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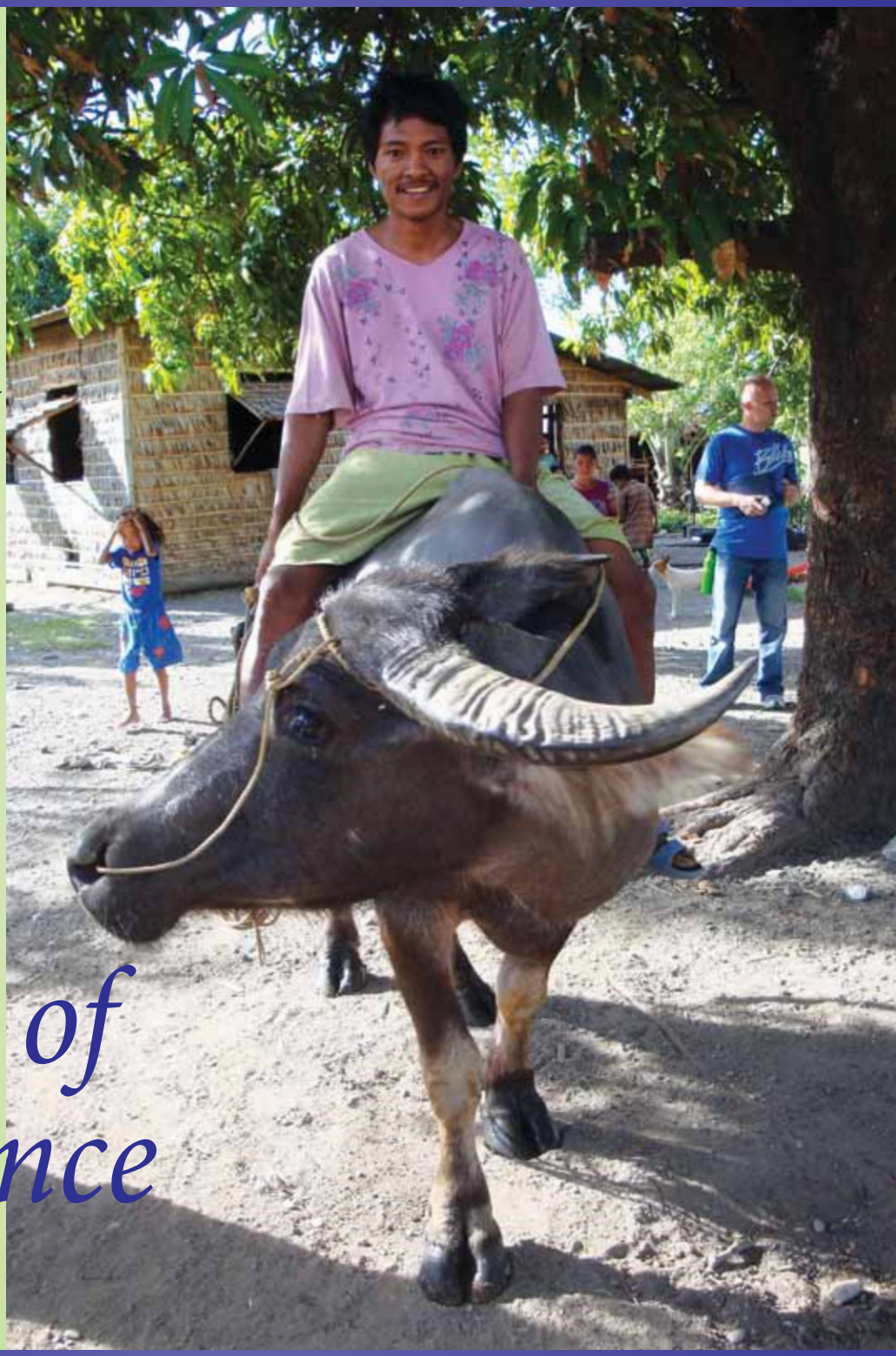
MIC Mission News

To sow seeds of joy and hope

Since 1923



Philippines

Standing Strong With Dignity

Quebec, Canada

Surpassing Oneself

In Focus

A Surge of Confidence

PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS – 2014

JANUARY

We pray for Christians of diverse denominations, that they may walk toward the unity desired by Christ.

FEBRUARY

We pray for priests, religious, and lay people, that they may work together with generosity for evangelization.

MARCH

We pray that many young people may accept the Lord's invitation to consecrate their lives to proclaiming the Gospel.

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

Challenged to Trust

Last summer, I was with a companion driving peacefully on a back road near Granby. Suddenly, a gust of wind came up. It began to rain and thunder appeared and everything around us became dark. I slowed down, but nevertheless we could feel the strength of the wind against the car. For a moment I felt fear, but soon calm returned. The landscape had been washed clean, the sun was once again shining brightly, nature's beauty was restored. That experience is worth a thousand words.

Can trust be renewed when we hear about world-wide corruption, dictatorships that oppress those who struggle endlessly to gain democracy which is less and less accessible? We dream of democracy, but does it really exist anywhere? The lure of gain, the desire for power results in numerous victims. Can we continue trusting, can we hope for better days?

The MIC Mission News magazine has as motto – ***To sow seeds of joy and hope***. In this issue you will read about people who lived through desperate situations, when all seemed lost. However, the hope of those individuals was revived thanks to the graceful interaction that took place between the missionaries and partners working alongside in the mission field, whether in the Philippines, in Vancouver, in Quebec or elsewhere. Trust can change many things. It's a challenge to take up especially when difficult moments arise; forgiveness is a pre-condition in re-establishing that trust.

Didn't God take a risk when He willed to trust the human person? St. Paul himself recognized this reality when he said, ***"… He considered me trustworthy…"*** (1Tm 1:12- NIV) Yes, the Lord trusts us!

It is now our turn to develop this sentiment of trust in God and in our neighbor even within difficult situations. This is an everyday challenge, a challenge that transforms the hearts. And then, the sun will brighten our daily landscapes.

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

Kateri Diab, Photo MIC

DÉLIA'S COLUMN

Throughout her life, Mother Délia trusted. In her letters, the word is repeated four hundred thirty four times. Here are a few encouraging words she wrote to her missionaries.

