

MIC MISSION NEWS

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To sow seeds of joy and hope

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TO THE
GREAT ONES

HONG KONG

A SILENT
AND LOVING
PRESENCE

IN FOCUS

*Be the Echo
of Silence*



MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS – 2014

JULY

We pray that the Holy Spirit may support the work of the laity who proclaim the Gospel in the poorest countries.

AUGUST

We pray for the Christians in Oceania, that they may joyfully announce the faith to all the people of that region.

SEPTEMBER

We pray that all Christians, inspired by the Word of God, may serve the poor and the suffering.

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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Canada



EDITORIAL

Know How to Listen

Why speak about listening when actually we should be ‘entering into silence’? Silence sends a message—it can be negative or positive. What sentiment is hidden when a person is silent? Sulkiness, anger, contempt, respect, wisdom, reflection, interiority, all these are modes of inner consciousness that are important to be listened to. The message needs to be clarified; I must understand what is going on within my own self in order to better understand the other. But that is not obvious, particularly in today’s noisy, loud, hyper active societies. So many words, so many statements are but resounding cymbals. Silence qualified as golden has become a very rare pearl.

To be silent or to take time for silence is to endorse a state full of wisdom that is not beyond our reach. More than ever noise has become a nuisance; thus the necessity of leaving the city life behind to find the countryside where fresh air not only regenerates the lungs but offers us the chance to have a spiritual experience and to reflect on the meaning of life with all its implications. Let us think: how many people are rejected because they are not heard? *How many heroes have been forgotten over the years?* (ref: Émilien’s text) How often the media presents us an array of world-wide unjust situations, yet the human family continues journeying with life’s wounded ones. The missionary heart looks from within to take-on the eyes of Jesus and see the world as He does, thus becoming the echo of the silent ones.

During His earthly life, Jesus often withdrew to a solitary place to pray to His Father and He invites us to do the same. Take time to be in touch with the indwelling Holy One, confide all the issues of your life and of the world to this Radiant Presence. The French author, Yves Duteuil tells us: *Silence is solitude, it is a mirror that reflects who I am, it is a pause during the turmoil.*¹ Being able to listen to the murmur of the Source deep within us, is it not a way to be one’s own therapist?

The articles in this issue offer you moments of inner reflection on the power of Life; savor some precious time with the authors—Sr. Agathe and Sr. Michelle who experienced the silence of being uprooted. Without any further delay let us go with André and meet our great friend—SILENCE.

Marie-Paule Sanfey, m.i.c.

¹ DUTEIL, Yves, *La petite musique du silence*, éd. Médiaspaul, 2014, p. 31

DÉLIA’S COLUMN

Mother Délia gave great importance to silence. She recommended “love of silence” the outer as well as the inner silence. She knew that such a disposition favors union with God, the knowledge of His Holy Will and charity towards one’s neighbor.

It is always in solitude that we learn to become useful and serve the interests of God and of others. (December 27, 1910)

When we are overcome by thousands of desires or assailed by further demands, let us think of the 30 years spent by our Divine Model in the solitude of Nazareth, teaching us the practice of silence. (October 26, 1911)

To live like Jesus is also to devote our whole life to humble tasks until the hour of Passion; it is praying always, in silence, far from the din of the world. (November 19, 1912)

Therefore, absolute silence... Watch your tongues—say only good things about others. If you think there is nothing good to say, say nothing. (July 15, 1921)

Tell those dear Children to nurture their interior life and to be silent in order to hear the Holy Spirit telling them, in the depth of their hearts, what they must do. (December 18, 1921)

Ask our divine Mother to help you love silence and solitude, so that you may become more intimately united to God. (July 12, 1922)

Remaining calm and collected facilitates our inner silence. To converse with the Lord will become sweeter and easier and the persons with whom you will have contact will sense your union with God; thus, you will be an apostle by way of example, the most fruitful apostolate. (April 30, 1927)

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BE THE ECHO OF SILENCE

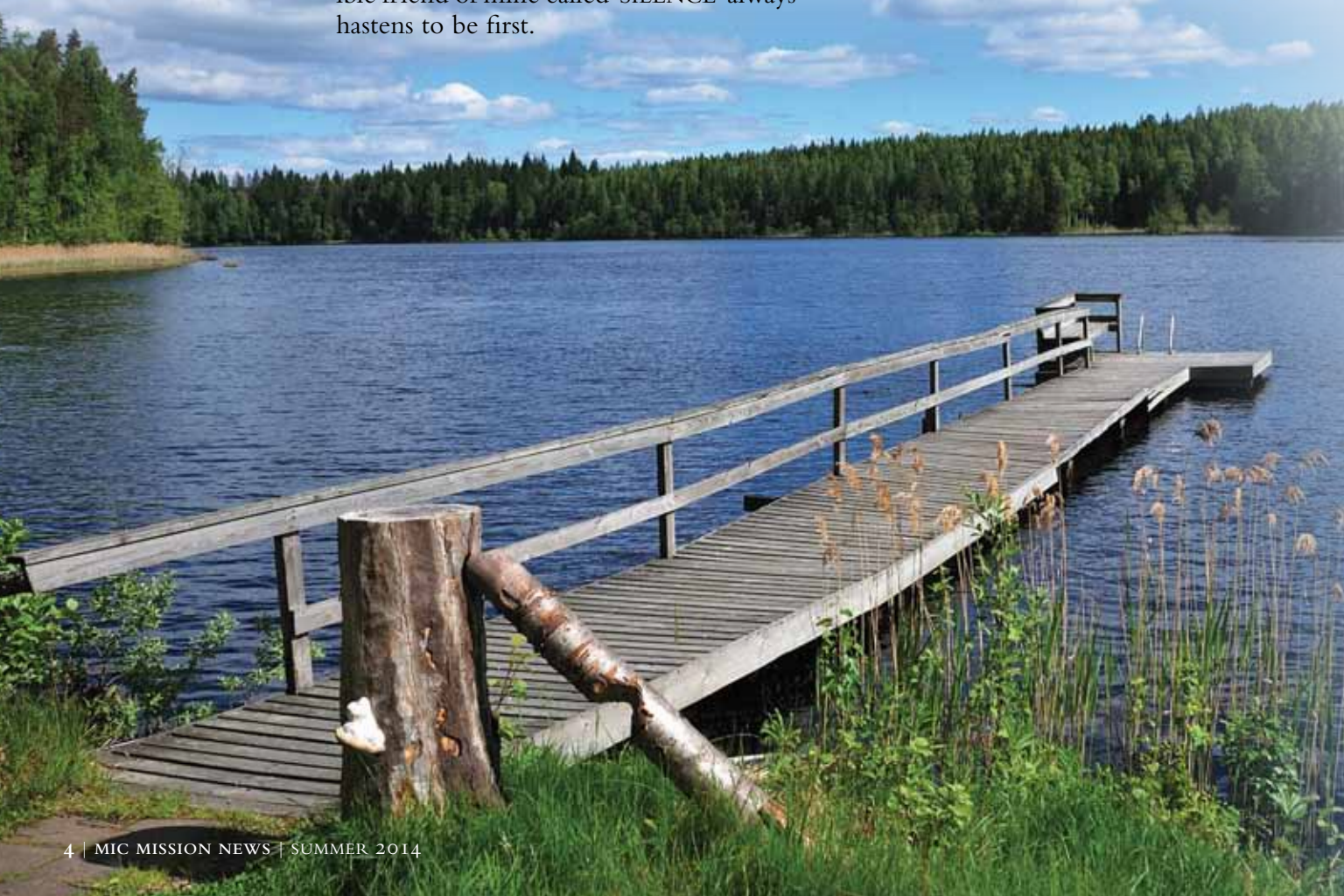


By André Gadbois

*In order to know what is real, we have to pause and reflect.
Silence constantly invites us to reflect.*

