

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 43, Nº 1 | JANUARY • FEBRUARY • MARCH 2016 | \$5.00



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CANADA

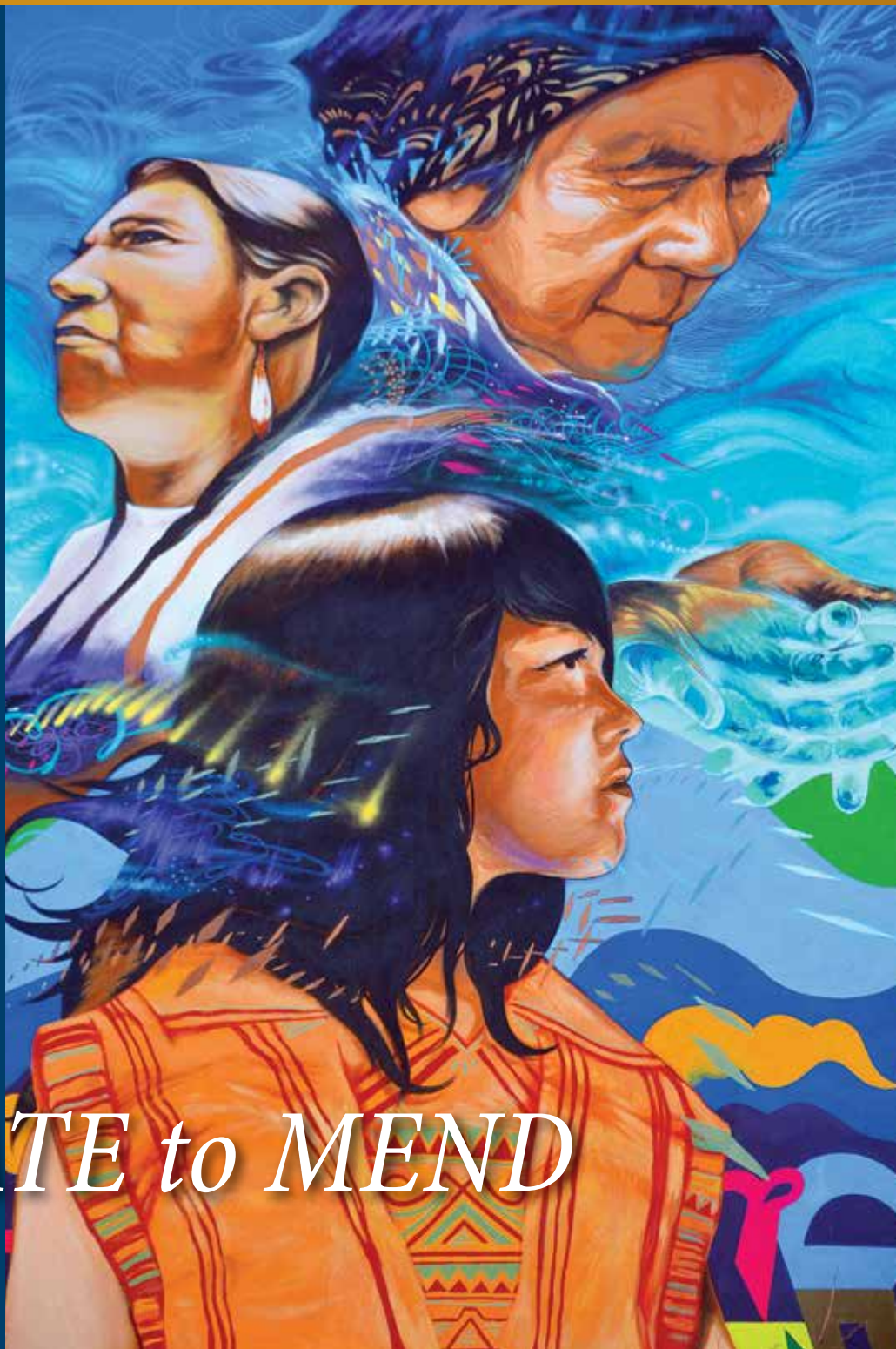
TRUTH
FOLLOWED BY
RECONCILIATION

BOLIVIA / PERU

PASSION FOR
CHRIST'S MISSION

IN FOCUS

MEDITATE to MEND



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS – 2016

JANUARY

For Christian Unity

Through dialogue, fraternal charity and with the grace of the Holy Spirit, may Christians overcome all divisions.