Long before the work had begun, I dreamt that in our future dwelling all would sing the grandeur, the goodness, and the mercy of God. Also, that all would serve as an incentive to follow Him along the ways of love and trust. (July 19, 1904)

Hence take courage and have confidence! Many joys await you not only in heaven, but on earth as well. (March 31, 1910)

Do what you can during the day and during the night Our Lord will do the rest. Think of the gardener: he digs and sows all day long, when he goes to bed nothing shows of the seeds he has sown, yet one fine morning he sees all sorts of vegetables sprouting. So, in peace and confidence, minute by minute, hour by hour, let us quietly do what the good Lord asks of us. (May 19, 1915)

Don't hide the truth. Courage, confidence! May God bless you! (July 29, 1917)

Have courage, confidence and great charity toward one another. (January 22, 1919)

Courage!... Confidence!... Look after the interests of God, and He will look after yours. (February 13, 1921)

Courage therefore and confidence; our faith will end up triumphant. (February 22, 1921)

Take courage, my dear Daughter, live and help your Sisters to live out of confidence in God and in our Immaculate Mother, and of gratitude for their infinite tenderness. (June 22, 1922)

FOR ALL FAVORS RECEIVED-OR-DESIRED

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Tiny Buds of Trust

When an individual or a people have been duped, it becomes difficult to trust and to find the Truth.

By André Gadbois

On the first work day of the year, January 2, 2013 at 1:18 p.m., the one hundred highest paid CEOs in Canada had already earned $45,448 according to the Canadian Center for Policy Alternatives. It will take one year for the average full-time worker to earn that amount of money.[1] In this kind of context, how can we regain our trust in and for a better world? Is it possible to dismiss being suspicious? Can we avoid thinking of a system that encourages tax evasion? Looking farther away, if we examine the wages and working conditions of the average worker in developing countries, we fall off our chairs; the hope and the confidence we had for a better world are crushed like puppets whose strings are cut off. When we become AWARE of this reality how is it possible to renew that trust, that confidence which is so necessary to keep us from becoming lethargic?

I grew up close to a railway on Bordeaux Street in Rosemont (Montreal). At the age of six, my parents gave me an electric train for Christmas. For years I enjoyed playing with this Gilbert train set. Later in life, I moved to the countryside, an area called St-François sur l'Ile-de-Jésus and for thirty-five years, when the windows were opened, I loved to hear the train's whistle as it sped towards Terrebonne. However, since last July 6, my trust in the trains which I idolized has been shattered. Due to negligence, there was a train derailment and it exploded into a ball of fire which destroyed half the downtown area of Lac Mégantic, Quebec. Since then, I dread hearing the whistle of the train.

Florence, the eldest of my granddaughters, just began kindergarten. Usually this little girl is a go-getter, she is audacious and adventurous. A few days before her first day at school she seemed anxious, agitated, tormented with many questions which she would express to members of the family. When the moment arrived, it was with ***her own eyes*** that she saw Mrs. Julie, her teacher, gently smiling and playing with the children of her group; she also found a friend, Agathe. These positive signs reassured Florence; in her heart and mind confidence was renewed and 'her world' was a safe place to be, she displayed serenity.

A CRUMBLING SOCIETY

How can we renew our trust in a society as flaky and as crumbled as ours? This society can be compared to fresh bread claimed by a few, the stale bread with its hard crust distributed to many, and the

crumbs thrown out to the crowd. How can we return to that confident hope which has been attacked over the years with lies, individualism, inequalities and deliberate rejection of the human dignity in order to attain power? How can we hear the words: ***This – this bread – is my Body which has been given up for you, do this in memory of Me*** and then go home with closed eyes, not seeing what is happening around us?

The era when Jesus spoke those words was also a time marked by corruption, collusion, organized social inequalities, eloquent speeches with empty or deceitful promises, hypocritical attitudes of the great and powerful. His society was also tinted with fear, individualism and forum games for the sake of entertainment. Confidence in the governing body was not high, could we say it had derailed. In the one room cubicle homes, conversation during meal time must have included questions about the salaries and social benefits of the elite class. For a long period of time the people's hopes had been undermined, a wave of defiance had taken over.

... telling the truth is a revolutionary act.

SPEAKING OUT

The famous English journalist and critic, George Orwell, once wrote, ***"In a time of universal deceit – telling the truth is a revolutionary act."*** That is precisely what Jesus did. He spoke out on the streets of his country, he interacted with the shepherds, the crippled; sometimes he ate by the seashore with the fishermen or discussed with women at the well. He addressed the crowds and expressed his indignation on the public place. He was close to those who had lost confidence. At all times, he spoke in favor of human beings and of their future. Yeshua (Jesus) CHOSE the Truth, transparency, convergence, tenderness, the street, the presence without ever contradicting Himself, disclaiming Himself, denying Himself. He dissociated Himself from strategic calculations, parochial mentality, ideological systems and dogmatism. Jesus taught His disciples one prayer by which they were given the power to grasp the glory of God's Kingdom and through faith and prayer discover it dwelling within their own inner lives, here and now.[2] For Jesus there was no opposition between earthly bread and the bread of Life.[3]

When the world will see with "its own eyes" disciples of Jesus, without any distinctive signs, converging in the streets to help those who attempt to humanize a disoriented and broken society, then a surge of confidence will rise. When people will encounter a non complacent presence, will see disciples of Jesus who reach out to heal, to console, to comfort, disciples who speak on behalf of the voiceless, then tiny buds of trust will reappear. When the Christians' "yes" will be a true "yes" and their "no" a true "no" they will inspire confidence and they will become revolutionaries as George Orwell stated.

[1] CARON, Catherine, *Relations* – August, 2013 No. 766

[2] JEREMIAH, Joachim, *Jesus' Words – The Central Message of the New Testament*, Cerf ed. 1977, P. 94

[3] Ibid, P. 92

Michel

THE VOICE OF THE VOICELESS

Endowed with strong faith and convictions, Kateri is a remedial specialist deeply committed to young children and toddlers. Tactfully she comes to their defense; for her the word 'justice' is for young and old alike. Let us hear what she has to say.

By Kateri Diab

In December 2011, I returned to Cochabamba, Bolivia. My goal was to see, once again, the Foundation ***Estrellas en la calle***[1] (Stars in the street); this is where I worked, from 2006-2008, as a lay missionary associated to the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. This was an unforgettable reunion, I was under the impression I had never left the place. It was most encouraging to see that the Foundation continues progressing and the projects begun in the early stages during my stay are well managed; it was most gratifying to meet the young pioneers of the "prevention program"[2] who are now, for the most part, university students.

A WELL-THOUGHT-OUT COMMITMENT

Upon my return from Bolivia, I was offered a job in Quebec which had to do with a class of children having PDD (pervasive development disorder). I hesitated since I did not know this clientele very well. Then I decided to take up the challenge. My class had nine autistic students ranging from eight to thirteen years of age—they all had an intellectual deficiency. Most of them could not speak; however, the children with echolalia would repeat words or parts of a phrase, such as "I want banana". Since I had a heavy workload, I could count on seven technicians and an aid.