I had a special date with an incredible friend; we were to meet on the wharf of a small lake at the foot of a mountain. To get there I had to walk the narrow paths that zigzagged through the forest of pine trees. I walked at a brisk pace; my companions were the sun, long-tailed tits and nuthatches. I was high-spirited because I was looking forward to meeting this friend. Suddenly, a vast clearing appeared before my eyes and my buddy was already on the wharf waiting for me. I should have known because this incredible friend of mine called 'SILENCE' always hastens to be first.

To have access to that which is 'real' I needed to have a date with 'SILENCE'. Today's ferocious materialistic society keeps inventing means to conceal that which is genuine; it distracts us and keeps us away from the real, the durable. My friend 'SILENCE' welcomed me with open arms and empty hands. Without doubt the heart was true, was genuine. We sat at the end of the wharf and I listened... though no words were uttered. I should have known it would be that way because my friend is unassuming. However, 'SILENCE'



did breathe within my soul the warmth of a camp fire, lighting up my memory, my imagination, my thoughts, my observation, my attention, my hope, my compassion for all living beings. I curled up against my friend and went along with the rhythm; a communion was established, the universal 'we' became real, the Beauty of the world was sketched out. I thought of my beloved, of all the great writers and singers, of Jean Vanier, of Father Pierre, of all the less-fortunate students I had taught. Somewhat in a state of bliss, I felt that my friend 'SILENCE' was imbued with the Divine Presence who, in a Vocal Silence, spoke of Beauty to my heart and soul. It spoke the Word of Wisdom that we may be ONE, for all human beings on this earth fear the same dangers and nourish the same hope.

AN UNSPOKEN WORD

This unspoken Word succeeded in opening my mind and heart. That which is 'real' invited itself in and took its place between 'SILENCE' and me: Alexander who is in his teenage years lost interest and was picked up by the youth protection agency; Jacquot, a panhandler with crutches, is always in front of the Metro grocery store, no matter the weather; Jeanne whose memory is gradually failing is so sad; two neighbors have been humiliated because the parish priest refused to baptize their newborn infant; Denis, after five years of penitentiary was finally released but cannot find a job; problems within Ukraine and Syria; our forgotten elderly; the disaster at Lac Mégantic... Entertainment and show-biz often hide the 'real' man and woman; however, there is the true art, *the one without which our understanding of the world and of the human self would be extremely poor.*¹ Quite often, true art amazingly goes hand-in-hand with silence, with prayer and the universal Soul.

In the presence of Silence, I took from my backpack a piece of pita bread, a slice of cheese and a small wine bottle. I slowly savored every bite while contemplating the lovely blue lake. Then 'SILENCE' imbued of the Divine Presence, whispered in my heart the type of Servant whom God chose to bring about unity while respecting diversity: *He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory.* The words from Isaiah were recorded by Matthew (12:15.21). These are a few traits of Jesus of Nazareth, Servant of the Word of God. He constantly put forward His patience and prudence, His spirit of poverty and truthfulness, His kindness and forgiveness so as to be faithful to His project. At this point I thought of Nelson Mandela.

SILENCE HAS A LANGUAGE OF ITS OWN

I said to myself that I should be the echo of what 'SILENCE' taught me. Every day I must give hands and feet to my words. Flesh out what needs to be said and done. I also said to myself that I must come back more often to this place with my friend 'SILENCE' – why? So as to take a deep breath, renew the energy and keep the light burning within; that in itself is an art... it demands vigilance. The Servant of the Word, in Samaria and in Judea, knew that very well. 🌿

¹ BEAUCHEMIN, Jean-François, *Quelques pas dans l'éternité*, Québec Amérique 2013, p. 183

Emerging Mysteriously



By Agathe Durand, M.I.C.

During these summer months, let us pause awhile to express *silence* in words—its probing experience, its beauty, its necessity, its fruitfulness.

In Quebec, Canada, we will not quickly forget the long, rigorous winter of 2013–'14. The freezing weather and the thick carpet of snow covering the hardened soil of both city and countryside were part and parcel of the season; the cold solidity added to the stillness that lasted for weeks and months seemed too long, but then in mid-April signs of springtime appeared. Like a freshly painted tapestry, grasses began to rise up out of the earth, fronds of fern unfolded, bright faced tulips and daffodils heralded the advent of the season, brilliant colors returned to the land as if by miracle. Beauty unfolded in absolute silence. Today, I will make of this my parable.

FAITH IN ITS WINTER SEASON

Upon returning to my homeland, after twenty-five years of missionary work abroad, I felt there was something in Quebec which I would describe as a “winter of the Christian faith”. The familiar faith culture of my origins seemed to have disappeared under the cloak of shame, of indifference, and under the threat of being ridiculed had become icy cold. As I came in contact with this reality, I wanted to discover its inhospitable climate, equip myself to brave the bad weather and its biting cold. My missionary heart had to experience the silence of change which hopefully time and confidence would bring about fruitfulness. Would springtime appear in the long run?

It is within my inner self that I discovered my new “mission country”. In silent prayer and discreet commitment, it took quite a few seasons before stereotype Christianity and my version of ‘mission’ vanished from my way of thinking.

Gradually, I was able to perceive the Good News opening its freshly renewed buds which the seekers of God were desperately longing for.

PARTIALLY HIDDEN SUN

Almost everywhere I went, meeting people here and there, I noticed there was a spiritual search varied in color and texture. Behind the charismatic revival expressed in certain milieux, it took time for me to perceive the scars left by unsatisfactory past experiences. Though almost ignorant of their faith identity, the same quest for greater constructive values and authenticity was expressed.

GARDENING TIME

I had the privilege of accompanying some individuals who, in the name of their Christian faith, were preparing themselves for a mission abroad. I met young adults from various backgrounds; based upon their own personal searching, their outlook on religion, society, and mission, they felt attracted to a particular mission project. I think of Nathalie, Caroline, Frédérick, Émilie, Marie-Hélène and many others who wished to commit themselves, with openness and transcendence, for a better world. Others who were career people, either single or parents expressed their determination to share their blessings with those who are less fortunate. All were motivated in taking the time needed to prepare themselves for their mission; spirituality, psychology, anthropology, were all subjects necessary to deepen their calling and increase their knowledge of the cultures where they were destined to work.

