

MIC MISSION NEWS

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To sow seeds of joy and hope

Since 1923

MALAWI, AFRICA

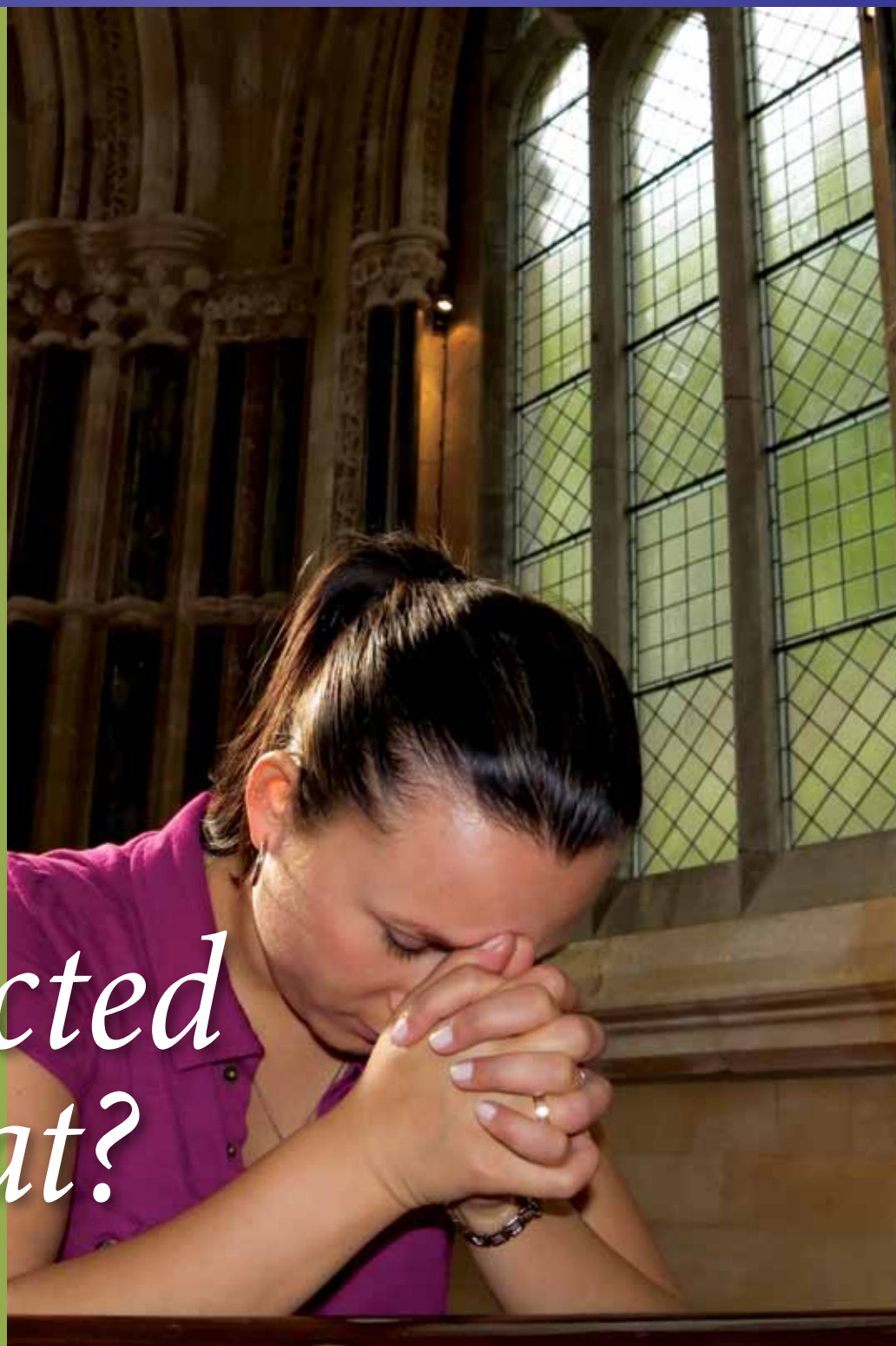
WONGANI
— A DREAM
COMES TRUE

JAPAN

FUKUSHIMA
— NO END
IN SIGHT

IN FOCUS

Connected to What?



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS – 2014

APRIL

We pray that the Risen Lord may fill with hope the hearts of those who are being tested by pain and sickness.

MAY

We pray that Mary, Star of Evangelization, may guide the Church in proclaiming Christ to all nations.

JUNE

We pray for Europe, that it may rediscover its Christian roots through the witness of believers.

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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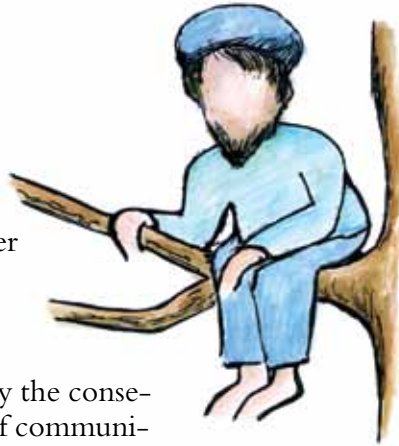
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To What and Why?

In the time of Jesus, a short man wished to see what was going on. He climbed a sycamore tree to have a better view; he wanted to connect with the person who was walking by, and his life changed...

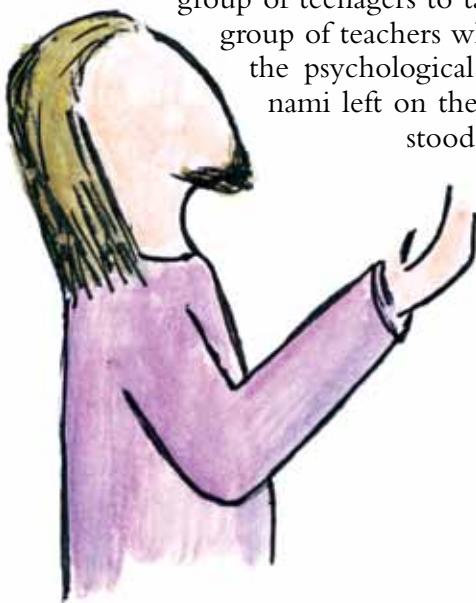


Today, who does not feel dwarfed by the consequences of globalization, by the speed of communications and the endless progress in technology? Having a desire to better understand or see more clearly we plug into social media. Yes, nowadays it is good to be connected, but connected to what and why? Zaccheus, the short man who wanted to connect with the passer-by, caught Jesus' attention, "*Zaccheus, come down immediately, I must stay at your house today*" (Lk 19:6). Touched by these words and Jesus' gentle look, he understood that he was precious in the eyes of God and that he was loved. From this point on, His own conception of others and of humanity completely changed. As a tax collector, he was regarded as a traitor and was considered as a money grabber who extorted money from his countrymen. Suddenly, Zaccheus felt the tug of grace inside his heart and went through great lengths to respond to this inner prompting of grace—he was ready to give away everything he owned.