THE STRENGTH OF A TEAM

Managing my work-team took most of my time. I relied on my sense of leadership to make sure the class functioned well and that the needs of each one were met. I knew that if the team worked well, the students would also be well treated. The message of Jesus which I often recalled made sense, ***"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant…"***

[1] Foundation *Estrellas en la calle*: www.estrellasenlacalle.com

[2] Prevention Program: it reaches out to people who live on the street, who do not have many options in life and who are the marginalized of society.

(Mt 20:26). In the light of Jesus' words, we can think that the shepherd who leads his flock is not the one who thirsts for power. In my opinion, the best leaders, the best managers are the ones who understand this principle and apply it. In my case, I can say that the team I worked with was extraordinary. There was an unbelievable cooperation among my colleagues and that gave us strength to continue working with these children who, at first, seemed to act as if we did not exist. An important element that characterized my team was our capacity to note the least progress made by our students, no matter how small it was.

I wish I could enter their minds to really understand what they are living.

A MUTUAL ENRICHMENT

As I kept working with these children, observing them, taking courses to better understand them and welcoming them as they are, I have succeeded in creating a bond with them. Of course, the relationship is different if compared with one we could have with a neurotypical child (non-autistic). We must learn to decode them, and since each one is different, the way to communicate and react to their environment is different with each student. When all is said, the world of autism remains a mystery even for the scientists who still do not agree on the causes of this trouble. I wish I could enter their minds to really understand what they are living. Sometimes people ask me, ***"What do you do with these children?"*** The first objective is to make sure they are fine because they suffer from not being understood and not understanding people who surround them. If we can give them a milieu where they can find some respite, well that is a plus! In retrospect, I realize that one of the most important experiences I've had was to fight for justice, but not just any way. I had to learn to fight intelligently, knock at the right doors. I became aware that when emotions run high and are exhibited, it leads us nowhere, and the solutions are rare. Things can change but we must accept that change takes time. Concerning my class, I had to denounce many conditions that were unsafe or unjust for the students or the personnel. The directress seemed to think I was taking too much place and that there was no budget for what I demanded. Even though I knew this could turn against me, I could not keep silence. Someone had to speak for the children who could not do so; I had to be the voice of the voiceless.

Kateri and Maxime

COUNTER CURRENT

In this sense fighting for justice is, according to me, an important aspect of mission, ***"Happy are those who hunger and thirst for justice, they will be filled"*** (Mt 5:6). I am a member of the Christian Workers Movement in Outaouais, a region of western Quebec, Canada. Every month we take time to re-visit our life. The subject at our last reunion was—***People who take advantage of others' vulnerability or naivety***. It's an aspect that made me reflect seriously about the fact that in a society where each one tries to become richer, we can find ourselves in the bracket of the voiceless similar to my autistic students. Indeed, we can feel powerless before that gigantic money machine that looks for profit at the expense of the weak. Coming together to reflect on this matter helps us to take decisions and act accordingly in the hope of bringing about change. Together we feel less isolated and our message is spoken loud and clear. In a society where money has become our God, going counter-current demands courage but is this not a facet of our Christian mission?

AN ABUNDANCE OF TRUST

Can we trust? Trust in what, in whom? Do gestures of confidence make us free? Do they make us more human? Émilien exposes us to a vibrant plea that incarnates confidence. What if trusting would be a witness to faith?

By Émilien Roscanu

A young child comes home from school, crying he falls into the arms of his mother; a man kneeling before his loved one asks her to marry him; a couple decides to begin a family; a terminally ill man is accompanied by his loving family… In all these situations which can occur in a lifetime, we rely on the unique sentiment of trust. This word is so simple yet it has major repercussions. Trust is a fundamental element in our society; it arises from our interdependence with others. It enables valuable social interactions, respect, and helps avoid chaos. However, trust is a fragile sentiment—***it is earned in drops and lost in liters***, as Sartre once stated. True, it is much easier to lose confidence in someone or something than to confer our trust. This is the reason why the sentiment of trust is of great value, though it can be difficult to maintain, it can be gratifying as it moves us to a higher level, intellectually as well as spiritually.

To have faith in someone is equivalent to saying that we place our total trust in this person.

THE LEGACY OF FAITH

At times, faith and confidence intertwine and blend. Faith is a strong sentiment of confidence, an absolute confidence which transcends the spirit. To have faith in someone is equivalent to saying that we place our total trust in this person. Throughout the ages, many charismatic individuals have drawn crowds inspiring people with confidence beyond imagination. Whether it be Jesus Christ, or more recently Pope Francis at the World Youth Days—such inspiring personalities have aroused great trust from their contemporaries who, in great numbers, have responded to their invitation with openness and solidarity. It is because we have trusted them that they in turn have attracted the crowds. The most important element of this faith resides in the sentiment of reciprocity. It is difficult to trust someone who has no confidence in us. We must first be confident and trust someone before receiving it from the other; then a certain treaty of alliance is established. The latter, if it is respected, paves the way to a durable and accomplished relationship. On the other hand, if the pact is broken the consequences are catastrophic for both parties.

A SMALL LEAP INTO POLITICS

This past year we have seen many distressing events happening in the political world: inquiry commissions, contract allocations poorly administered, collusion, corruption, abuse of power… so many words, so many terms that have recently come up. Our political world is shaken by the appalling scandals; it is difficult to have confidence in our elected representatives. Hearing about how certain individuals, who were supposed to represent our interests actually did the opposite; hiding the truth from the public and failing to fulfill their mandate, has left us with a bitter taste and a loss of confidence in those we

had elected to public office. However, we must avoid the abusive generalizations and we must not jump to conclusions immediately. At times, we must learn to trust some individuals and they in turn, hopefully will render us justice. We can take, for example, the little town of Lac Mégantic in Quebec where the explosive train derailment devastated the downtown commercial core. The citizens could not stop praising their elected representatives who, day by day, were present to the people afflicted by this tragedy. The people reiterated their confidence in their mayoress whom they compared as a benevolent mother looking after the welfare of each local family. We are often amazed by those stories that reveal such compassion and dedication. At times we seem to think it is impossible for any of our elected representatives to be authentic, sincere, upright and devoted to their task; however, it is more often the case than not. We must re-learn to trust our elected members. The work will be colossal as much for the future candidates as for the citizens, but the benefit justifies the cost; it is a prize to win. Together, in a spirit of mutual confidence, we are able to accomplish great things.