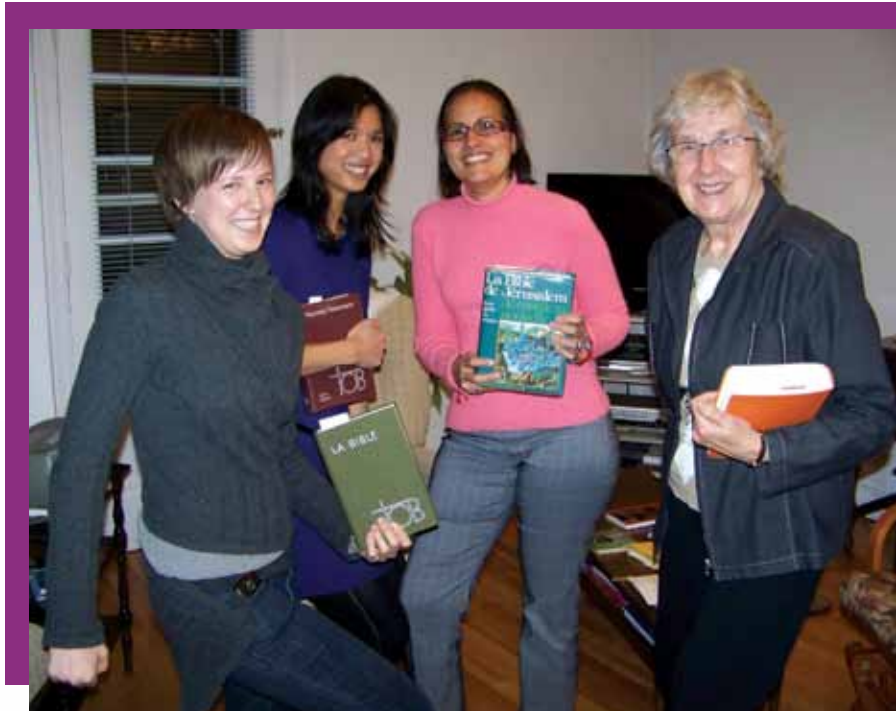
From year to year, people who have had a desire to share their potential and maximize it beyond boundaries registered in the *Intercommunity Missionary Training Program* (PIFM). During a period of two

years, they attended eight to ten week-end sessions per year. These mission-oriented participants were offered opportunities—to visit their inner landscape, to trust the stirring of life within, to allow spiritual spaciousness expand where universal values can be cultivated. In the Light of the Word of God and witnesses, they became aware that the inner self was awakening to a new dimension—seeds of growth were beginning to appear. Most of them left for their mission assignment, here or abroad. Aware of the effects of the multi-faceted phenomenon of globalization and its profits, they brought about a different dimension—a universal Love dotted with the Joy of the Gospel.

VISITING OTHER GARDENS

Furthermore, my life journey has led me to many other groups varying in age whereby the Christian faith is expressed differently. For the past twenty seven years numerous young adults and teenagers, some of whom have received little religious education per se, rally at the *World Youth Days* where they discover the splendor and awesomeness of the universal faith, where they experience bonds of friendship with fellow pilgrims, where barriers are non-existent and where celebrating the liturgy becomes meaningful.

There is also the ecumenical community of Taizé which leaves an impact on numerous young adults searching for God. To see them praying the psalms, sharing deeply about their struggles to live out their faith, pondering silently, respectfully taking part in rituals such as kissing the cross, these hope-filled signs bring about a life-transforming experience. In recent years many new religious communities have emerged. I visited at least four of them; for the most part, the members are both men and women and are considered as “mixed communities”; they bear the features of a new form of consecrated life. I was happy to express my solidarity with them and take part in some enriching conversations. Such diversity is awe-inspiring and I cannot help but marvel with gratitude.



Far right: The author accompanying young adults on their spiritual journey. – Photo Credit: MIC

GOD, THE FAITHFUL GARDENER

I no longer have any doubt that the human breeding ground is showing signs of authentic Christian vitality. Though different from the past, the new seeds of life are being tended and quietly taking shape. Evidently, this is not reported in the popular news media. But here again, the faith experience of a new generation and upcoming ones will lead them to new ways, via multi-medias, of proclaiming and radiating the Good News in a language adequate to the times.

Through this ‘group formation’ and ‘team animation’ experience I have come to realize God’s magnificent fidelity. His mysterious *silence* opens us to Jesus’ Gospel and to His creating power which holds the promise “I create a new heavens and a new earth” (2Peter 3:13; Is. 65: 17).

Henceforth, discovering the obvious echo of God’s silence in the heart of the faithful, we can be reassured that generations of missionary-disciples are in the making; they are sent and will continue being sent all over the world to serve and respond to the unlimited needs of today and tomorrow’s societies. ♡

A Tribute to the Great Ones



Whether young or old, great or small, known or unknown, heroes are everywhere in our world. ~



By Émilien Roscanu

In our own way, we can all be everyday heroes. Whether we be an astrophysicist who unveils the nature of the heavenly bodies, or a single mother who must combine work and family duties, or a missionary abroad who teaches young needy children, heroism is more common than we think. But what exactly is heroism? It is to exhibit great courage and bravery. Whether on a large or smaller scale, courage is within our capacity. Thanks to this virtue we become the echo of our beliefs, the echo of our deep convictions and our dearest values. Heroism has no boundaries and it does not calculate. However, when we are attentive it can be observed. Thanks to our inner incentive, our vibrations are captured by others and passed on; thus the echo is heard and is perpetuated.

THE FORGOTTEN ONES

We all know some everyday heroes; we could put a name to their faces. They are powerful examples of courage. A parent who gives the total gift of self for the livelihood of the family or a volunteer in a soup kitchen will not necessarily find their

names in history books, but they will leave behind a legacy that will have repercussions and will be transmitted from person to person, from generation to generation.

Other heroes are forgotten in time. We reward them with a medal and after we marginalize them. After the Chernobyl nuclear incident on April 26, 1986, apart from the emergency crews who tried to contain the fires on the roof of the turbine building and the radiation leaks, hundreds of millions of Russian volunteers were involved, battling to contain the contamination and avert a greater catastrophe. These heroic workers knew they were exposing themselves to high doses of radiation but they took the risk in order to protect their neighbors from an even greater explosion. For the common good they ventured their lives; they set aside their security, their health, they literally sacrificed themselves for others. These heroes probably changed the course of history and saved many human lives. Unfortunately, after receiving a medal for their courage, they were not to be mentioned again because they were the reminders of a fiasco in the Soviet

Union. However, people owed their gratitude not so much to their leaders but to all those brave volunteers who worked in the shadow of the powerful voices and assured them of their future. Those hundreds of millions of volunteers were the true heroes.