FEBRUARY

For Asia

That opportunities may increase for dialogue and encounter between the Christian faith and the peoples of Asia.

MARCH

For Persecuted Christians

That those Christians who, on account of their faith, are discriminated against or are being persecuted, may remain strong and faithful to the Gospel, thanks to the incessant prayer of the Church.

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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MIC Mission News

*Mission magazine published
by the Missionary Sisters of the
Immaculate Conception*

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Cover: Street art in Montreal,
Canada (2015) © Meunier /
Shutterstock

Tax Receipt

Registration Number:
NE 89346 9585 RR0001
Presse missionnaire MIC

Legal Deposits

Bibliothèque nationale
du Québec – National Library of
Canada – ISSN 0315-9655

Subscription rates (4 issues)

Canada: 1 year – \$15 / 2 years – \$25
U.S.A.: 1 year – US\$20
International: 1 year – C\$30
Single issue: \$5 (plus mailing costs)

*Member of the Catholic &
Ecumenical Media Association*

We acknowledge the financial support of
the Government of Canada Periodical Fund
of the Department of Canadian Heritage. /
Nous remercions l'appui financier du
gouvernement du Canada par l'entremise
du Fonds du Canada pour les périodiques,
qui relève du Patrimoine canadien.

Canada

STAND UP!

Standing up in all his dignity—this is how Man appeared when he first sprang forth from the heart of God. Standing up! Christ looked at the crippled woman, put his hands on her bent and crooked back, and immediately she straightened up. A look of kindness, an act of compassion, and a woman was reborn after eighteen years of suffering. (Lk 13:10.16)



Recently, Pope Francis said: “Jesus of Nazareth, by his words, his actions, and his entire person reveals the mercy of God.”¹

Mercy is an outstretched hand, welcoming, forgiving, and embracing. God is love. A person is more important than all the offensive acts they’ve ever committed. God is forgiveness and mercy. The theme of this issue, “meditate to mend”, touches on the injuries we experience throughout life. Sometimes, all it takes is a small gesture to cause change and bring someone inner peace. These opportunities to sow and spread happiness are around every corner.

Thousands of people suffer everyday because of wars and natural disasters caused by human negligence. Today, we have to mend many wounds that could have been avoided if there had been more meditation. But there are many gestures of goodwill that are within our reach.

In his apostolic letter on mercy, Pope Francis entrusted us with a mission: “During this Jubilee, the Church will be called even more to heal these wounds, to assuage them with the oil of consolation, to bind them with mercy and cure them with solidarity and vigilant care.”²

Let us follow Christ’s example by opening our arms and our hearts, and by giving back a little dignity and joy to the world.

Deep down, every person carries a profound desire to be recognized and respected by others. We must go beyond our perceptions and see that everyone—be they migrant, prisoner, homeless, victim of AIDS or even of leprosy—has the right to their dignity. This is what the following articles will explore.

Marie-Paule Sanfey, m.i.c.

¹ Apostolic letter on Mercy, *Misericordiae Vultus*, No. 1

² Idem, No. 15

Painting: Bernadette Lopez

Délia Tétreault wished to communicate her complete trust in God’s loving mercy; her experience led her to say: “When I stop and think how much I am loved by God in spite of my deep misery, I feel I am the happiest person in the world!” (Archives MIC) Mother Délia wrote in her letters:

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

Throw the past into God’s mercy, sanctify the present by a peaceful attention to do all things well, and for the future, commit yourself to the maternal providence of our good Master Who can do all things and Who loves you. (August 27, 1915)

Yes, my Daughter, you are a hundred times right in saying that God is a “mother” and an incomparable “mother” in the workings of his divine Providence. (April 9, 1925)

Be courageous and patient my dear Daughter... because many times a day we miss being so. In such moments let’s think of the Merciful Heart of Jesus, and let us call upon Him to help us, He will surely respond. (June 14, 1928)

Let us throw this past year and all the others in the Merciful Heart of Jesus. Let us make a wish for the coming year that it may be filled with the joy of accomplishing our duty properly.

(November 24, 1928)

**FOR ALL FAVORS
RECEIVED-OR-DESIRED**

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MEDITATE TO BETTER MEND

Jesus knew how to look inwards; how to discern in order to help others and heal their wounds without causing embarrassment.