A SURGE OF CONFIDENCE

Sometimes one word, one smile, one look is enough for two people to engage in a relationship, but much more is needed to maintain it. From the very beginning, respect for the other, including their differences and their ambiguities, is of utmost importance. Then the indispensable, marvelous sentiment of bonding arises—it solidifies the relationship. To have faith in a person is to be able to abandon yourself to this person, to place your destiny into their hands. To have confidence in your mother who will be there for you in difficult times; to have confidence in your fiancé whom you cherish and will fill you with happiness; to have confidence in your better half who accepts the adventure of child bearing; to have confidence in your family who will be by your side until the very end. These manifestations reveal the spirit of trust that exists, which is omnipresent and transcendent; it guides our relationships with others in a constant moral and spiritual elevation. To trust, to be confident, is the first step towards shaping a better world.

PHOTO:
www.thecatholiccatalogue.com

CHILDREN HELPING CHILDREN

The Holy Childhood Association also known as the Missionary Childhood Association invites you to meet Hannah, Zachary, Cassandra, and Nadia. These ambassadors have put their talents together to take you around the world and show you how kids across Canada are successfully helping out children who live in the poorest countries of the world. They will take you to Malawi, Papua New Guinea, Thailand, Kenya, India, Philippines and many other places. All you need to do is go to their website: www.worldmissiontv.ca – next click on World Mission T.V., then click on Holy Childhood Kids and they will give you a great tour.

Hundreds of projects around the world take shape thanks to the support received from the Missionary Childhood Association. As our children learn about the poor living conditions of other children, they want to get involved and they want to help. But they also learn to hear the words and emotions of these youngsters; the following are examples.

A child from Africa told me, "Some people laugh at me because my skin is black. They laugh because I am different from them. But in my heart, I am good and I wish I had friends." – Guillaume, Terrebonne, Qc[1]

A child who saw bombs falling from the sky said to me, "It's miserable when a country is at war; but when a country lives in harmony there is Life." – Caroline, Labelle, Qc[2]

A child suffering from poverty and abuse whispered, "Not much money is needed to be happy. All we need is faith to receive joy; observant eyes to see God. Around you there are not only bad people, but there are children who do not eat and who are cold. They see bombs instead of doves." – Laurence, Montréal, Qc[3]

A student came to me and spoke about Children Helping Children. She said that together they share and pray; they play and think of ways they can collect food and money for those children in need. The Missionary Childhood Association helps us grow and think of others." – Marie-Ève, Ville Lemoyne, Qc[4]

Giving a world-wide vision to our children is a missionary way of taking part in Jesus' Mission.

[1] Visages d'Enfance, *Recueil de textes d'enfants-Mond'Ami* – 1998, P. 10
[2] Ibid, P. 55
[3] Ibid, P. 69
[4] Ibid, P. 98

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In Focus

A Surge of Trust

1

2

STANDING STRONG WITH DIGNITY

They trusted and were empowered. One step at a time, they became acquainted and journeyed with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (MIC). It has been a long haul–24 years–for the Mangyans Alangans[1] of Siapo, Philippines, to become self-assured and take their destiny into their own hands. It all began in 1989.

3

4

By Claudette Bouchard, M.I.C.

With glowing missionary hearts, the Filippina MIC Sisters favorably responded to a request made by the Vicar Apostolic of San Jose in Mindoro, Bishop Vicente Manuel, S.V.D. On this Island the Sisters established themselves first in Siapo, then in Sipuyo, a hamlet farther away in the mountains and finally in Santa Cruz.

Upon their arrival, few Mangyans could read or write. Those who did were the privileged ones who had received some basic lessons from a Visayan guest, Mr. Martin Dimacutac. The Sisters' tasks were immense. Without delay, they responded to the Mangyans' urgent needs which they divided in three categories: livelihood, health and literacy.

LIVELIHOOD

Agriculture being key in the development of a civilization, the Sisters proceeded in purchasing many ***carabaos***[2] with the intention of teaching some farming methods to the Mangyans whose slash and burn farming ways were rather unproductive. Other related farming assistance came with the threshers, water irrigation pumps, palay (rice) seedlings. The Sisters were the earliest mentors in regard to technology in lowland rice farming. They also planted new fruit trees and introduced a variety of tree planting programs so as to curb deforestation.

THE ANCESTRAL DOMAIN

The Mangyans zealously guard their Ancestral Domain; however, land developers have traumatized them. With the help of the Sisters, they have come to know their rights and the government laws concerning this issue. With the assistance of lawyers, various benefactors and the MIC Sisters, they have claimed their Mangyans rights. Their hope to obtain their land title was a goal they strived for.

The MIC Sisters' objective in this area was always to make this very poor population more independent, politically solid and responsible for their own future. Gradually, they were empowered to orient their destiny without fear. Invited to take part in numerous seminars and formation sessions, the Mangyans participated in order to prepare leaders who would stand up for the rights of their people. Successfully they achieved their goal. In 1989 the Mangyans of the region were entitled to only a meager territory of 55 hectares. In 2004 they were granted their ***Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT)*** providing them with a territorial jurisdiction over 5,365 hectares on the Island of Mindoro. On November 14, 2012 another victory was won—CADT acknowledged the Mangyans' territorial rights of 98,426 hectares. The tribesmen recognize the Sisters' great contribution of supporting them all

[1] Indigenous people living in the remote forested interior of Occidental Mindoro

[2] 'Water buffalo' used by countryside people to pull plows

[3] VAN BREEMEN, Peter, S.J., *Let All God's Glory Through*, Paulist Press, 1995, P. 57

through the process. Culturally, they helped them to preserve their traditions, to value their know-how and their rituals in songs and prayers, to appreciate their healers and their ***kuyay***, the elders.

HEALTH & HYGIENE

Basic notions of hygiene were a priority from the start. With the installation of a water pump, several health habits were introduced. Parents were encouraged to bathe the children in the river to convey health care practices. Encouraging cleanliness in the surroundings became a daily practice. The sick were taken care of either with indigenous herbal medicines or modern medicine depending on the illness.

Over the years, a Health Center was built. It was meant for maternal and child care, public health education, environmental sanitation, immunization, and development of herbal medicine. All this was made possible by networking with the national and local health agencies.

A NOVELTY FOR THE CHILDREN OF SIAPO

Upon the request of the Sisters, a government funded school was built in 1992 and the MICs closely managed it with the help of benefactors. They subsidized the regular meals of the students, their uniforms, the school supplies and related items. This was something new for the children who had never before experienced going to school. What was the most difficult thing in this ministry? It was to keep the children interested and motivated.

In the span of 15 years, the Siapo Elementary School had enrolled a total of 1,258 children. However, only 28 had graduated from the elementary level and only 5 of them went as far as a second year high school education. Throughout the years many efforts have been made to demonstrate the importance of an education and with time learning has become a treasured gift for both adults and young people.