TWENTY-SEVEN YEARS FOR A MAN AN ETERNITY FOR HUMANITY

Some heroes whom we refuse to see or to hear, whom we want to suppress sometimes bounce back and emerge triumphantly. Nelson Mandela is an inspiring example of courage and bravery. During twenty-seven long years, he was imprisoned for his convictions, for his opposition to the apartheid system. Steadfast, he never disowned his ideals so as to avoid suffering. After being released from prison, Mandela was able to lead his people to freedom. He abolished apartheid in South Africa; he gave hope to numerous oppressed peoples worldwide. Nelson Mandela became the echo of his silent suffering people; he echoed the will for freedom which all the men, women and children of his country were hoping for. Mandela was a model leader and he will long be remembered for his inspiring leadership and relentless efforts to bring about freedom for his people. *Madiba*, a name he was given as a sign of both respect and affection, *you were and always will be a genuine guide, a genuine echo.*

YOUTH SUMMIT

Not far from where I work part-time during my years of studies, there is a building on René Lévesque Boulevard in Montreal where the Youth Summit Association has its headquarters. Every year, young Christians organize a bilingual event to which young people from across Canada are invited to participate. The goal is to take time for a week-end away from their busy lives, to deepen their faith, to be re-energized spiritually, and to experience a lively, dynamic Christian community. Every year, a new theme is proposed to help guide the participants towards a rediscovery of their Christian Mission and of experiencing the Person of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist.¹ This year, the theme of the Summit was *Ephphatha! Be opened!* (Mk 7:34) These young adults who come together every year hold a universal hope, the vision of a world imbued of peace and love. Each year, these young people sing with one voice and one heart—they are the echo of hope.

Whether young or old, great or small, known or unknown, heroes are everywhere in our world; they are alive, they are inspiring, they are legion. Nothing and no one will be a stumbling block while on their journey because they are the echo, the unwavering echo which is vibrant and eternal. ☺

¹ Internet: Youth Summit 2014

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Perhaps... and perhaps not... but that's o.k.

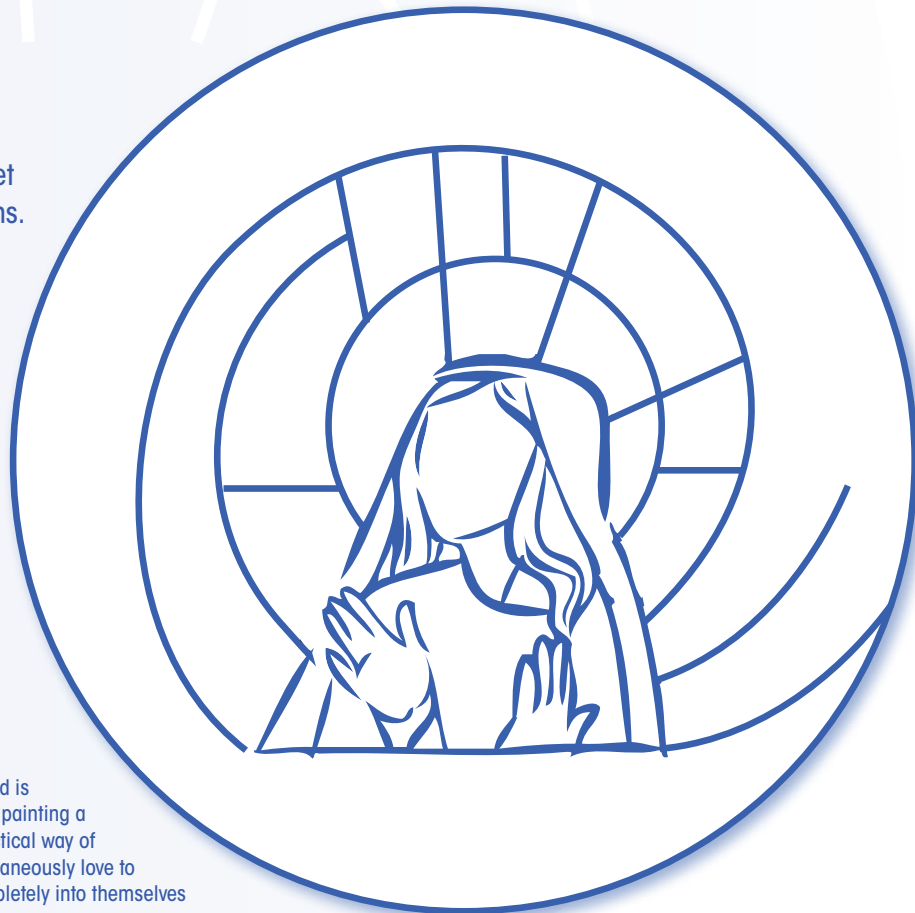
This space is especially for you. Find a quiet spot with a small table and coloring crayons. Keep in your mind the question: Who is Mary for me? As you keep this question in your mind, draw Mary's physical features.

Then around her, fill-in the pieces with colors or tiny sketches. In the larger circle write a message to Mary. Discover Mother Mary as you color this "mandala"¹ and hear her special whisper in your heart.

With Mary, have a happy summer!

(Mond'Ami – Pontifical Mission Society)

¹ The 'mandala' is the highest form of the unifying circle and is used in meditation around the world. The act of drawing or painting a 'mandala' requires concentration and this in itself is a practical way of centering-in, it brings the attention inwardly. Children spontaneously love to paint or color a 'mandala'; it's calming and they relax completely into themselves as they move towards their center.



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IN FOCUS

Be the Echo of Silence

The SEEDS That Made a DIFFERENCE



January 12, 2014, the Archdiocese of Vancouver, British Columbia, highlighted in a ceremony of Thanksgiving the end of 160 years of missionary work performed by two religious congregations: The Cenacle Sisters and the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. Archbishop Michael J. Miller, C.S.B., offered the Thanksgiving Mass at the Holy Rosary Cathedral and with gratitude mentioned the legacy the Sisters have left behind.





By Monette Ouellette, M.I.C.

THE BEGINNINGS

In May 1921, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception took up an important adventure. At that time, Msgr. T. Casey, bishop of the Diocese, approached Mother Délia Tétreault, our Foundress, asking her if she could send some Sisters to help the numerous Chinese immigrants who had come to work on the construction site of the Canadian Pacific Railway. Worn-out, sick, neglected by a society still exhibiting colonial attitudes, help was needed for these workers. The first four MIC Sisters that arrived in Vancouver had many challenges. Humbly and resolutely they set up their quarters in a poor neighborhood and began by visiting the population in homes and hospitals. Health and education issues were enormous. At first, they set up a small dispensary in their own little house. The following year, in 1922 a center was opened on Keefer Street and was known as the “*Oriental Home*” for the Chinese, mostly single men suffering from various illnesses. On the same street another building was rented, it served as school and eighty seven young Chinese came to study. Two years later, the demands were so great that the Sisters moved to a larger house on Campbell Avenue;

then a little further on Albert Street, two dispensaries were set up. In 1927, *Saint Joseph Oriental Hospital*, the first of its kind, opened its doors and in 1932 a section of the Hospital was reserved for treating patients with tuberculosis.

AUDACIOUS WOMEN

To meet the spiritual needs of the Oriental immigrants which were expressed in a variety of ways, Mother Délia had the idea of calling upon a young Chinese woman from Canton, China. That was a major challenge because of the *Chinese Immigration Act* passed by the Parliament of Canada in 1928, banning most forms of Chinese Immigrants to Canada. Due to her courage and determination, her request was finally accepted by the Canadian Government and in April 1936, Miss Teresa Fung, who turned twenty-one while on the Pacific Ocean, arrived by cargo ship in Vancouver, British Columbia. With her missionary heart, her eager desire to serve, and her firm faith in God, Teresa began the work for which she had come. During thirteen years, she offered her exceptional, uninterrupted help, and she was united in heart and spirit to the MIC Sisters in Vancouver. Teresa communicated

with all the Chinese communities that had settled on the West Coast of Canada and the United States; her aim was to collect funds for a future general hospital specifically for the Chinese population. In 1946, her dream came true: *Mount Saint Joseph Hospital* on Prince Edward Street was built. What a feat that was! In 1949, Teresa was accepted at our Novitiate, located at Pont-Viau, Laval, Quebec. Once her training was over, she returned to Vancouver and lived there for most of her long life.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the course of the ninety-two years that followed the initial call, approximately one hundred Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception came to work in Vancouver. Most of them served either within the framework of a humble dispensary, or a general hospital; each one according to her talents and qualifications.