We have many occasions to consciously grasp that our life and that of others has great value, and each one is important in the eyes of God. This reality awakens the missionary heart; sensitive to the abuses that take place in our world, there is a desire to react. Then why not be among effective altruists who act in the way that brings about the greatest positive impact.

This issue reveals how fruitful it is to be connected in order to hear, reflect, and commit one's self in providing a more human life to those who are deprived of it. Christine, in Bolivia, motivated a group of teenagers to take on positive actions; in Japan a group of teachers who visited Fukushima, understood the psychological impact the earthquake and tsunami left on the victims of the area. They understood that after help was received they, in turn, must take up the challenges and get to work.

André, Émilien and Marcelle help us reflect on the manner we are connected; not only must we be plugged-in but we must ask the question: *To what am I connected and why?*



Maria-Paule Sanjacon, m.i.c.

DÉLIA'S COLUMN

There is no doubt on this subject—Venerable Délia Tétreault's life was well connected to God and His Holy Will; and this was her wish for everyone of us.

CONNECTED TO GOD...

Oh, my dear child, live the interior life, don't be distracted by external concerns. You will do good inasmuch as you are united to God. (September 4, 1921)

Ask for union with God, for yourselves and for all the members of the Community. When united to Our Lord, we cannot imagine all the good that souls can do, the graces they can obtain for the world, and the glory they give to God. (July 28, 1922)

... AND TO HIS HOLY WILL

To smile at the most Holy Will of God in whatever way it may be manifested, to smile to the dear neighbor, always unhappy in some respect and with whom the good Lord wants us to be in contact, is this not all we have to do in this world? (April 19, 1915)

Again, don't spread yourself too thin; consecrate yourself, more than ever, in the hands of our Immaculate Mother and to the very Holy Will of God. If you are attentive, you will find this adorable Will everywhere. Be missionaries of this devotion of devotions. What a grace it is to have a taste for all that God wants. (April 6, 1917)

Where will my letter find you? Will it be in Canton? Will it be at the lepro-sarium? Wherever you may be, seek only one thing: doing God's Holy Will. (April 1, 1922)

FOR ALL FAVORS RECEIVED-OR-DESIRED

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Disconnect to Better Reconnect

The desert—a dry, barren, hot, and silent place! In such a harsh environment, the human person changes; alone with the ALONE, the human conscience can hear and be transformed by the Essential. Here, a blurred conscience is disconnected.



By André Gadbois

Recently, I had the opportunity of walking in the desert, descending into the depths of many canyons so that I could barely see the sun through narrow crevices. I climbed mountains and reached their rocky peaks; at the summit I was astonished before the grandeur of such overpowering beauty and mystery. The towering red cliffs, fanciful geological formation, rock columns with jagged shapes with hardly any vegetation stretched out for miles; the spectacular view was awesome. This was a perfect occasion to reflect, meditate, to question the beginning and unfolding of Creation and to give thanks for the beauty of our planet Earth. While admiring such splendor, an episode mentioned by three of the four evangelists came to my mind—Jesus tempted in the desert shortly after His Baptism in the Jordan River. The desert is synonymous with silence, solitude, bareness which leads the soul, the mind to reflect on what is essential. The desert is a place where truth breaks forth within the realm of conscientiousness and saturates it with its reality. The desert is a place that can affect our mind, bring it to stillness and prepare it for deep inner reflection.

old ways, implying a complete alteration in the mind, in judgment, in disposition. He called for an inner transformation and challenged those who swore by the immutable traditions inherited from Abraham (Lk 3:7.9). Jesus felt the need to see where He was heading; He must have felt a certain pressure to be what people expected of Him (victorious with the sword in hand, vengeful, comfortable life as the outcome...) and what His conscience as Son of God indicated Him to be (loving, compassionate and poor, forgiving and reaching out to the lowly, inspiring justice and peace). Jesus' temptation in the desert mirrors someone who is torn between two important visions and who looks into His conscience as Son to orient His life and opt for a straightforward decision; and according to the Evangelists, a Son who was enlightened by Scripture. It's the kind of approach by which someone disconnects from all that he sees and hears, seeks silence to better see and understand, then reconnects with a clearer view of things. The three evangelists tell us that Jesus often withdrew to the wilderness and prayed; He listened to the Will of His Father and wanted to be faithful to His initial choice which took place during His baptism at the Jordan River. Jesus was very conscious that to think we are well connected once and for all is a fallacy: the initial choice (Baptism, Marriage, Perpetual Vows) must be consciously reviewed periodically so that life may bear fruit... in abundance.

To think we are well connected
once and for all is a fallacy. ~

JESUS AND THE DESERT

During His forty days in the desert, Jesus had to disconnect Himself from the crowd in order to hear the voice of His conscience, the voice of His Father, the voice of God. He had just been baptized by his cousin John who preached the urgency to repent and to be converted from their

YAHWEH AND THE DESERT

Yahweh led His chosen people to the desert. Their past had been one of slavery and to help them reflect, to support them in their search for freedom and autonomy

PHOTO:

Mount Sinai – Egypt

Photo Credit: R.M. Nunes /
Shutterstock

they were brought to this solitary place. The bible tells us that they wandered forty years in the desert; it took all that time to finally assume their freedom. Thinking they were connected forever, the Hebrew people gradually forgot their desert experience where they heard the voice of their conscience; away from their solitary space, they did “like everybody else” they became dissipated. As such, they lost their freedom and dignity. When the mind and heart unconsciously accepts imposed choices, life’s orientation is distorted and the consequences are disappointing.

OUR CONSCIENCE AND THE DESERT

We live in a time when deserts are rare: we are always connected to images, to messages, to voices. Nowadays, it is difficult to find a quiet, solitary space where silence is heard, where our choices, our decisions, our fidelity can be evaluated; a space where we can be our true, authentic self without comparing what we are or what we have with others. During my short stay in the desert of my city, I saw people with the smart phones. On St. Catherine Street a beautiful girl collided (bang) right into me as she was texting. At the market place, a young man of about 25–30 years was on the phone asking: “Sweetheart, did you say Fruit Loops or Rice Krispies?”; and two counters down, the same young man asked: “Did you say Worcestershire Selection Sauce or the original?” And to this I add: are you autonomous or heteronomous? That’s the real question: Am I free or am I dependent? To avoid problems, we do not neglect changing the motor oil in our car, but do we take time to change the oil of our mind and heart? Jesus always sought freedom for Himself as well as for His disciples and His contemporaries knowing very well that “Truth will set you free” (Jn 8:32). Going out to the desert is to dare to step aside so as to develop a TASTE IN LISTENING TO THAT SILENCE; it is to prepare one’s self to hearing the Other. To remain forty days or forty years is of no importance, that symbolic figure is simply to emphasize the importance of stepping aside for some time to successfully live in freedom. 