On April 1, 2013—JOY was in the atmosphere! The MIC Sisters of the Mindoro Community attended the first College graduation of a Mangyan Alangan student. Maricel Lorenzo obtained her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education. She is the first to earn such a degree and she is the pride of her family and tribesmen. Though Maricel encountered many difficulties, her courage and determination led her to success. Her gratitude towards the Filipina MIC Sisters who guided her, was expressed with love and appreciation.

It is said that a missionary's ***mission must be rooted in the "Beyond" and becomes fruitful in the degree that the "Beyond" comes through***.[3] How true this has been for the MIC Sisters in the Philippines who, for years, rolled up their sleeves and worked relentlessly with and for the Mangyan people that they may come to know the Good News. Now, well equipped and supported by various government agencies, the MIC Community could bid farewell to the Mangyan communities. Masses of Thanksgiving were held in Santa Cruz and in Siapo; then on June 1, 2013, the Sisters departed leaving behind a tribal people standing strong with dignity.

PHOTOS:

[1] The Mangyans Alangans wearing their traditional attire.
Photo Credit: Frédéric Laugrand

[2] The great 'Kuyay' Luben, proudly holding the certificate of their "Ancestral Domain Title" given by the Government of the Philippines.
Photo Credit: Frédéric Laugrand

[3] First water pump installed with the help of the MIC Sisters
Photo Credit: MIC

[4] Sr. Lydia Cabornay, M.I.C., treating a wound.
Photo Credit: MIC

[5] Sr. Vilma Masinda, M.I.C., and Sr. Lilia Frondoza, M.I.C., preparing a special meal.
Photo Credit: MIC

A Smart Phone for God

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Many Christians worry about the future of the Church. They say that there are no more vocations, the clergy is aging, and members of religious communities are taken aback by sickness as well as having to sell their houses. All this is true, but... there is a *but*. We must recognize that the Holy Spirit is at work and from His cellular, He travels all over the globe calling here and there to young people asking them to abandon all their possessions and to follow Christ. From Europe, the Spirit crosses the oceans to reach the Americas, Asia, even Africa, Haiti, Madagascar and the Philippines. The call is being heard all over the social networks: iPad, Twitter, Facebook, and Internet. The Holy Spirit knows how to communicate with the young people right where they are and they can respond.

THE M.I.C. VOCATION

From the very beginning, in 1902, Délia Tétreault had captured the depth of young peoples' hearts; thus, she proposed to them a missionary ideal which was very demanding, yes, but also very gratifying. To go to the ends of the world to proclaim Christ's message of Love, isn't this a beautiful vocation? This missionary flame cannot be extinguished. That is why ***every historical age has seen a rise of individuals who, faithful to themselves and to the call of their times, have walked the unexplored pathways and expressed God's tenderness by the radical gift of themselves 'incarnated' in concrete life situations***.[1] Even today, after more than a century, young people from various countries, convinced of their calling to a missionary life decide to opt for this vocation. Our Foundress, Délia Tétreault, knew the generous treasure the young people had in their hearts; therefore, she did not hesitate to present to them the noble ideal of becoming a missionary. Motivated by the spirituality of Thanksgiving, seventy-three young women are currently in formation. There are three stages to the formation program, namely: postulancy, novitiate, and scholasticate. Under the leadership of competent persons, the young women get to know each other better, they acquire a deeper knowledge of the Christian Mysteries, they develop their full potential and perfect their talents so as to bet-

Statistics as of September 2013 – Young adults in formation within the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

	Postulants	Novices	Scholastics
Philippines & Vietnam	–	2	6
Taiwan	2	–	–
Haiti	2	1	9
Peru & Bolivia	–	1	3
Malawi & Zambia	8	2	14
Madagascar	5	4	14

Is it possible nowadays to think that young people from around the world can hear God's call? God is not at the end of His resources and He knows that today's population has multiple ways of communicating…

ter respond to the demands of their future mission. After these years of preparation to religious life, the young woman who feels ready pronounces her final vows as a sign of commitment to the Church and of belonging to the Institute she has chosen.

AN UPLIFTING SPIRITUALITY

Mother Délia was inspired by the reality that all gifts received come from God's gratuitousness. Yes, the spirituality of Thanksgiving is uplifting and urges us to sing our gratitude for God's infinite bountifulness. Délia did say: ***God has given us everything, even His own Son, what better way to repay Him—inasmuch as a feeble creature can do so in this world—than to give Him children, chosen ones, who will also sing His goodness for centuries to come.***[2] This spiritual legacy brings sunshine in our lives and dissipates all clouds inherent to life. It is within this awareness that the missionary commitment takes its dynamism.

A STOP-OVER

At the end of their scholasticate, the young Sisters come to Canada, the home country of Mother Délia. The aim is to provide them an opportunity to see and hear about the origins of the Institute. Within this historical context, it is an ideal time for them to deepen their MIC vocation. Guided by a team of MIC Sisters specialized in the historical facts of the Congregation, the Scholastics receive precious information, a heritage which they will always treasure; they also come in contact with the pioneers who began so many mission posts and lived through so many experiences which they love to share with the younger Sisters who are preparing to take over.

The Lord does use the "smart phone" and He continues contacting young people as He always did, for He knows that ***the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few*** (Mt 9:35-38). Let us continue praying the Master of the Harvest and trust that He will bless His Church with numerous vocations dedicated to the priesthood and religious life. God knows, more than we, the needs of His Church—His People.

[1] LONGTIN, Pauline, M.I.C., *POSITIO*, Vol. I, 1990, Chapter 1, P. 1

[2] VILLEMURE, Gisèle, m.i.c., *Listening to Délia*, 1997, P. 77

PHOTOS:

[1] The International Scholastic MIC Team

[2] Scholastics in training

Photos Credit:

M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

I Lost My Button!

Sister Monette, a registered nurse, has lived the Mission in Vancouver, in Taiwan and in the United States. While in-charge of the MIC Infirmary at Pont-Viau, Laval, Quebec she gave the best of herself to the Sisters who were in loss of their functional autonomy. Currently, she is working in Vancouver, B.C. and she tells us about her experience with the itinerants.

By Monette Ouellette, M.I.C.