Others, such as Sr. Émilienne Vézina, M.I.C. responded to very specific needs expressed by the population; in the seventies, they established a house for women at risk, offering them support and protection from violence. In the eighties, Sr. Noëlla Brisson, M.I.C. worked as chaplain in

detention facilities while Sr. Adeline Mead, M.I.C. was a missionary on the road. In the name of the Holy Childhood Association she visited schools and parishes in order to speak to the children and adults about their brothers and sisters around the world. In 1993, Pope John-Paul II awarded the “Bene Merenti” medal to Sr. Mead, acknowledging her missionary work in Western Canada; it was presented to her by the Diocese of Vancouver, B.C.

THE YOUNGER GENERATION OF MIC SISTERS

It is said that every new generation is different from the one that preceded it. Over the last one hundred years many changes in the larger society have brought about unprecedented challenges. Aware that today’s families come in hundreds of shapes and sizes, that family life has become more stressful, the younger generation of Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception has turned its attention to the immigrant families who face many issues complicating their adjustment to the new host culture.

At the farewell luncheon, Father James Comey stated that in 1994 he hired Sr. Helen Hong, M.I.C. to minister to the Chinese families of Corpus Christi Parish. Sister worked with all the Chinese generations: the elderly who felt isolated in their new surroundings, the couples, and the children—all were important to her and Sister’s approach has had a lasting effect in the parish.

Mr. Eric Liu who is Board of Director of Catholic Family Services and Director for the Canadian Chinese Marriage Encounter Association (CCMEA) credited the Catholic Family Services counselor, Sr. Cecilia Hong, M.I.C. with helping establish CCMEA’s relationship with the Archdiocese. Sister gave workshops in the light of: spousal relations and communications, individual spousal counseling, social and spiritual growth. Mastering the Chinese language, Mandarin and Cantonese, Sister Cecilia was able to understand the mind and the difficulties of Chinese couples and of the newly arrived immigrants.

Mrs. Diane Doyle, CEO of Providence Health Care which operates seven facilities, one of which is Mount Saint Joseph Hospital, mentioned that in 2004 Sr. Marie-Vie Chua, M.I.C. arrived on the scene and offered her services. Thus, she became a member of the Board of Providence Health Care, she assisted the fund raising arm of the organization’s Tapestry Foundation, she visited the patients and was a liaison with the patients’ families; Sister Marie-Vie was key in meeting the multi-faith needs of the patients.

During this occasion, the acknowledgments expressed reminded the audience, predominantly Chinese, that the two religious Congregations had served the Church and society, each according to their charisma: The Cenacle Sisters had a special way of reaching out to women, of being committed to the ecumenism movement and the environment; the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception had an openness of mind and heart and a respect for all peoples from other cultures. Together, and for many years, these two Congregations taught us how to be Church in a different fashion.

In his homily, Archbishop Michael Miller, C.S.B. mentioned that the presence of the two Congregations in the Archdiocese has been an act of great Blessing and their departure is a true sadness. He added, *their joyful and gentle witnessing of a consecrated life lived faithfully, the fruits of their apostolic works of charity and justice will be missed. Sisters of both Congregations have touched the lives of many people and their legacy will live on since goodness never disappears.* ☺

PHOTOS:

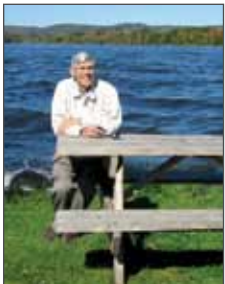
- ¹ (left to right) Srs. Monette Ouellette, Marie-Paule Sanfaçon (Provincial Superior), Cecilia Hong, Archbishop Michael Miller, OSB, at the farewell ceremony; *Photo Credit: Mr. Raymond Cheung*
 - ² 1st MIC house, ‘Oriental Home’ Keefer St. – Vancouver, B.C., 1921;
 - ³ 2nd MIC house, with adjoining oriental hospital, Campbell Ave. – Vancouver, B.C., 1925;
 - ⁴ Mount St. Joseph Hospital, Prince Edward St. – Vancouver, B.C., 1946;
 - ⁵ Sr. Margaret Farrell, Sr. Jeannette Bouchard, Sr. Marthe Giguère, Sr. Berthe Surprenant with Chinese patients on Campbell St.;
 - ⁶ Sr. Teresa Fung, M.I.C., with some Chinese children;
 - ⁷ Sr. Adeline Mead, M.I.C., with Drina Ly Van – high school graduate, 1998;
- Photos Credit: MIC Archives*



THE ECHO OF MY SILENCES

1

As a mailman, Pierre Lacroix walked the streets for thirty-three years. He soaked up the sunshine, the rain, the snow, felt the wind and the breeze, he breathed the fresh air. His work required concentration, but he loved the solitude and the freedom as well as the silence that surrounded him.



By Pierre Lacroix

In my childhood years, my parents frequently went to Church and I liked going with them—there, I could find quietness and be still. As a young adult, I would get on my bike and cycle to the Botanical Garden where I could enjoy peace and silence. I also moved away from the city to the countryside where I could find tranquility. Silence always attracted me.

SILENCE AND MY FAMILY LIFE

I was not talkative but I married a loquacious woman. Of course, at the beginning she found I was an introvert. Since we truly wanted our marriage to be a success, we took sessions together and I sincerely believe that silence also helped us to grow as a couple; it opened my ears so that I could welcome all that my spouse, Claudette, had to tell me.

This wife of mine is a marvelous woman... she understands my need of silence and even goes as far as wearing

earphones to prevent the radio from disturbing my meditation. We are a sports oriented family. With Claudette and my two sons, I went swimming, bicycling, and skiing. We love to breathe-in the fresh air of the wide open spaces; we admire the beauty and peace that is offered to us so generously. As my sons became older, they stopped travelling with us, but Claudette and I continue our journey.

SILENT MEDITATION

In September 2002, I retired from work and joined the World Community for Christian Meditation which was initiated by John Main, O.S.B. one of the most influential, spiritual teachers of our age. With much perseverance, I consecrate two twenty minute periods a day for silent meditation. The mantra, “Maranatha” which means “Come, Lord Jesus” is repeated slowly; this simple word resonates in the silence of my heart, prevents my

mind from wandering with distractions, I remain centered on Jesus. The practice of daily meditation may take some time to develop, but with perseverance abundant fruits are gathered.

