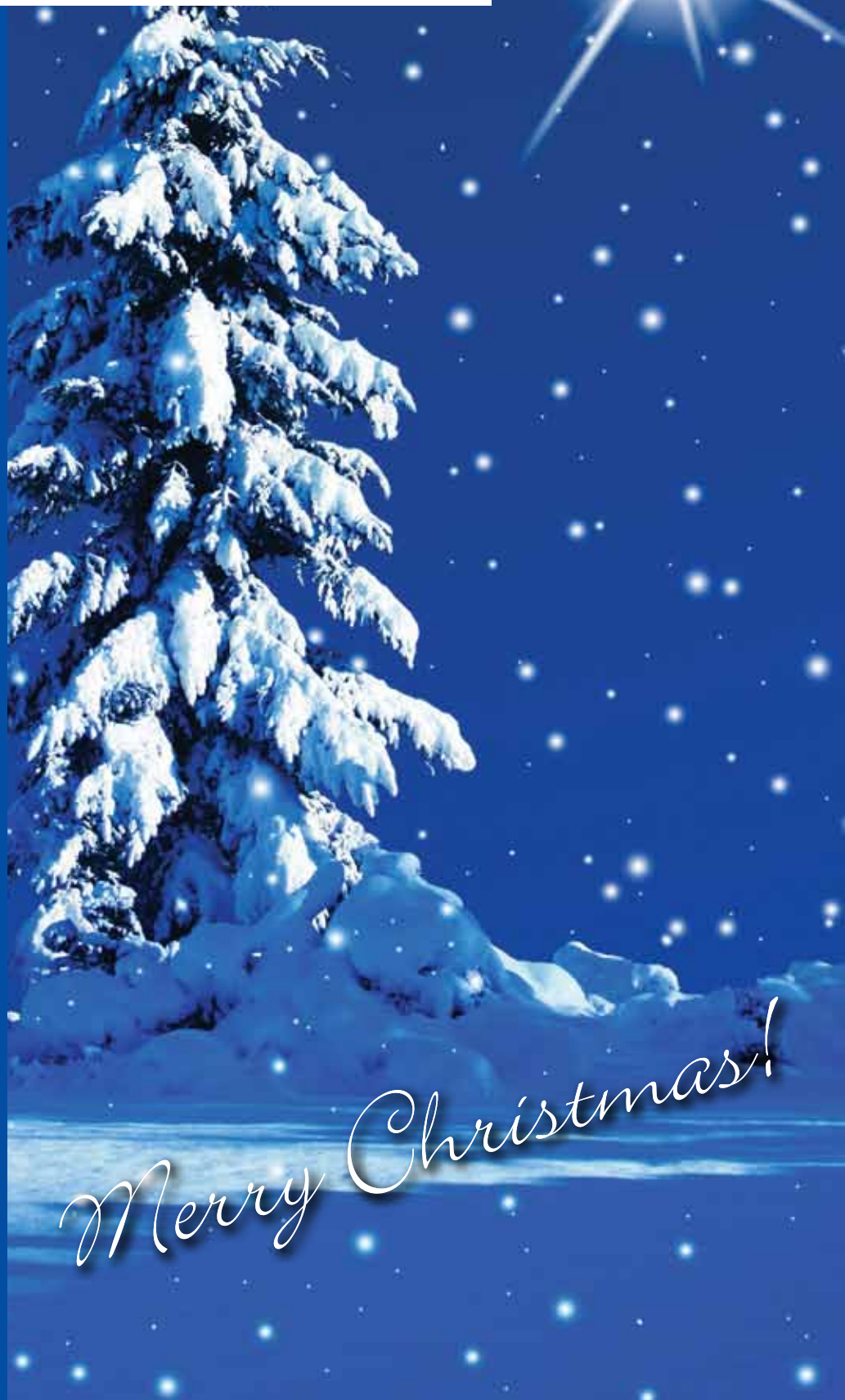
*The Christian season of Advent
has as its central theme:
the coming of the Christ-Star
into the world.*

*It is a time to remember how God's
Beloved came to restore harmony to
a fractured world, to dispel whatever
keeps love from shining through all
beings.*

*The Christ-star,
this Irresistible Love in us,
this Radiant Goodness,
this Peaceful Beauty
is at the core of our souls.*

*Advent reminds us
that each of us has the light of this
SHINING STAR within us.
Just as a star led the Magi
to the Christ Child,
so we are meant to be stars
leading others to the Divine Love.*

M. Wiederkehr



Merry Christmas!