Bolivia – Teenagers in Mission

A few years ago, in collaboration with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, Christine and her family were leaving for Bolivia. This adventure had been planned and thought of at length. Their positive, enriching experience inspired Christine to pass-on to the youth of Quebec the meaning of sharing, perseverance, resourcefulness, togetherness, self-knowledge. Once again, she saw a sign from God and she responded to His call.



By Christine Husson, I.o.p.

Leaving with seven teenagers to take up a missionary project is quite an adventure! The idea began to take shape when, as a family, we gave a witness talk describing how in the year 2009 we had lived at the Institute of Rural Education (IER). Upon hearing us, the young people who attended the talk began saying, “I would also like to go...” and the response came spontaneously, “why not?”

We spoke about this to our Lay Dominican Fraternity. The parents thought this would be a great opportunity for their children to discover a different reality of the world. They agreed to support the project. The young people were very enthused; they knew each other and were eager to leave. They were ready to invest in the project, to come to meetings and even to learn Spanish.

For a period of two years we met with the youngsters of the Fraternity and their friends. Some eventually gave up, abandoned the idea while others joined the group. At the end, there were five boys and two girls between twelve and sixteen years of age; they were ready to live an experience far from their parents, their friends and... their video games.

At the onset, the idea of performing concrete actions in the field was very important for the youth. With the arrival of Mireille Chalifour, a Quebec environmentalist from the watershed Matapédia in Gaspésie and the collaboration of Murielle Dubé, M.I.C., from the Institute of Rural Education, the project took form: “At Cochabamba, we lack drinking water and we lose much of it when gardens are sprinkled.” This became the goal of our project: find a way to salvage water from washers to irrigate the gardens; utilize the recycled water to avoid soil contamination.

Other ideas came up, “How about teaching this process to the students at the IER, so that they could apply the acquired knowledge in their respective local communities.” Mireille’s experience in environmental education helped us include a ‘teaching’ section in our project.

Other participants expressed their desire to take part in the students’ life at the IER and to visit Bolivia. Another idea came from a young woman who had some experience as a social worker; she suggested that, with the help of two other participants, a workshop be given to the students about domestic violence.



Others wanted to work as volunteers at an orphanage. The ideas were not lacking and believe it or not they were almost all realized.

Another part of the project consisted in collecting \$4,000 to help ten young Bolivian girls go to IER for their studies. We decided to share the profits of our annual Christmas proceeds and to organize a garage sale. In addition, the idea of inviting a group of students from IER to come with us for a tour of their country was more than welcome, so another \$2,000 had to be raised. We decided to fabricate objects made out of Bolivian material and to sell them. Thanks to the work done, the participation and support of the Dominican family and the members of the Dominican fraternities, we were able to reach our financial goal.

For the time we were to stay at IER, the program was planned in such a way that our youth would have a variety of activities that would allow them to interact with the Bolivian people while at the same time realize a concrete project that would be praiseworthy. These objectives were reached beyond our hopes. The participants learned to bake bread, to cook on fires fueled by eucalyptus leaves, to hand-wash their clothes, to work in the garden. They had sports activities with the students and they also learned traditional Bolivian dances. They taught reading and writing, supervised children and worked hard on the water recycling project.

They experienced all kinds of emotions one of which was the culture shock; being in another country where another

language is spoken can be destabilizing. They were confronted with a lifestyle completely different from their own: no running water, traumatized by certain toilets, and moments of weariness when digging under the heat of the sun was taxing. However, they were to be admired for their good humor and for their capacity to adapt. They all learned something about themselves and had to surpass their own expectations.

From this experience, I came back home stimulated and happy to know that the youth were most satisfied with the project. I am very grateful towards all the people who permitted us to realize this beautiful adventure. Thank you to all the youth, to their parents, to the MIC Community, to Mireille Chalifour for her expertise, to Sr. Murielle and all the MIC Sisters of the Cochabamba fraternity. Thank you also to José, Ruben, Gregario, Basilesa, Yolanda, the teachers at the school who generously welcomed our young people. Thank you to the students at IER who integrated the participants into their daily life. Thank you to all the benefactors who participated in our financial campaigns.

May the missionary spirit of Mother Délia continue to inspire people of all ages and from all horizons to generously take up the missionary adventure with the worthwhile purpose of reaching-out. As for Tayo, Emmanuel, Philippe, Clément, Simon, Camille may this personal enrichment lead them to take part in building a world of solidarity to which we all aspire as Christians. 

PHOTOS:

- ¹ Outing to the thermal waters – IER students with the Quebec teenagers and the Marier family.
- ² Clément and Don Gregorio cutting the pipes for the irrigation system.
- ³ Simon and Don José dig the holes that will filter the wastewaters; Mireille supervises the work; Clément and Tayo collect the earth.
- ⁴ At the end of the day, the boys escort Sr. Murielle back home.
- ⁵ Of the same name, the two Camille are going to dig under the sun.

Photos Credit: C. Husson

BEING – Consciousness & Conscience



By Émilien Roscanu

We are not only made of flesh and bones, we are more than simply organisms. Human beings are endowed with intelligence; we have the capacity to be aware of our existence. In other words we are conscious of our 'being'.

We have the ability to be conscious of the world around us, to marvel; we have an

that time as we deem pertinent and meaningful. It is by way of our conscience and consciousness that we are able to give a sense to our actions and to our whole life.

THE INNER VOICE

Our conscience is constantly in competition with the external stimuli. It is of



innate curiosity that incites us to discover the unknown, to reach new record highs in whatever field. It is thanks to our consciousness that we are capable to apprehend our existence. We situate ourselves in time and space thanks to that awareness. We are conscious of our finite life and during the years given to us, we can use

primary importance to give as much attention to that which our spirit communicates from within as to that which stimulates us from the outer world. We all have that inner, small voice that we can listen to or ignore. That inner whisper is one of the manifestations of our conscience and unfortunately it is often shut off or neglected. The exter-

nal stimuli which we could call the 'beast' have something to do with it.

That inner voice must be listened to as it guides our actions, helps us to distinguish between right and wrong. Our actions will become more meaningful if they are guided by the inner whisper; they will take on the cloak of righteousness.

THE ENEMIES OF CONSCIENCE

The outer world with its stimuli is far from being fundamentally wrong, but some of its elements can be obstacles to the development of the human conscience. Omnipresent in our lives, the new technologies and their uncontrollable flood of stimuli can be among those obstacles. Constantly being connected to the smart phone or to the social networks we no longer take time for serious self-reflection, for introspection with defining moments, for private moments with our inner self. Information and communication technologies are instruments developed to serve humanity but are not humanity's final end. However, if used wisely and without exaggeration they can be a vector to one's conscience.

Though these new technologies create major obstacles in the realm of introspection and conscience, there are also other elements in our lives that drive us away from our inner self. There is the constant listening to the noise which comes from our televisions or radios—noise that is translated in empty nonsense publicity or repetitive sounds of music. How can we concentrate on the essence of our 'being' and be in touch with the Source of life, if we cannot leave behind our noisy self-centeredness and our noisy surroundings. Noise is the enemy of silence—the inner silence which is needed to hear the Divine whisper in our conscience.