SILENCE—WELCOMING GOD'S PRESENCE

Through the transparency of my prayer I become aware of God's presence here and now; the experience brings me PEACE, CALMNESS, SERENITY. Spiritually awakened, conscious and attentive to God's love, I stand in wonder before His Presence. In this total self-giving to God, I have become more faithful to my commitments and I realize that my spirit and heart have become more open not only to God's Word but also to my relationship with others. Deeply touched by the clarity of the Message, I marvel and I am transformed. Maurice Zundel, a doctor of philosophy, a mystic, a poet and a liturgist, once stated that left to ourselves we cannot achieve an authentic inner life without constantly coming back to the indwelling silence. By way of silence I receive strength, energy, and wisdom to adjust my life; learning and welcoming God's Love enriches my whole being. I also seek inspiration and spiritual nourishment from great writers such as Father Yves Girard, a Cistercian monk.

SILENCE—AN AWAKENING

I love being awake and vigilant. This truly simplifies my life; it helps me to discover and do God's will. Before, I used to complicate my life with all kinds of reasoning or arguments. In silence, I feel welcomed with my story, my limitations. I feel gratified and I have the desire to give to others and be a witness of God's goodness. At the deepest level of my being I am in touch with my authentic self. About meditation, John Main once wrote, *"Be opened unconditionally to the gift He gives you, that is the gift of your own identity. It is towards this tremendous love that silence is leading you to."*

Along with retirement, the golden age, and time, I am called everyday to 'let go' to

be detached, to go without. Christian meditation helps me to accept the events of life which at times can be painful, for example, health issues. Through meditation my attitude and behavior have become more humane; compassion has become a part of me. Silence has also drawn me closer to my grand children, more present to my children's lives and their choices.

SILENCE—A MISSION

If, egoistically, I were to isolate myself to assure my comfort and tranquility then what value would be my silence? If in my silence, I experience the Divine Presence in all its Beauty and Goodness, then my words, my actions, and my smiles become "source of life" for all those who cross my path. Yes, I feel my duty is to radiate the Divine Light in my own milieu. I always ask the Lord to precede me wherever I go and that a spark of His Joy be left in the lives of the people I meet. Since God is a God of relationship I now give great importance to the persons who come my way.



PHOTOS:

- ¹ Photo Credit: Elenathewise – Deposit Photos
 - ² The Confederation Trail PEI;
 - ³ Pierre and his family;
- Photos Credit: C. Cossette

Silence has transformed me
into a Life-giving person. ~

Drawing from the source of silence inspires me to lead others. Every Wednesday, I animate a small group of people who desire to practice the Christian meditation. Then, at our parish Church, I collaborate in preparing adults who seek to celebrate the sacrament of Confirmation.

Silence has transformed me into a Life-giving person. It is the most beautiful thing that could have happened to me in my life. I feel eternally young, witnessing hope in the Light of God. ~



A SILENT AND LOVING PRESENCE

Hong Kong is a city situated on China's Continental south coast. In 1842, a treaty was signed with Britain—Hong Kong thus became a British colony for a period of 155 years. In 1997, a transfer of sovereignty over Hong Kong took place. This 'handover' marked the end of British rule in Hong Kong. The city became the first special administrative region of the People's Republic of China under the principle of "one country, two systems". Its population of 7,100,000, with approximately 6,405 hab/km², gives the impression the city is held in a clamp. Everything circulates around the economy which is known as the most liberal in the world. Hong Kong is known as the world's leading international financial and commercial centers.

By Michelle Payette, M.I.C.

AN UNEXPECTED DESTINATION

Our missionary life sometimes takes us by surprise. Having worked many years in South America and then as Secretary General of our Institute for a few more years, I was at a point where I felt a change was needed. Blessed with good health, physical energy, plus a good dose of experience and faith, all the elements were present to begin a new project. In a spirit of prayer and discernment this need for change was gradually transformed into a profound desire to do God's Will.

My third mandate was ending when I asked for an assignment 'ad extra'. I was signing a blank check—when, how, where... *Go to the land I will show you.*¹ The lapse of time between the request and

the response taught me silence, patience, and readiness.

The "God of surprise" answers our requests but sometimes in a very original fashion. Our Superior General, Sr. Louise Denis, had just returned from Asia when she asked me if I would be interested in going to Hong Kong. My first reaction was one of surprise... Me, in Hong Kong!... I don't speak Chinese, my English is limited, I am not a teacher. I know South America and Cuba, but nothing of Asia. All the elements "against" appeared in my mind, then, the breath of the Spirit took over—I accepted to let go; God's wisdom is sometimes folly to the human judgment... *Walk in my Presence.*² I decided to peacefully live through this project, to have confidence

¹ Ge 12:1

² Ge 17:1

³ MIC Mission News, Vol. 32, Jan-March 2005, p. 14

⁴ LOEW, Jacques, *La prière à l'école des grands priants*, Fayard Publisher, 1975

and be open to what may come. I left for Hong Kong thinking I was very privileged to have such an opportunity after forty-seven years of religious missionary life.

AN INNER UPROOTING

As I got off the plane, a complete change of scenery appeared before my eyes. The massive concrete buildings all around gave me the impression of being in a “concrete jungle”.³ Everything seemed to be disproportionate! It’s as if the streets were piled one on top of the other. My first contact with people obliged me to step back because the Cantonese language has no similar roots with the French. I tried to memorize “hello” and “thank you” in Cantonese, but every time I said the words, the intonation was incorrect. All my points of reference were different: the food, learning how to eat with chopsticks, discovering the way people greet each other, adapting to a very humid climate, and to the culture itself. I had to learn everything.

Gradually, I became conscious of the fundamental changes I had to go through in this new milieu. Previously, as secretary general, I had to be productive; the team I worked with was well qualified; I could express my opinion and participate in various projects. The ‘shooting star’ that I had been suddenly became a ‘discreet spark’ without much glow. The adaptation phase obliged me to be humble and poor, to be a silent and loving presence. My observation of people and events became more insightful. I tried to understand the sign and heart language. Psalm 131 (130) expresses well the state of my soul: *My heart is not proud, O Lord, my eyes are not haughty; I do not concern myself with great matters or things too wonderful for me. But I have stilled and quieted my soul; like a weaned child with its mother, like a weaned child is my soul within me.*

Délia Tétreault, our Foundress, invited her Sisters to live a recollected life in such a manner that the inner beauty would radiate externally. Thus, silence becomes a springboard for an authentic communication. Letting go and trusting with profound faith is an experience that is essential in my



Letting go and trusting with profound faith
is an experience that is essential
in my life. ~

life, as well as in the life of all individuals who commit themselves to a missionary adventure. Above and beyond all the differences concerning the frontiers of language, culture, climate, we are called to live the universal fraternity, to recognize that we are all brothers and sisters in Christ.

THE GRAND DETOUR

In order to respond to the commitments I wish to take on, I must first learn to put away the barriers of fear, thus allowing me to communicate, the best I can, the love of my Missionary Institute, her Foundress, her history and her mission in the Universal Church of today. With enthusiasm I look forward to this project which is life-giving.

Some years ago I read a statement from the French author Jacques Loew⁴—*Jesus’ whole life was to accept the detours and contours of His Father’s Will.* This grand “detour” which took me to Hong Kong gives me real happiness. In silence, I love to pray a verse from the prophet Micah: *He showed you what is good; and what does the Lord require of you? To act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God.*

Thank you for journeying with me in discovering and loving my new mission.