They were both standing at the bus stop, their backs to the street, hand in hand, seemingly embarrassed and not knowing what to do. The gentleman was tall, with graying hair and beard. The lady was also rather tall, but heavier set, with a cane in hand and dangerously unstable. As I stepped down the bus and was ready to take the direction leading me to the women's drop-in center where I help prepare breakfast on Wednesdays for women in need, I felt I had to turn around and see what was happening. I asked the couple, ***"Do you need any help?"*** She answered, ***"I lost my button!"*** Her skirt was on the ground and she had little to cover her nudity. She could not even bend to pick it up. Without hesitation, I helped her pull up the skirt, tie it and put on her flashy red coat which was also on the ground, I then gave her the walking stick. Before parting, the gentleman looked at me peacefully and said, ***"You are a nun!"*** They thanked me and went off hand in hand. I, though somewhat perplexed, felt the kind of happiness that compels me to go further, to dare take risks in the Name of the One to whom I offered my life, almost fifty years ago.

A BIT OF HISTORY

In September 2012 I was once again in Vancouver, B.C. and my desire was to rediscover the footprints of the first MIC missionaries who, in 1921, responded to the pressing and warm invitation of Msgr. Thomas Casey. He needed their help to rescue the Chinese who after having worked hard to build the Canadian Pacific Railway had become sick, worn-out, suffering from tuberculosis or struggling from fragile health. At the time the request was made, 1,500 Chinese had already died. The remaining members of that community had no access to health care because of language barriers.

One Sister, among the first four missionaries that our Foundress Délia Tétreault assigned to Vancouver, had been a few years in China and she spoke Cantonese. Upon their arrival the Sisters began looking after the sick; health issues were many and critical. With time a small missionary hospital was built but it soon overflowed with patients; evidently, more space was needed. In 1946, we founded Mount Saint Joseph Hospital, a general hospital where approximately one hundred MICs (myself included in 1974-'75) worked and offered medical services to the Asian population and later to other immigrants. With the years the hospital expanded in response to the particular needs of the population. But the Chinese do not forget! They continue to generously contribute and support the Hospital which now accommodates many elderly persons in need of long term care.

TODAY

I once again visited the old Chinese quarters, a section of which is known as

the *Downtown Eastside*. We can still find some Chinese boutiques and factories but there are less Chinese. A new section south west of the City has developed and many Chinese now reside in Richmond where they are prosperous and participate in the development of Vancouver in various domains.

Downtown Eastside is still an area where human misery is tangible, but it has a different appearance: poverty, dependence, promiscuity, rape and prostitution, drug trafficking, violence, thefts, social alienation, wayfaring and mental illness... (60% suffer from mental disorder). In the midst of this human brokenness, I often witnessed loving, compassionate actions which are most touching. I observed that it is often the poorest ones who are in a better position to heal the broken hearted and they are the most ready to relieve and soothe the other, be it for only an instance. Our Pope Francis vigorously defends all our brothers and sisters who are hurting one way or another; this is an essential requirement of the Gospel of Jesus Christ who is Alive and in our midst.

THE DOOR IS OPEN

There are numerous 'help centers' in this area, one of them is called *The Door Is Open*. I work at this center two days a week. It is open 365 days a year; it offers food, clothing, various services and support. There are also learning and recreational activities. The center is under the aegis of the Catholic Church and counts a great number of volunteers—some come on a regular basis from week to week, from year to year; others come occasionally but one thing is for sure, everyone wants to give the best service to the persons who present themselves at the door. It is a shelter that offers respite during the day, away from the dangers of the street; here, people relax peacefully while reading the local newspapers, or while drinking good coffee with pastries offered by various groups including the food bank.

I SEEK THE LORD'S FACE... DEEP INSIDE YOUR HEARTS!

When I take the road in the morning, it is He I seek in my heart, in the heart of others who are also on the road, and in a special way in the heart of those I will encounter at the center. And I often think of our Venerable Délia Tétreault who still tells us, *"When I stop to think that God loves me, I am the happiest creature in the world."* How I would want to live this with greater intensity and help others discover this wonderful grace which is always renewed and always at work in this world of ours. What joy to hear someone say to us before returning to the streets: *Thank you! How good it was for me today to feel once again that I am SOMEONE!*

[1] Home-made soup prepared by Sr. Monette and a Korean volunteer.

[2] Happy youth giving their time to help.

[3] Thursday's musical bingo

Photos Credit: Julia Ruggier

Looking Towards the Future for Africa

ZAMBIA

MALAWI

Our Foundress, Mother Délia Tétreault, once said, ***"Missionaries devoted to gratitude must try by all possible means, even the beauties and wonders of nature, to praise the Creator on behalf of all the souls who cannot think of giving Him thanks because they do not know Him."***

By Yvonne Ayotte, M.I.C.

UNWAVERING DETERMINATION

My mission in the past five years was to help at our Délia Formation Center in Chipata, Zambia. This meant everyday encounters with candidates who were interested in religious life. I lived with them and led them to recognize the presence of God in their lives as well as to discover Him in the beauty of His creation, thus inspiring them to be grateful for the Creator's love and bountifulness.

During the initial formation years, my main concern was to help give a holistic training to our young Sisters. They truly have an inner incentive to live life to the fullest even within a formation setting. As they progress in recognizing the beauties of nature and discover its productivity, the MIC candidates are gradually awakened to the spirituality of Thanksgiving. Most African people are action-oriented in expressing their inner experiences; they take care of Mother Earth, they love gardening and look after animals. They have a natural capacity to truly live a gratuitous life. With the novice mistress, I tried to help our young Sisters to integrate issues of faith and development using the resources available, such as land. A high percentage of people in most African countries live below poverty levels, hence a challenge for the Church today is to address both, faith and development issues, so as to become effective missionaries of the Good News encompassing the spiritual and physical elements of life. Formation therefore presupposes both aspects.

MIC FOR AFRICA GREEN

With the aid of benefactors from ***The Church in Need***[1], and ***St. Luke's Parish, Montreal***, QC we began chicken rearing which provides eggs and meat for consumption and sale as well as manure for our organic garden. We experienced that vegetable growing, gardening and animal care provides sustenance and excellent training for our Sisters in formation. Presently about 50% of our food consumption comes from organic farming and chicken production. We then decided to extend our garden project thus producing more

[1] Aid to *The Church in Need* is an international Catholic Charity Association which helps and serves the suffering Church around the world.

[2] MICFORAFRICA GREEN Visit our website www.micforafricagreen.com

staple food and vegetables. This project is deliberately called MICFORAFRICA GREEN, meaning that the MIC formation promotes a green ecology in Africa[2].

Looking forward to the future of the younger generations of religious Sisters, we see the importance of becoming self-reliant for the needs of our novitiate, for developing more self-sustainable projects and for giving better care to Mother Earth. The number of young people in formation has now increased. By June 2013 when I left the formation house, we had welcomed eight young women. Vocations are growing for the MICs in Africa and thus your support in investing in such projects truly helps the Congregation prepare these young missionaries.