Drugs, no matter their origin are also an obstacle to conscience. Whether it be an abuse of alcohol or narcotics, or an addiction to gambling or money, these drugs disorient our concentration as well as hinder our quest for life's true meaning.

Seeking wealth and absolute power are also stumbling blocks to our inward journey. Instead of looking for answers in the deepest core of our true self, we believe finding the answers in luxury and domination over others. We take delight in illusions or dreams that lead us astray. These are all true temptations to which we must resist, temptations similar to which Jesus resisted in the desert.

We all have that inner small voice
that we can listen to or ignore. 

DISCONNECT... TO BETTER RECONNECT

On what must we be connected? The answer to that question is found within ourselves and to discover it we must listen to the inner whisper of our conscience. By getting rid of all those superfluous external stimuli, the drugs and daily vices, we can then find favorable time for ideas, for thought, for meditation and prayer.

In our instantaneous societies, everything must be accessible immediately and quickly. However, some questions, the more important ones, can remain without answers for a longer period of time. Without interiority, without taking time to be alone with the Alone, we cannot hope for an immediate response. To disconnect with the immediate, the noise, etc. and to make peace with one's self is of utmost importance; only then we can reconnect with the Essential and take decisions that will be life-giving and fulfilling. What distinguishes us from the animal world, and distinguishes us from other humans is not only physical; the difference is much deeper. The conscience of every human being is different. Each person conceives and sees the world in his/her own fashion. To be someone, to be whole as a human being, we must be in communion with our conscience. Not only must we be conscious of our 'being' but we must be conscious of our conscience. 

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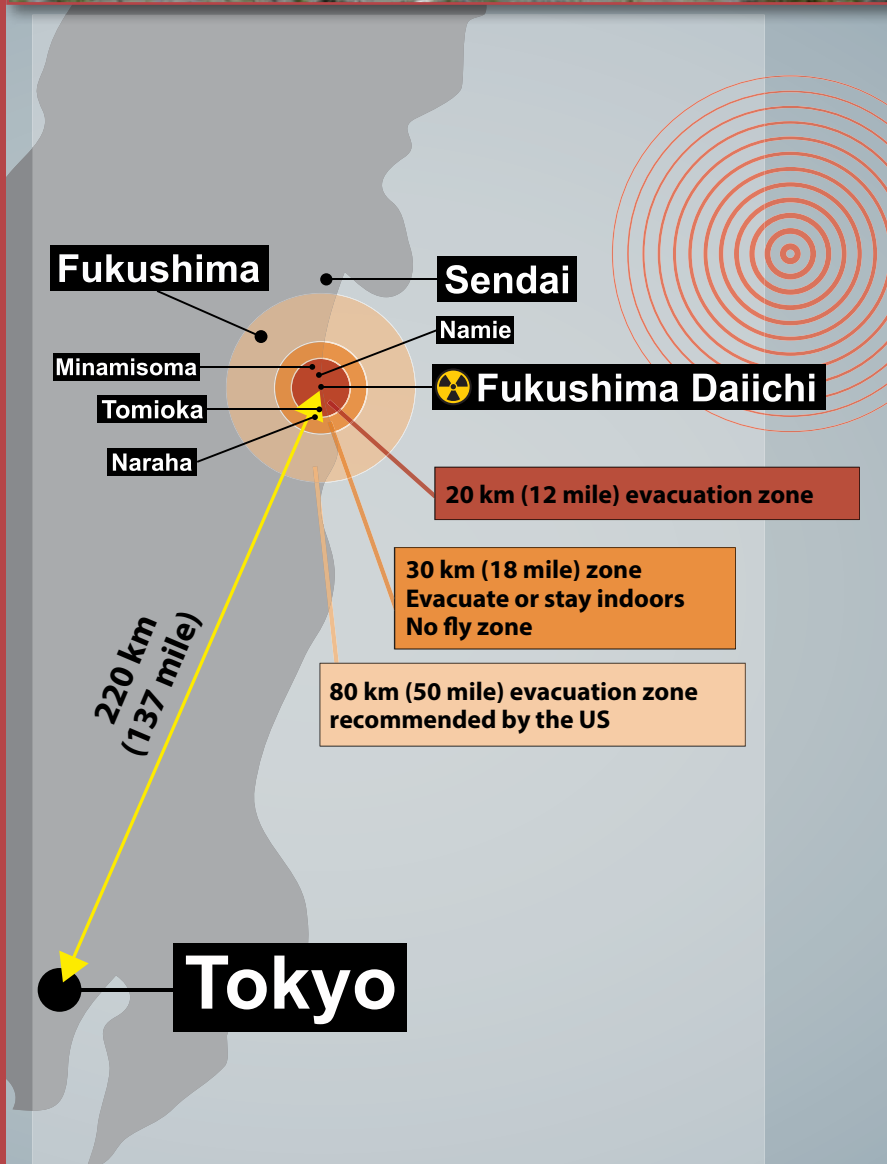
IN FOCUS

Connected to What?

FUKUSHIMA, NO END IN SIGHT

Fukushima, a prefecture located north-east of Japan, is now known all over the world since the Great East Japan Earthquake and tsunami that took place on March 11, 2011. Though in the Japanese language “Fuku” means happy and “Shima” means land—a land covered with trees and beauty all around, these characteristics are no longer seen and the name Fukushima has become a byword for the cursed place; there is very little hope here and time seems to stand still.

As part of a study session, an observation tour to the site was organized by Sr. Kyoko Takahashi, M.I.C., Directress of Setagaya Seibo Kindergarten in Tokyo. Two MIC Sisters, Sr. Kesayo Sato and Sr. Sachiko Hongo joined the kindergarten staff. The following is an excerpt depicting what the author observed.



1



By Yoriko Takita

In collaboration with
Kyoko Takahashi, M.I.C.
Ghislaine Parent, M.I.C.

ALONG THE WAY

From the Fukushima bus station which is a lively regional city revived thanks to the local people's efforts and a lot of support, the bus drove us east to Kawamata. In less than ten minutes, the green landscape becomes countryside scenery. However, we were told that all of this area has been contaminated by radioactivity; the paddy fields have turned into wasteland and are ruined; the place is utterly deserted though we have seen here and there men in their coveralls trying to decontaminate the road shoulders.

Lined up along the roads are large numbers of lumps in which contaminated soil is wrapped up in white and blue tarpaulins; these are kept above ground because for the time being, burying places cannot be secured. Decontamination is a primitive handwork, done by digging out the contaminated soil as deep as 8 cm; the trees get a high-pressure washing and then are barked; nearby houses go through a high-pressure washing as well and are wiped with dust cloths.