PHOTOS:

¹ Photo taken at ‘The Peak’... highest point in Hong Kong;

² Chinese New Year – Srs. Michelle & Rossetti Lau, M.I.C. with a former student;

Photos Credit:

Eden Tabudlong, M.I.C.

An Intergenerational Meeting

Originally from Cuba, Sr. Jacqueline dynamically takes part in the missionary movement of the Church. At the parish of St. Gregory the Great, located on Marquette Street in Montreal, Quebec, she is called upon to journey with teenagers, young adults and newly arrived immigrants. Parents invite Sr. Jacqueline to accompany the youth during their years of searching. It is with all her heart and creativity that she organized an activity for “parents-teenagers”.



By Jacqueline Brage, M.I.C. **AN INVITATION**

For over fifty years in mission countries, they worked laboriously with very little means, they instilled the Spirit of Jesus in the hearts of people and now the Sisters come back to their origins where their religious missionary life began. The place where their training took place—the MIC novitiate located at Pont-Viau, Laval, Quebec now welcomes them back for a well deserved rest. There are many MIC missionaries here.

Recently, a group of seven young people between the ages of 14 and 18 from St. Gregory the Great parish had an enriching experience with the missionaries. These youngsters who are high-school and college students were all born in Canada but their parents were immigrants from Guatemala, Mexico, and other Latin American countries except one mother who is a Quebecer.

When the proposal of visiting the elderly Sisters came up, the seven teenagers

expressed great interest and enthusiasm. The fact that geographically they are miles away from their grandparents, they feel the importance of having a grandmother or grandfather and they have a desire to be closer to them. In Latin American countries, the elderly have a central place in the family circle—this is a cherished value which is passed on to the children at a very early age.

PREPARING AN ACTIVITY FULL OF TENDERNESS

One of the girls, Jennifer, suggested to the group that the visiting date should be on Valentine's day, a meaningful day to celebrate love and friendship. *We want to offer the elderly Sisters our presence and our tenderness*, they said unanimously. The date was fixed on Saturday, February 15, 2014. When I saw the enthusiasm this proposal brought about, I was very happy and thankful, praising the Lord for this initiative.

The group had the intention of presenting a ‘puppet show’ that would thrill the young at heart. Unfortunately, the main actress who had to work on that day was unable to find a substitute. The disappointment was obvious; what to do next? I thought the group would decline the invitation, but to my big surprise they elaborated a plan B without my knowing. They creatively thought of performing a ‘play’; the theme included the gift of self, cooperation, compassion, authentic love. I was dumbfounded and admired these young people who were decided to share their joy and enthusiasm.

MOTHER DÉLIA'S SPECIAL PLACE

Once our love project was ready, the person responsible for the residence at Pont-Viau was contacted; having received her approval we then took the road to our planned destination. We had the joy of visiting an area where Mother Délia's special marble-like tomb contains her remains which were exhumed in October 1983. Her heart is exposed in a bronze reliquary encased within a wall, there are small relics of her clothing, and images of her with a prayer behind. In front of the tomb there is a lovely symbol carved in bronze which depicts the MIC Sisters' spirituality of Thanksgiving. The stained-glass window behind the tomb illustrates Mother Délia's dream—a large field of wheat is seen, suddenly all the wheat spikelets changed into heads of children from all around the world. Inspiring and conducive to prayer, we all knelt and prayed together.

THE MISSION GALLERY

We then took a glance at the main entrance hall, the library, and the dining room where the Sisters take their meals. As we walked the long hallway leading to the Sisters' quarters, we admired the many pieces of art-work which reveal the soul of the mission countries where the Sisters have served for so many years. The most striking among others were—various hand paintings on silk or velvet fabrics from Japan and Taiwan; ebony sculptures from Zambia, very colorful paintings from Haiti, magnifi-

cent pieces from China, the first country where we began our mission works; from Madagascar and the Philippines there are photos depicting their respective cultures.

WE ARE WELCOMED

As we arrived a heart-felt welcome was expressed, then after introducing the group members, the teenagers set the stage, acted out their play entitled: “I LOVE YOU”—it was a success! Following the performance came the sharing; for both groups, the young and the elderly, the dialogue was most enriching. Someone once said, *life calls forth life*—on that day this fact was achieved one hundred percent.

One of the immigrant parents who came with the children said that when he arrived in Quebec he found it difficult to be unable to speak with the people. Then he added: *When you came to our country, even though you did not speak our language at first, your actions and your eyes revealed the love that you had in your heart for us and this is so even today.*

Daniel was pleasantly surprised; he never thought this visit could be so interesting and enriching. In one of the small chapels, parents and adolescents paused for some time and prayed to God in gratitude for His wonderful love.

The following Sunday, the young people evaluated their visit with the Sisters. The inter-generational meeting with the elderly nuns was for them an experience they will long remember. Through dialogue, the youngsters discovered the real meaning of a lifelong commitment, of perseverance in times of difficulties, of joy in responding to the Lord's callings, and of being enriched by a life dedicated to others. The group enjoyed their experience and one day would like to come back to visit their newly-found friends. ☺



PHOTOS:

¹ TEENAGERS: Daniel, Jennifer, Maria Alexandra, Jacqueline, Kimberley, Méliza

PARENTS: Petronilo, Carmen, Patricia and Maria;

Photo Credit: J. Brage, M.I.C.

² Mother Délia's

marble-like tomb;

Photo Credit: T. Lortie, M.I.C.

³ Gallery of handcrafted objects and paintings from mission countries;

Photo Credit:

M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

MISSION—PASSION FOR JESUS AND HIS PEOPLE



2013-2014 MISSIONARY DEPARTURES

In his first Apostolic Exhortation: *The Joy of the Gospel*¹, Pope Francis defines the missionary as follows: *A true missionary, who never ceases to be a disciple, knows that Jesus walks with him, speaks to him, breathes with him, works with him. He senses Jesus alive with him in the midst of the missionary enterprise. Unless we see him present at the heart of our missionary commitment, our enthusiasm soon wanes and we are no longer sure of what it is that we are handing on; we lack vigor and passion. A person who is not convinced, who is not enthused, certain, and in love will convince nobody.*²

By these modest commitments, performed in the name of our Faith, we hope to be witnesses of the Good News and bring about Christian justice in the lives of those peoples who are oppressed and deprived of their freedom. Thus, as Pope Francis tells us - by so doing we will know the missionary joy of sharing life with God's faithful people as we strive to light a fire in the heart of the world.³ [¹⁻²⁻³ POPE FRANCIS, Apostolic Exhortation, *The Joy of the Gospel* – Mediaspaul, 2013 – Chapter 5, No. 266, 271]

DEPARTURES TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS



Sr. Isabel Ayala, from Bolivia;

Sr. Aida Sabandal, from the Philippines



– Both Sisters have had a great experience with the younger MIC Sisters in their respective countries. They are currently members of the formation team at our international Scholasticate in Montreal, Quebec.