LONG TERM VISION

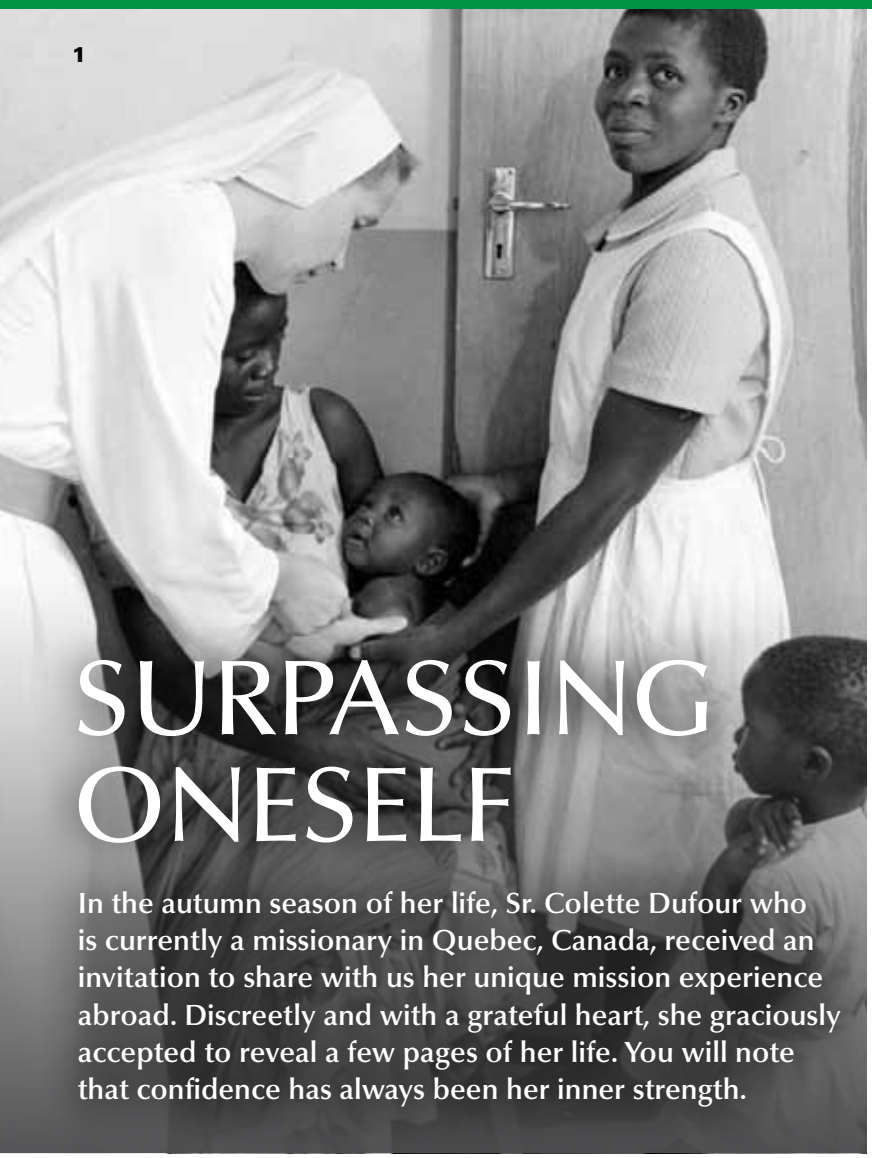
For such a project to really become sustainable, sufficient water supply and proper irrigation methods are necessary. We must also buy more layers and broilers for a high yield of eggs and manure production. Since there is a lot of labor force required to properly manage the project we need enough finances to pay some workers because the Sisters in formation cannot tend to all the chores while still studying. The support we receive locally and from abroad for these interesting projects is greatly appreciated and for those who do give us a helping hand you have the guarantee of an active participation in our formation program.

As I have received a Call to a new mission, the local Sisters who are responsible for formation will still need the spiritual and material support. As for me, I am grateful for my experiences in religious formation at all levels in the province of Our Lady of Africa. It has helped me to feel young at heart and to be associated in the important task of preparing the youth to serve the Lord and His people. I can say with our Mother Mary, ***"My soul rejoices in God my savior"***

Postulants at the Formation Center

Sr. Yvonne Ayotte and Mrs. Delia Ngoma in the convent garden

Some postulants working in the garden



SURPASSING ONESELF

In the autumn season of her life, Sr. Colette Dufour who is currently a missionary in Quebec, Canada, received an invitation to share with us her unique mission experience abroad. Discreetly and with a grateful heart, she graciously accepted to reveal a few pages of her life. You will note that confidence has always been her inner strength.

By Colette Dufour, M.I.C.

Willingly, I responded to the inner callings within me though at the time I was unaware how far these would lead me.

FIRST CALLING

In 1950, at the age of eighteen, I confidently decided to respond to an inner calling. I entered the novitiate of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception at Pont-Viau, Laval, Quebec. ***By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going.*** (Hebrew 11.8)

What the Bible says is quite true particularly when we begin our religious formation years—a time when we experience being uprooted. However, God's grace is always present and our final profession crowns those difficult years. A professional training is then offered in view of our future missionary commitment; I opted for medical science. Having completed my studies in nursing and a year later in midwifery I was ready to leave for the country I was assigned, namely Malawi.

THE CALL TO MISSION IN AFRICA AND ITS CHALLENGES

After learning Citumbuka, a Bantu language, we opened a medical station in one of the remotest bush areas of Malawi. This dispensary-maternity clinic was made of mud, had no electricity, no ambulance, but fortunately it had running water. Every day, in suffocating heat, we would welcome some one hundred patients suffering from malaria, colds, pneumonia, abdominal worms, tropical wounds, leprosy. At first, I felt inadequate and powerless before such a task but with time the day-to-day experiences gave me greater assurance. Besides, the Tumbukas who are most endearing and wanting only to be helped, filled me with the hope of serving them well.

The following year, I was transferred to the neighbouring country of Zambia where the same language was spoken and the patients differed little. Two weeks after my arrival, we were confronted with a territorial war. The group was composed of approximately one thousand men and women under the command of a so-called prophetess. She declared being inspired to inaugurate a new religion. With primitive weapons they began attacking during the night; their plan was to strike our mission and we were in danger. Having been informed that they were approaching, the three Sisters and I barricaded ourselves in the same room and prayed, preparing ourselves to die. It was quite a moving experience to think that I could die at the age of thirty-two...