The families living in this specific area are faced with financial problems but also wonder if they should stay or leave, they are not sure what to do. Our tour guide, Sister Shizuko Endo, CND, a native of

Minamisoma, told us, *"there is a necessity for the people involved to think and act on their own initiative and not wait with a passive attitude for the government's support. Is the present condition really 'temporary' or is 'temporary' a name for a semi-permanent situation?"* For the first time I realized, firsthand, the harsh life of those residents who do not see what the future holds for them; every day they are confronted with complications and worries.

MINAMISOMA CITY

From afar, we can see the ocean area where damages from the earthquake and tsunami are considerable. However, in this city a project is underway to speed up the recovery process of disaster-affected communities in the area. The new Fukushima Recovery Solar-Agricultural Park has been built by Mr. Hangai, a former employee of Tokyo Electric Power Company. It contains more than 2,000 solar panels and two air-inflated greenhouse domes. This solar power facility not only provides electricity but helps farmers to produce their vegetables. Grade school children come here to learn about renewable energy and have a 'hands on' experience. The celery and the lettuce harvested here have the reputation

of being delicious. Thanks to this initiative, the negative rumors about the crops are wiped away little by little and it might increase the self-confidence and vitality of the children who will shoulder the future.

After the disaster, the Catholic Haramachi Kindergarten's enrollment declined from eighty to thirteen children and the personnel from five to three. The large dosimeter on the playground is startling. However, wanting to provide for the little ones, no matter their number, the sandpit, the jungle gym, and the playground equipment have been hauled inside the kindergarten. To prevent the radiation level from rising, artificial turf has been laid out and rubber scraps have been scattered all over the grounds.

GHOST TOWNS

Lastly, we visited Odakaku, Namie, and the Ukedo fishing port. These places have been completely devastated by the earthquake and tsunami. Up to this day, collapsed buildings are still covered with vinyl sheets, the debris is piled up, cars and fishing boats are overturned; it's a widespread reality that hits hard. I was struck by the words, *"Let's hold on!"* written on masking tape on top of the vinyl sheets. At the time of the earthquake, it was difficult for some people to evacuate, so they remained on the spot. When the zone became *'search prohibited'*, the rescue efforts had to be abandoned. We were told stories that many bodies were later found, leaving behind signs that there had been life there for some time. This shook my mind!

At the Ukedo fishing port we can still see wreckages of cars and boats, collapsed embankments, houses destroyed and carried away; all is in the same state as when the earthquake hit. The power of the tsunami was beyond my imagination. Children's torn-off feet and hands were carried away by waves several meters high. More than one hundred people died right where I was standing. I was overwhelmed by the sight and also by one man who walked around the fishing port,

staring at the sea... had some of his loved ones been engulfed in the destructive tidal waves? The scene touched our hearts and Sr. Hongo said, *"Whoever that person was, without doubt, wanted to live!"* She then picked up two pieces of driftwood and made the shape of a cross. At that moment, deep grief took hold of me and with compassion felt the loss this man was grieving; unconsciously I wept with him.

THE AFTERMATH

The complex current state of Fukushima is not reflected in the media. There is little 'support money' given to the stricken areas; consequently, people must try to survive the best they can but not all can cope. Mental problems, family break-ups, divorces are on the rise; there is much suffering and not all are capable of taking up the immense challenges.

For those of us who have not gone through such a calamity, a message is sent our way—have we not forgotten to be grateful for a life of peace and quiet, and are we not prone to discontent and grumbling? May the memory of this disaster never fade away and remind us to be thankful for what we have and to keep in mind those who are victims of such catastrophes. ♪



PHOTOS:

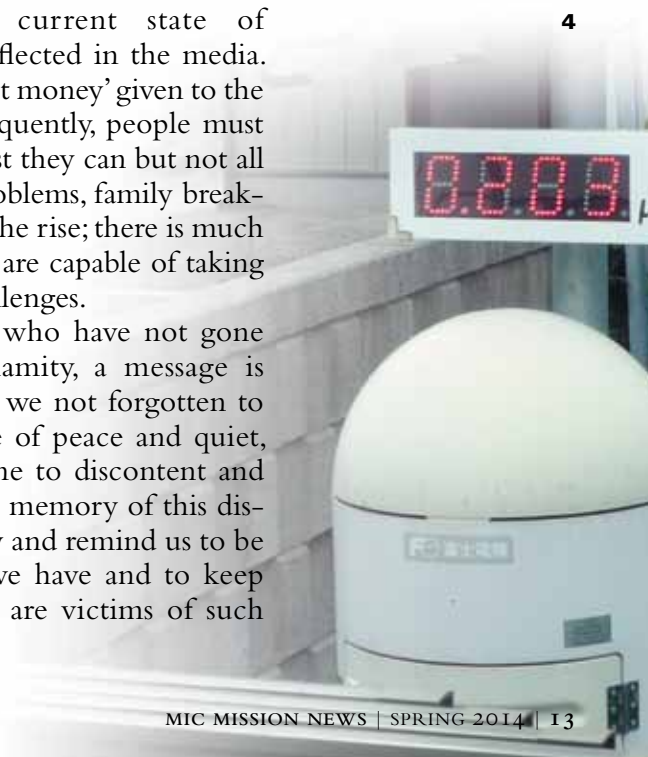
¹ Kindergarten personnel with Sr. Kyoko Takahashi, M.I.C., Directress (1st row, center), Sr. Sachiko Hongo, M.I.C., (1st row 3rd from r.), Sr. Kesayo Sato, M.I.C., (1st row 1st from r.)

² Debris pile-up

³ Lumps of contaminated soil

⁴ Dosimeter

Photos Credit: Mina Ota





All trees are key to survival in this beloved City of Baguio in the Philippines. Trees do not only provide life for the people who breathe fresh oxygen and clean the air of carbon dioxide, nitrous oxide, sulphuric oxide and other persistent green house gasses (GHG) but trees continue to ensure water supply, prevent erosion and excessive water run-off. Luneta Hill and its trees are not only of ecological and cultural importance but they have an historic value to Baguio City and its people. Without fresh air and the pine trees Baguio City could not be what it is known for—the City of Pines.

Save the 182 Trees Movement

By Milagros Duque, M.I.C.

FLASH BACK

SM City, Baguio – What does it stand for? The expansion of a shoe store chain became ‘ShoeMart’ the largest shopping mall in the region. The entire complex stands on a land area of 860,000 sq. ft. It was formally opened on November 21, 2003. This cruise ship-patterned mall is surrounded by towering pine trees and luscious green gardens.

In 2011, expansion was announced to the public. A seven storey parking lot was already designed and ready to be built. Hundreds of naturally grown Benguet pine trees were to be cut. With a battle cry, people reacted, “We need the trees, not a bigger mall.” It was then decided that the trees would be earth-balled and replanted in designated cites.

EMERGENCY MEETING

Bishop Carlito Cenzone, CICM, DD, took the issue seriously. Conscious of the environmental impact this project could have for the region, he called the Superiors of different religious Congregations in the Diocese of Baguio to come and attend an

emergency meeting. On the agenda was the ‘burning issue’ to protect and save the 182 trees that SM wanted to cut. Series of protest activities were planned.