By André Gadbois

Just as human beings need to laugh, they also need moments to pause and reflect. Animals don't laugh, and as far as I know, neither do insects. People who rarely crack a smile are just as disquieting as those who spend all day in peels of laughter. Laughing "heartily" is a sign of good health, and the effect it has on others is apparent; it lightens the mood, expresses happiness and hope, and doesn't make much noise. Like a budding tree, laughter cleans the air around us. Laughing and smiling are steps that elevate us, allowing us to rise above the human condition and participate in the Beauty of the Earth, "daring complicity and co-creation"¹. In the portico of my house, we recently hung a drawing of Jesus of Nazareth. His hair and beard are long, and he's smiling warmly, raising a glass. Is he at the wedding at Cana, at Zacchaeus' house, at the Last Supper, at the inn on the road to Emmaus? Ever since, five visitors have requested a photocopy of the drawing. A Jesus that laughs! How wonderful!

Laughing is a visible sign, and is usually—but not always—the result of meditation. Meditation is not expressed on a person's face, because you meditate from within, you settle inwardly. Meditating is taking the time to stop and distinguish between what's happening around us and what's happening within us; it's undertaking a difficult task, and placing yourself somewhere between yes and no. This can often bring about feelings of relaxation, joy, and happiness, but it can also bring fears and worries to the surface. Let us read Luke 1: 29—Mary was greatly troubled, and wondered: is it possible that the impossible will happen, and if so, will I be ready to wel-

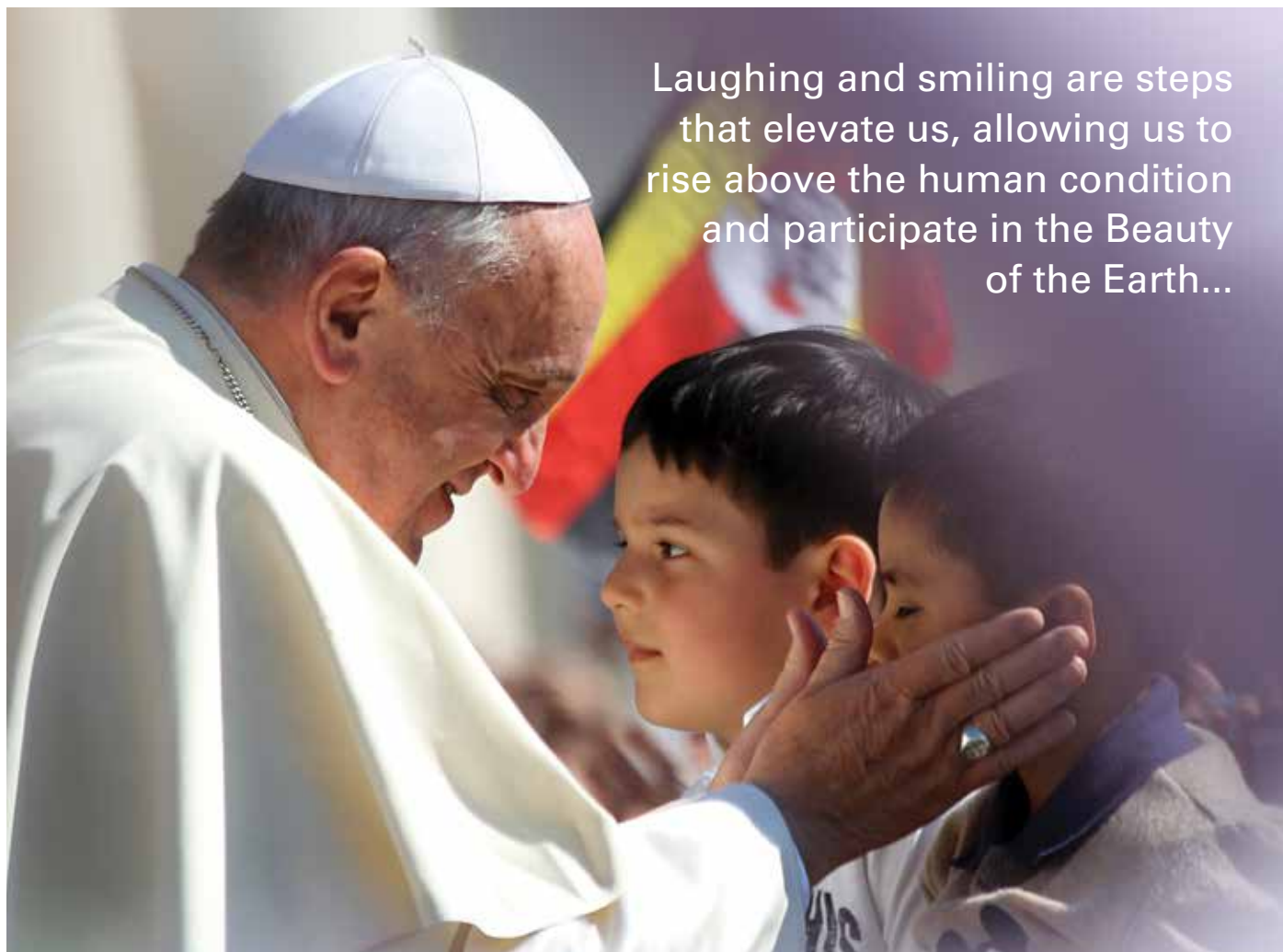
come it? In Matthew 4: 1.11—the evangelist uses the word "temptation" to show us that Jesus took the time to distinguish between each choice, that he paused and meditated on the situation before making a decision.