Sr. Michelle Payette, from Granby, Quebec – She has been missioned to Hong Kong where she supervises the French Club begun by the students of Good Hope Secondary School. At the primary level and kindergarten, Sr. Michelle animates the prayer and presents life-facts of Délia Tétreault's journey.



Sr. Marie-Colette Razanabahoaka, from Madagascar – In her country, Sister accompanied the aspirants who had an interest in our Community. She is currently a member of the formation team at our interprovincial Novitiate in Bolivia.



Sr. Marie-Colette Raeliarisoa, from Madagascar – After serving as Superior Provincial in her native country, Sister is now in Pucallpa, Peru. She is currently learning Spanish, gradually discovering the culture of the Peruvian people and taking part in local church events.



Sr. Monique Fortier, from Sherbrooke, Quebec – Sister left for Peru, the country where she received her religious training. She now shares her expertise in accounting with the provincial bursar in Lima, Peru.



Sr. Venus Monestime, from Haiti – For many years, Sr. Venus was in charge of the novices' religious formation and was also involved in vocational pastoral ministry in Haiti. Today, she is a member of the novitiate's MIC interprovincial team in Cochabamba, Bolivia.

AFTER A BRIEF FURLOUGH IN THEIR HOMELAND, THEY HAVE RETURNED TO THEIR MISSION COUNTRY



Sr. Yvonne Ayotte, from New Liskeard, Ontario – After many years of active involvement in Africa, Sister now serves as provincial secretary in Malawi.



Sr. Huguette Pigeon, from Laverlochère, Quebec – Having been provincial bursar for many years in Malawi, Sr. Huguette now serves within the field of her competence at Chipata, Zambia.



Sr. Louise Lefebvre, from Granby, Quebec – Sister has returned to Malawi where she offers guidance and responds to the needs at our new primary and kindergarten schools; she also oversees the administration of these two schools.



Sr. Carmen Ménard, from Côteau-du-Lac, Quebec – The human and spiritual formation of adults has always been Sister Carmen's field of interest; she has returned to Napo, Peru where she continues working with the local people.



Sr. Murielle Dubé, from Notre-Dame-du-Bon-Conseil, Quebec – Sister Murielle returned to Cochabamba, Bolivia where she directs the *Institute of Rural Education*; here, young girls from remote villages come to complete their studies and specialize in an area of interest in view of their future career.



Sr. Pauline Brodeur, from Ste-Théodosie, Quebec – For many years, Sister has been very active and involved in parish ministry at Mzuzu, Malawi. She has returned and continues reaching out to the local people in the remotest areas of the region.



Sr. Ghislaine Parent, from Drummondville, Quebec – Sister is currently provincial secretary in Tokyo, Japan; having more than thirty years experience in this country she is well adapted to the Japanese culture and is able to reach out to women living at the Saalaa shelter where counseling is provided.



Sr. Jacqueline Vachet, from Nomingue, Quebec – Twenty-five years as directress of the Kanyanga Health Care Center in Zambia, Sr. Jacqueline returned with enthusiasm; under her aegis the Center keeps expanding.

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



Francine Ravaorilala, M.I.C., 1953-2014 – Antsirabe, Antananarivo, Madagascar

“Woman of the Islands, with an open and listening heart, with deep convictions, Sister Francine was able to point towards the way of the Beatitudes.” This testimonial reveals the missionary zeal of the one who left us prematurely at the age of sixty. Our novitiate at Antsirabe, Madagascar welcomed Francine in 1984; she was deeply committed to the Church and her Lord. She served in her country, in Quebec as General Assistant, and at Mbouo, Cameroon; her multiple occupations were always for the poor. Her interest in research and the internet were most valuable; her co-workers were most grateful with the information she was able to provide. Sister Francine, may your missionary heart continue being present among us and foster many vocations.

Marie Roy, M.I.C. (Sr. Joseph Marie) 1919-2014 – Pain Court, Ontario

In 1936, our Novitiate welcomed Sister Marie. Though she was the only daughter, her parents respected her choice. Soon after her religious profession, she travelled the roads of Quebec to promote our mission magazine: The Precursor/MIC Mission News. She also visited many schools, giving talks to the students about children around the world who did not know Jesus. Bilingual, Sister was able to reach out to the English-speaking families. Blessed with a musical talent and teaching aptitude, she taught music, singing, and English during many years; she was also parish organist for thirty-five years. Sister Marie, your bright smile revealed the joy and the spirit of thanksgiving that dwelt in your heart. Having served your Lord for seventy-five years, you are now rejoicing in God.



Lucienne Beauchemin, M.I.C. (Sr. Saint-Ernest) 1910-2014 – Roxton Falls, Quebec

My home, Jesus, it is You, Your home, Jesus, it is I. This leitmotif sustained Sr. Lucienne's missionary life in Quebec, her native land. Her frail health required long rest periods as well as lengthy restorative convalescence; during that time the contemplative dimension of her being gave her inner strength. Sister would often say: My room is my little chapel. Such a sedentary lifestyle favored Lucienne's artistic talent which she expressed in canvass painting. In 1929, she entered our Novitiate; on February 11, 2014 she celebrated her 75th anniversary of religious life. At the age of 103, Sr. Lucienne entered the Father's dwelling place where she will celebrate her eternal Magnificat.

Lise Robert, M.I.C. (Sr. Robert-Marie) 1932-2014 – Acton Vale, Quebec

Our Sister Lise was flying at the speed of light; her inner freedom and love of God prompted her to commit herself with unyielding enthusiasm. In 1953, she entered our Novitiate; ten years later she was assigned to Malawi, Africa. At Mzimba, Sr. Lise organized the much needed “Mobile Health Unit”. Travelling to the remotest areas, she set-up health centers for the populations deprived of medical help. Later, in Montreal, Sister worked at the Diocesan Family Office; her many life experiences together with a counseling degree, enriched the lives of many. Prayer and daily Mass energized her physically and spiritually. Dynamically reaching out to those in need marked her mission until her ultimate Flight on February 26, 2014. May you now rest in Peace, dear Sister Lise.



Germaine Laflamme, M.I.C. (Sr. Saint Germaine) 1918-2014 – St-Léon-de-Standon, Quebec

Being the fifteenth child in the family, Germaine had a privileged place among her siblings. However, her education opened her heart and mind to others and she even dreamt, at a very young age, of becoming a nun. At sixteen, she made an attempt with the Sisters of Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Ten years later, in 1944, our Novitiate welcomed a mature young woman, happy and ready to leave for the missions. In 1950 Sister Germaine's dream came true in Haiti. As a teacher and principal of a school, she had outstanding success and she always served with a smile and thoughtfulness. With you dear Sister, we now give praise to God who is our Eternal Joy.

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A BLESSING FOR PRESENCE

May you awaken to the mystery
of being here and now;
enter the quiet immensity
of your own inward presence.

May you have joy and peace
in the inner temple of your Being.

May you respond to the call of
your gift and find the courage
to follow its path.

May the warmth of your heart
keep your presence aflame;
and your outer dignity mirror
the inner dignity of your soul.

May you take time to celebrate
the quiet miracles that seek
no attention.

May you be consoled in the
secret symmetry of your soul.

May you experience each day
as a sacred gift woven around
the heart of wonder.

John O'Donohue