On January 14, 2013, Bishop Carlito led the protest actions. Sensitive to all environmental issues, we, the MIC Filipina Sisters took part in the protest. Along with other members of religious congregations, students from Catholic schools, and other cause oriented groups, Sr. Milagros Duque, M.I.C. – Sr. Lourdes Serrano, M.I.C. – Sr. Felicitas Tobias, M.I.C., were among the many who joined Bishop Carlito Cenzone in demanding all Baguio residents and tourists to sign the petition addressed to President Benigno Aquino III, requesting that the expansion project of SM City, Baguio be immediately stopped.

PROFESSIONALS AND RELIGIOUS SPEAK OUT

At the forefront of the protest is Dr. Michael A. Bengwayan, an arborist who speaks out to protect the environment. He states that “*trees are the most*

important living things that absorb carbon dioxide (CO₂); they trap CO₂ before it gets to the atmosphere to trap heat around the earth's surface."¹ Another strong advocate is Mr. Mike Arvisu, chair person of the Kafagwan movement which is geared towards the preservation, rehabilitation and sustainable development of public lands in Baguio City. He states that *"the trees and plants of Luneta Hill have a combined capacity to absorb 12-24 tons of air pollutants each year. They produce a combined 26 tons of oxygen annually."* Furthermore, and most importantly, *"the tree canopy intercepts rainfall and prevents water run offs that cause erosion and structural damage."* With almost all of Baguio's mountains now dotted with houses and commercial buildings, erosions and flooding within the City has become more frequent and disastrous these past few years. The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization reports that the rate of deforestation in the Philippines is among the highest in the world; within the span of 50 years, almost two-thirds of Philippine forests have been lost – down to 16 from 26 million acres.²

Sister Fidelis, R.A. (Religious of the Assumption) chairperson of the AWRBB (Association of Women Religious of Baguio Benguet), spoke on behalf of the members of the Association. She said, *"we are joining this activity because we cannot separate faith from action, we are called to protect our environment."* Sr. Fidelis further pointed out that the case is not a matter of ownership, but of conscience.

In his pastoral letter, Bishop Cenzone expressed dismay over the court's decision which dismissed the environmental case filed against SM. He urged every Baguio resident to speak out, to express what is on their minds with the hope that SM and its agents might consider the residents' opinions.

THE ON-GOING STRUGGLE

No matter the resistance they are facing, the giant SM has already secured the necessary permits from the national and local agencies for its expansion pro-

ject at Luneta Hill. They are persistent and vow they will consider earth-balling the 182 trees instead of cutting them down. But is SM aware of the 497 pine trees that were earth-balled by Camp John Hay Development Corp. in 1994? Dr. Bengwayan stated that *"only less than 20% survived and those not dead were showing signs of deteriorating. Therefore, we should expect that out of the 182 pine trees that will be uprooted, more or less 30 trees will survive."*³

While residents of Baguio respect the decision handed down by the honorable court, they on the other hand strongly disagree with their conclusion and vow to exhaust all other ways available to them in their battle to stand up and speak for the trees on Luneta Hill.

The struggle for environmental justice in Baguio continues... 

¹ Liporada Rudy, Asian Journal, *The Legacy of 182 Trees in Baguio City*, December 3, 2013

² Ibid

³ Ibid

PHOTOS:

¹ Protesting against the cutting of trees
Photo Credit:

Bro-Martin-Francisco

² SM Shopping Mall

Photo Credit: MIC



As we read through some pages of Sister Marcelle's missionary life, we come to notice that she always remained connected to the Essential—the Word of God. This explains why a special current was transmitted whenever she encountered challenges; the inner awakening and consciousness was vital in her life. Let us read her story and “see”.



1

And... The Current was transmitted

By Marcelle St-Gelais, M.I.C.

WHILE STUDYING... A LUMINOUS CURRENT WAS FELT

For me, to be inwardly aware is to hear the inner calling to live my life fully in the Light of Jesus and to follow Him. It is to courageously keep my focus on the Resurrected Christ and like Him to give my life for others. At one point, during the time I studied nursing, I strongly felt the Call to leave everything behind and to follow the Lord Jesus' invitation. It took some time before giving my final 'yes'; I prayed and seriously reflected upon where this could lead me. Seduced by the Lord, no one could pressure me to change my option for Him; my mind was definitely made up. With this final choice came great joy and profound peace. In 1948, I entered the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception.

A STRONG CURRENT IN HAITI

In August 1953, I landed in Haiti, the “Pearl of the Caribbean”. On this beautiful

Island, I discovered a warm and welcoming people. Every morning as I joyfully went to work, Jesus' words motivated me, *“What you did to the least of my brothers and sisters, you did for Me”* (Mt 25:40).

For many years I was committed to health care in dispensaries and also reached out to the sick in their homes, traveling on horseback, the only means available at the time. In my heart I nurtured the words of Jesus, *“I have come that they may have life and have it to the full”* (Jn 10:10).

Later, for more than five years, I had the chance of working at the Albert Schweitzer Hospital which was founded by Dr. Larimer Mellon. A humble man and profoundly human, very much like the ‘Good Samaritan’; he would pick up the dying who were found along the roadsides and he transported them in his car to the hospital. Doctors, surgeons, lab technicians, radiologists, registered nurses, who came from the United States and Europe staffed the hospital and responded to the needs of a neglected rural population.

Being in this cosmopolitan and ecumenical milieu was quite a challenge for me. We were a team of five Catholic nuns sharing the work with two hundred employees: Haitians, Asians, Europeans and Americans all with different faith backgrounds. For us, religious, we had no intention to proselytize but rather to be

witnesses of Christ's love; no matter their faith tradition, our goal was to awaken each patient, each mediator to the reality that every person is to be respected and loved as a child of God.

The last year of my apostolate in this beautiful Haiti was at "LA CHARITÉ, S.V.P." The name of this Institution indicates very well its objective—to welcome all the homeless elderly. This "home" allowed them to leave behind their earthly journey in peace and serenity. So many times I have observed the Haitian soul revealing itself in total self-abandonment to "*Papa Bondié*"—"Bondié bon!" (Good Father, Good God!)

WHAT ABOUT THE CURRENT IN QUEBEC

Now that I have come back to my homeland, Quebec, the mission continues but differently. The ministry of Baptism and Confirmation has been of great interest to me because this is a time to tell the Good News of Jesus.

Participating in the Faith and Light community movement, founded by Jean Vanier and Marie-Hélène Mathieu in 1971—a movement which brings together people with intellectual disabilities, parents and friends—made me realize, once again, the dignity of the human person no matter the limitation. Wonder and gratitude filled my heart as I walked the journey with them. An example—at the end of a year when I had given the children lessons in catechesis, adapted to their age and understanding, I told the group of ten that I had to leave for another mission.