RESPONSIBLE FOR THE OTHER

Jesus of Nazareth entrusted his followers with a critical mission: to heal the wounds constantly inflicted on Humanity. His message continues to be passed on through his Holy Spirit and his disciples. Emmanuel Levinas, a Jewish theologian, has said that the Bible can be reduced to a single idea: *you are responsible for the other*. In the Bible, the "other", the discomforting and unfamiliar person, is often considered divine. Let us read Matthew 25:31.46—*Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You...?* And the Lord said: *Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.*

As Paul mentions in his epistles, Jesus came to accomplish a ministry of reconciliation; throughout his "ministerial" life, Jesus revealed a loving God who wants "service" instead of "sacrificial blood"². Throughout his lifetime Jesus showed us a humble God who strives for peace and mutual understanding; who is concerned with the mental and physical wellbeing of all his sons and daughters; who sows the seeds of justice and truth; who is merciful, and elevates human dignity.

To continue God's work means **becoming aware** of the threats (sins?) that are crushing human lives and cultures, and **mending** the wounds of our brothers and



Laughing and smiling are steps that elevate us, allowing us to rise above the human condition and participate in the Beauty of the Earth...

sisters. It means **meditating for the purpose of mending, of reconciling what is broken**. Pope Francis recently called upon us to protect our common home, to take care of our different families living on this planet. He asked us to humanize eternal salvation and to bring it back to Earth, **as did the Man from Nazareth**.

WITHOUT SPECTACLE

Jesus often remained on the sidelines, not only to pray (give thanks) but also to distinguish (meditate on) the tools necessary for reconciliation (mending). He took his time to avoid wasted time and unnecessary spectacle. Why should He throw himself at the bottom of the mountain? Why should He turn the stones into loaves

of bread? In John 4: 21.24, Jesus confided to the Samaritan: *a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem*. God is only truly loved when we have compassion for our fellow man.³

Let us give thanks to the God of Heaven and Earth for the bold statements given by Francis, Bishop of Rome; his words are imbued with the Spirit of Jesus' words to the Samaritan. Let us also give thanks to all the religious brothers and sisters who continue to meditate on better ways to mend; to all those who have realized that the Church can no longer continue the mission Jesus gave us as we did before. We need to think about the world of today and adapt accordingly. ∞

¹ KEARNE, Richard, *Anatheism: Returning to God After God*, Nil 2011, p. 163

² Idem, p. 164

³ MOINGT, Joseph, *The Gospel Will Save The Church*, Salvator 2013, p. 97-98

PHOTO:

Pope Francis at a Wednesday General Audience, April 30, 2014
— Vatican City, Italy
Credit: Softdelusion66 (Shutterstock)

TRANSFORMING THE OLD INTO THE NEW

Audrey Charland, a 25-year-old graduate student with a master's degree in Religious Studies, is trying her hand at something new: first the thesis, now the news article! After studying the history of Catholic missionary nuns in India, she has joined the MIC Missionary News team as the new Communications and Development Officer. This position will allow her to take on new and exciting challenges, and put her knowledge and skills into practice.