Shortly after the attacks began, the injured came knocking at our door; there were all kinds of injuries. We dressed the wounds, injected medication, spoke words of encouragement... an injured woman who was left agonizing behind a truck was transported to the dispensary. She had been stabbed several times with a spear; however,

with the proper care and treatment she survived. Two days later, the army came to our rescue. By plane, they had surveyed the area and they had seen that the rebels were three miles away from us. We therefore escaped with the sick and the student boarders to a place twenty miles further. The army succeeded in capturing the sectarians and brought the prisoners to a military camp.

There are always callings to which we can respond when we want to give ourselves to God and to others—that is where we find happiness.

Other incidents occurred, perhaps less tragic but nonetheless just as poignant. One night, someone brought us a woman in tears. Her daughter-in-law who was angry because the woman's son had taken a second wife, furiously tore off the lower lip of her mother-in-law while biting into it. The woman held in her hand the piece which was almost in a state of necrosis; it was impossible to put it back in its place. Joining the edges of the wound, I sutured them together. Some time later, when the stitches were removed I had the pleasant surprise to see a lady with a lovely little face smiling and grateful as she looked at herself in the mirror. Those were the simple joys of mission.

In Zambia as in Malawi, obstetrics and paediatrics were both my concerns. There were times when pregnant women, after having walked long distances, arrived at the maternity in a pitiful state. They came to sleep while waiting for the baby's delivery. Thus, they avoided giving birth in the village with all that it entailed such as bad treatment, superstition, and mortality. After a few years, we saw the importance of opening clinics in remote villages so that we could continue assisting the women and their babies. We provided powdered milk and soya flour to those infants who were malnourished; in that region malnutrition was frequent. All this took place in the seventies and eighties; since then, the situation certainly has improved.

Twenty-one years had already gone by! Though at times the work had been exhausting it was nevertheless most encouraging to see the fruitfulness of our labour. But there came a point when my health no longer withstood the pressures of those responsibilities and I had to come back to my homeland. John Littleton, singer and composer once wrote and sang: ***We must walk very long roads... We must surpass oneself.***

PHOTOS:

[1] Sr. Colette, at the Karonga dispensary, 1970

[2] At the maternity ward, Mzambazi, 1976

Photos Credit: MIC

THE CALL TO A NEW MISSION

After a "rest" period, I was able to take up another mission on Canadian soil. There are always callings to which we can respond when we want to give ourselves to God and to others—that is where we find happiness. It is also beneficial to take time to reflect, to forge bonds of friendship, to visit our beloved ones whom we have not seen for a very long time.

ENTERING INTO THE LAST SEASON OF MY LIFE

At eighty years of age, I am in the last season of my life...John Littleton did say: ***We must go to the end of our life to rediscover our first love, and to sing with a dazzling soul the symphony of the eternal return.*** It is with Him, the God of my life, that I enter into the last season of my life—a life He gave me to live in total confidence and serenity.

The Lord carries His lambs close to His Heart. (Is. 40:11)

Thérèse Pichette, M.I.C. (Sr. Anne-Thérèse) – ***1927-2013*** – Marieville, Quebec

Sister Thérèse was proud to have been born in the same town as our Foundress, Délia Tétreault. As a teenager, she was involved in the Catholic Action Movement; these activities prepared Thérèse for her entrance at our Novitiate in 1955. Eight years later, she left for Chile and was co-founder of our mission in Ancud, Chiloé; teaching piano was her main commitment. Upon her return to Canada, missionary animation kept her on the road, but above all it is at the organ and with her voice that she provided quality liturgies at our Mother House. Nothing was too beautiful for her. Thank you Sr. Thérèse and be happy in the Eternal Beauty.

Madeleine Bolduc, M.I.C. (Sr. Estelle-de-Jésus) – ***1921-2013***
– St. Damien-de-Brandon, Quebec

Our Venerable Délia Tétreault would say, *"sow seeds of joy by the handful it is the most needed bread on earth."* Sr. Madeleine succeeded this recipe very well through her joy, dynamism and liveliness. Though she had dreamed of becoming a cloistered nun, the missionary life fulfilled her aspirations; with enthusiasm she served in Quebec and in Haiti. Education was one of Sister's priorities, her expertise as teacher and principal was appreciated; she took part in parish animation as well as missionary animation; she also worked closely with immigrants. At retirement age, Sister Madeleine continued sowing seeds of joy to the lonely elderly persons in long-term care facilities. Thank you Sr. Madeleine for the beam of sunshine you radiated so beautifully.

Denise Lamarche, M.I.C. (Sr. Bernadette-de-Nevers) – ***1917-2013*** – L'Épiphanie, Quebec

It is said that *happy people have no history*. However, Sister Denise did write a beautiful page of her missionary life in Haiti and in Quebec; the page reflects her joyfulness and youthful heart. Mother Délia said, *"Cultivate joy, it is a health factor."* Sister Denise knew the truth of this statement as she had already celebrated her ninety-sixth birthday a month before her passing away. During her years in Haiti, she was seen with the poor, a presence very much appreciated and she also worked in a parish context. Being a 'cordon bleu' she took pleasure in providing substantial meals for her MIC community. Thank you Sr. Denise, now may you enjoy being at the Banquet of the Lord.

Agnès Dubuc, M.I.C. (Sr. Marie-Arthur) – 1918-2013 – Longueuil, Quebec

At a young age, Agnès suffered from illness and from the loss of her parents; she was adopted by an aunt. She developed a special capacity—that of adapting herself rather easily to all circumstances. At the age of eighteen, she entered the MIC Novitiate; her dream of being a missionary took shape. However, because of her fragile health, the Mission would be for her in Canada. She endorsed many community services: printing, sewing, sacristan and receptionist. Being very sensitive, Sister Agnès easily captured the beauties of nature; her wonder and awe were expressed in a spirit of Thanksgiving and Joy. On October 5, she passed away suddenly and peacefully. Sister Agnès may you now enjoy the Beauty and Love of God.

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I saw simple people gathering together in silence.
I saw shy people bloom like roses.
I saw hurt people become community oriented.

I saw betrayed people sit at the table of reconciliation.
I saw bruised people search for fullness of life.
I saw troubled people empathize with the pain of others.

I saw prayerful people discovering that they are Church.
I saw broad-minded people begging for a kind word.
I saw upright people standing like a beacon in the dark of night.

I saw people at the Banquet of the Lamb become Eucharist.
I saw people with many diversified faces form the Body of Christ.
I saw people on the move being at the service of the world.

I saw all those citizens of heaven and I recognized you, Father.
I saw your Word and your Breath walking with them.
I saw that we were all the living stones of your House.

Jacques Gauthier

French edition: *Guide pratique de la prière chrétienne,* Éd. Presses de la Renaissance, Paris 2010, P. 236

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