Emotions were expressed with tears running down our cheeks; we were very much attached to one another. One of the children signaled to me that he wanted to see me in their small oratory. I followed him and in front of the tabernacle he said a prayer of thanksgiving for the love and affection I had shown them. Then turning to me he signed my forehead with the symbol of the cross, and I, in turn, did the same. "*I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things to the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children*" (Mt 11:25).

And what to say of Linda, severely handicapped; for months she had made constant efforts to handle her mini piano's keyboard, finally she succeeded... She looked at me with a broad smile which she had never shown before. How rewarding!!!

And what about little six year old Sadrak who is aggressive, blind, cannot speak, nor stand on his legs; the love, affection and attention gradually helped him bloom. Can we not hear Jesus saying: "*I was sick, (handicapped), and you looked after Me...*" (Mt 25:36).

Wonder and gratitude filled my heart.



STILL CONNECTED AT EIGHTY

Currently, I have the joy of bringing about a "spark of life" to my MIC Sisters who are in loss of autonomy. Most of them have travelled the world's roads and paths to be at the service of Jesus' Mission. And now, they are on the way to their Eternal destiny—the Light of Life.

As I write this page of my missionary experiences, I am aware, once again, of the power of the Living Word when meditated and integrated in our daily lives. This Word has helped me to remain connected to the Essential... to hear His callings and respond accordingly. In the evening of my life, I gather the fruit of His Promise: that of making me happy. Mission accomplished!!!

And what if I had to start all over again? I would take the same road. ∞

PHOTOS:

¹ Sr. Marcelle St-Gelais, M.I.C., with Dr. Larimer Mellon, Founder of Albert Schweitzer Hospital – Haiti 1974

² Listening to God

Photos Credit: MIC



1

PHOTO:

¹ Monique Cloutier, M.I.C., author of the article, with two of her spiritual daughters

A LIFELONG COMMITMENT

(cont.)

In the Fall issue 2013,¹ an interview presented by Sr. Huguette Turcotte, M.I.C., gave rise to much interest and admiration. At the end of the conversation, Sr. Huguette invited Sr. Monique to write a summary of her sixty years in Japan. In this issue, she responds to the invitation.

MY ADAPTATION

At the outset of my apostolate in Japan, when I began to share the Good News, I soon realized that my religious terminology had no equivalent in the Japanese language; I therefore had to explain, paraphrase each word so that its meaning would be well understood. To express each spiritual reality in simple ordinary words, I had to ponder at great length over the content. This led me to dig deeper and to personalize my own faith; I consider this as having been one of the greatest graces of my missionary life. I was sent to communicate the faith; it is in Japan that I rediscovered it.

I thought that Saint Thomas Aquinas' philosophy, particularly natural theology would be a precious help in my teaching. But I soon discovered that the discursive manner of reasoning in our western world did not correspond with the psychology of the Japanese people who are mostly intuitive. They have a sense of mystery and when they have captured the heart of the message, they do not need to reason the pros and cons. I understood why Jesus, who was an oriental, never made long theological dissertations but rather communicated the profound truths by means of examples and parables. Where to find a better model? I decided to imitate Him

and draw examples from everyday life. I experienced that to transmit the message, at least in Japan, love and imagination is more effective than book knowledge.

TEACHING-SHARING THE FAITH

During three years I studied the Japanese language in Tokyo and in 1954 I was assigned to Koriyama where I took the direction of the Kindergarten. Three years later, I was transferred to Wakamatsu where I began my long teaching career; I taught English and religious education to the young students of our schools. After fifteen consecutive years of service in Japan, I had a sabbatical year in 1966. I took this opportunity to register for courses in theology and missiology given at the University of St. Paul in Ottawa, Ontario. So as to better know the culture of my adopted country I also opted for courses in Asiatic religions in particular Buddhism. This was a tremendous help in understanding the Japanese mentality and to adapt my teaching accordingly. I believed that these courses would also be necessary to establish a formal interreligious dialogue, but this was also another illusion. Apart from the bonzes and specialists in this matter, the ordinary Japanese has no definite notion concerning Buddhism. In Japan, Buddhism is more of a family

religion than a personal religion and it consists mainly of rituals and religious feasts. A former director of a high school in Wakamatsu, whom I had the joy of preparing for Baptism, thus told me as I was to begin comparing our respective religions: *Please, Sister, start with Catholicism because I know nothing of Buddhism.*

In 1984, I was transferred to our Xaverio High School in Koriyama. Here, I concentrated all my time and energy in offering religious instruction to adults, mainly, parents and teachers.

RESPONDING TO THE REQUESTS

For a missionary, communicating the Word is essential; however, this Word must also be translated into actions. With the students from our high school in Wakamatsu, I formed a club of volunteers who, once a month, would visit the elderly who are in homes as well as children and adolescents who are in institutions because of mental deficiency or deafness.

In 1983, during a short stay in the Philippines, I observed that poverty prevented many young people from pursuing their studies. Upon my return to Japan, I prompted the Students' Association of Koriyama in organizing a scholarship management system that would allow Filipino youths to pursue their studies thus enabling them to eventually earn a decent living.

Our MIC Community in Koriyama now has forty Associates which I had the pleasure of animating. One of their commitments is to collaborate, as volunteers, with the city in organizing activities for the evacuees affected by the Fukushima nuclear disaster. This allows us to bring them comfort as we listen attentively and with a compassionate heart the sad stories of their experience; we share with them their suffering and take part in their conversation.

A TESTIMONY AMONG OTHERS

One day, we had prepared a celebration for the victims of Fukushima; though welcomed, the management of the cen-

ter had asked us to not mention our religious background. As the feast unfolded, an elderly lady with whom I was speaking asked me: *Tell me, which organization do you belong to?* What could I answer? I wanted to respect the given order. *I replied: We are a group of people who find joy in giving it to others.* The lady immediately exclaimed: *So you are Catholics! Could you prepare for us a Christmas celebration?* It is to be noted that all these people were non Christians. After the reunion, we reported this wish to the management team and to our big surprise, they accepted.

To give joy is to give love. And to give love is to give God. And this has been my greatest joy all along my missionary life in Japan. Magnificat! ∞

¹ *MIC Mission News*,
Vol. 40, No. 4 – October-
December 2013, p. 12-13

PHOTOS:

^{2,3} MIC Associates organize
a feast for the victims of the
nuclear tragedy.

Photos Credit:
Friends of Sr. Monique





By Huguette Ostiguy, M.I.C.

WONGANI — A DREAM COMES TRUE

After many months of construction and preparation, a new school, Wongani Primary, welcomed more than 120 children from standard (grade) one to five. The Assembly, on opening day, was an emotional moment for us, the MIC Sisters of Malawi, Africa. Our dream of a primary school in addition to our kindergarten has finally come true.

MALAWI PROFILE

Malawi is over 118,000 km² (45,560 sq mi) with an estimated population of 16,777,547 (July 2013). A landlocked country, Malawi ranks among the world's most densely populated and is among the least developed. It is one of the poorest countries of the world and ranks 160th out of 182. Eighty five percent of the population live in rural areas with subsistence farming and an income of less than one dollar a day... Malawi has a low life expectancy, approximately 55 years, and high infant mortality of 79.02 deaths/1,000 live births. There is a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, which is a drain on the labour force and government expenditures

EDUCATION IN MALAWI

In Malawi, youths make up to almost seventy percent of the whole population. With such a great number of children, there is a huge demand for schools. About thirty five percent of the children benefit from primary education. However, only sixty percent reach standard two and about thirty percent make it to standard five. The dropout rate is higher among girls than boys. Though the primary education is free in Malawi, it is estimated that thirty percent of the children from poor families do not attend primary school for various reasons, one of which is the long commute, often alone on foot. Secondary and higher education is largely confined to the non-poor. Based on the results of their standard

eight final exams only a certain number of children are selected for the government sponsored schools; among the non-selected students, only those who can afford paying the school fees can pursue their education. The government alone cannot face the tremendous challenge of educating all the children and so the private sector is welcomed to participate toward the education of children.

MIC CONTRIBUTION IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

The MIC Sisters have the desire to contribute in a special way to the education of the children of Malawi. Since a few years, we have been able to open four kindergartens in our different missions for the young children from age three to six. Upon the requests of parents, we considered the possibility of building a primary school in Mzuzu, on a plot near our Wongani Kindergarten. We first acquired from the Mzuzu Diocese a vacant convent and transformed it into the administration block. Slowly, with some financial support, we were able to build an adjacent eight-classroom block. Finally, *Wongani Primary School* opened its door on September 9, 2013.

THE NAME — “WONGANI”

‘Wongani’ means to ‘Praise’. The MIC spirituality, being one of Thanksgiving, we, the MIC Sisters want our kindergarten and primary school of Mzuzu to be a school where children who come to us for an education also learn to praise God and be thankful. The logo chosen for the school, ‘*Learn-Love*’ is a reminder for both the learners and the staff to dedicate themselves to ‘*Learning*’ and to ‘*Loving*’. This is a challenge but, together, we can achieve this goal through hard work and participation, responding to the different opportunities which the school already offers. We now have a library which provides the children, who enjoy reading, a variety of books for all the grades.

For us the MIC Sisters, Délia Tétreault, our Foundress is always alive in our hearts. We want her spiritual presence to also be alive at the school for the children and their parents/guardians. Illustrated at the

entrance of the administration block are her words, “*May Your Best Kindness Be For The Little Children*” (Sept. 8, 1916). This reminds everyone that we, like Jesus, must offer our best kindness to all the children and recognize the Kingdom of God present in their hearts.

LIVING OUR DREAM

In the name of the MICs, Sr. Catherine Mkamanga, M.I.C., is the Headmistress of the school; Sr. Grace Phiri is the bursar while very recently Sr. Louise Lefebvre, M.I.C., has joined them to provide support and respond to the various social and pastoral needs. A team of teachers is in place assisting us and providing the children a holistic education including all aspects of human existence and not just academics. This year, being the opening year, there are one hundred thirty students who have enrolled in Standard one through five; within two to three years the number is expected to increase to four hundred. We believe that educating a child is educating a nation; this is the goal of the ‘*Wongani*’ Primary School while at the same time inspiring people to give praise and thanks to the Lord for all His goodness

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR MIC MISSION

‘Wongani’ is not yet one year old; it is not yet able to walk on its own. There are many ways to assist Wongani Primary which would be deeply appreciated. Here, in Malawi, we have two seasons—during the dry season, children can easily be gathered outdoors, but during the rainy season we must assemble the students indoors but at this point we have no assembly hall. Any contribution toward the building of a hall for the school would be very welcomed. Due to the economic situation of Malawi and the major devaluation of the Malawi Kwacha, construction has become expensive. We therefore do need the help of generous people for this section of the school to be finalized.

To all those who have helped us along the way and to all who will respond to the above request, we, the MIC Sisters of Malawi, wish to express our heartfelt gratitude. 🙏



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



Marie-Lucienne Déry, M.I.C., (Sr. Marie-Lucienne) 1916-2013

– Ste-Anne-de-la-Pocatière, Quebec

Marie-Lucienne who was consecrated to the Blessed Virgin on the day of her Baptism always had a special devotion to Our Lady. When she entered our Novitiate on February 1, 1937, she knew that Mary was protecting and guiding her. Always happy to be of service, Sr. Marie-Lucienne took particular interest in helping the sick. At the age of fifty-two she took courses in auxiliary nursing after which she worked seventeen years in Haiti at l'Asile Communal, Cap-Haitien. With great devotion she provided medical help to the 140 elderly pensioners who were abandoned, sick, blind, or suffering from leprosy. At 90 Sister Marie-Lucienne retired. Since the rosary had always been precious to her, praying with Mary was a consoling presence till the very end.

Gabrielle Laurent, M.I.C., (Sr. Marie-de-Lorette) 1919-2013 – Quebec, Quebec

In 1919 Gabrielle was born, the third in a family of five children. When she opted to enter our Missionary Institute in 1941, her two other sisters Rita and Lorette welcomed her with joy. After her training years, Sr. Gabrielle was appointed to Totonicapan, Guatemala. Adult literacy, social activity in prisons, sharing life with the natives fulfilled her aspirations. Upon her return from Guatemala, she accepted to be secretary and receptionist for the Missionaries of Africa (then known as White Fathers) and also at the St. Charles Garnier Jesuit College in Quebec; her professionalism and discretion were appreciated. On October 27, 2013, after a long illness, the Lord invited Sr. Gabrielle to come sing the eternal Magnificat with her two siblings.



Ruth Bégin, M.I.C., (Sr. Rachel-Marie) 1918-2014 – Lévis, Quebec

Sr. Ruth's missionary life reflects the Gospel. It is during a retreat that she realized that the call to be a missionary had always been in her heart. In 1939, she entered our novitiate and in 1959 her vocation blossomed in Zambia, Africa. During ten years, she exhibited many talents—organized sessions in catechesis, taught domestic science, took up maintenance work and set up a cooperative. When she came back to her homeland she dedicated her time to young adolescents and others in need of help. During the last years of her life, she continued nurturing life and hope in the hearts of those who confided in her. Thank you, dear Sr. Ruth, your love was truly unconditional... like HIM.

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The World Within You

From the moment of your birth,
there is a world within you
no one has ever seen,
a voice no one has ever heard,
not even you.
As yet unknown
you are your own seer,
your own interpreter.
And so, with eyes and ears
grown sharp, for voice or sign,
listen well—not to these words

but to that inward voice,
that impulse beating in your heart
like a far wave.
Turn to that source, and you will find
what no one has ever found,
a ground within you
no one has ever seen,
a world beyond the limits
of your dream's horizon.

Paul Murray, *The Absent Fountain* (adapted)