By Audrey Charland

While wandering through the streets of an Indian megacity, you don't have to be a seasoned people-watcher to notice the poverty lingering on every corner. Slums spread out here and there, a collection of sprawling tin-roof huts. Children kneel over basins and wash themselves with murky water.

Women sit on the ground, their hands dry and cracked from hard work and too much sun, their fingers grasping notepads filled with letters that have yet to form words. Under the benevolent gaze of the sari-clad nuns, they are trying to change their sad fate—one letter at a time.

In India, the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary have made education a top priority. Their nursing department is also very active, with the nurses dividing their time between daily tasks and hospital administration. Always attentive to social needs, these nuns have chosen a path strewn with obstacles—but there are great plans and successes blooming around every bend. Here is one example among many others that illustrates the spirit of ingenuity and acute sensibility that these women demonstrate when faced with a problem, and their steadfast search for a solution.

FROM BLIGHT TO BLIGHT

Sadly, throughout history, leprosy has almost always been associated with shame, stigmatisation, and solitude. The truth is, leprosy is not very contagious¹. However, from the era of Mary of the Passion² until

recently, we didn't know the true scope of this illness. Our knowledge was limited to the severe symptoms experienced by the victims: their skin, nerves, and eyes slowly deteriorated until they were irrevocably disfigured and handicapped. According to Sister Monis, f.m.m.,³ these poor souls were sometimes even abandoned by secular nurses. In the end, it was consecrated women who devoted themselves to treating the lepers, many of whom had been rejected by their families. As a result, leprosariums were founded in many countries with high endemicity, such as India and Sri Lanka.

The twentieth century brought many techno-medical advances, including a cure for leprosy. However, it wasn't until the early 80s that scientists introduced an effective cocktail of medications. In 1995, the World Health Organisation made these treatments free, in support of the work done by religious congregations and other health care organisations. Little by little, morbidity rate decreased, as did the rate of leprosy outbreaks.

Just as this blight was beginning to run its course, a new one broke out. This time, it was an international crisis: HIV/AIDS. This disease weakens the victim's immune system at an alarming rate, making them extremely vulnerable to all kinds of infections⁴. Despite scientists' hard and dedicated work, HIV remains incurable. However, there are medications that slow the disease's progress. Prevention programs

¹ World Health Organization (2012) – Leprosy; www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs101/fr/

² Mary of the Passion – Foundress of the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary

³ MONIS, f.m.m., F. (2000-2009) *60 years of service among the rejected poor* – India (Chennai) www.fmm.org/pls/fmm/v3.s2ew.consultazione.mostra.pagina=915

⁴ World Health Organization (2015) VIH/sida. www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs101/fr/

are still our strongest weapon against the HIV epidemic, but the most effective are those that take a humane and empathetic approach. The Franciscan Missionaries of Mary learned this a long time ago.

MORE THAN A RELIGIOUS PRESENCE

In her blog, Sister Monis writes with genuine feeling about her institute's sixtieth anniversary in the province of Chennai (Tamil Nadu). She also writes about the history of the Saint-Joseph leprosarium and its various associations.

What you take away from her writing is not simply her explanations about sociology and biology. The reader is first and foremost compelled by what lies at the heart of these nuns' mission. They interpret and live the Gospel in a larger sense, and in doing so, revitalize it. Their arms and hearts are wide open. Men and women of all ages, casts, classes, and religions are received and welcomed. For many, the institute is their first contact with Catholicism. Some never leave, and adopt the institute as their "home".

TWO FACILITIES WORKING TOWARDS ONE MISSION

Whatever happened to the leprosariums if the disease was eradicated in this part of India? Far from falling into disuse, the buildings continued to shelter the work that had begun nearly sixty years earlier. The Saint-Joseph leprosarium was converted into an HIV/AIDS treatment center. It goes without saying that the building already had the equipment necessary to form a healthcare department. In any case, the sustainability of this new facility is thanks to the nuns' attentive ears, their outstretched hands, and their concern for the poor and the marginalized.

Religious congregations are constantly reflecting on their actions, particularly since Vatican II. They've had to make changes in order to remain relevant and useful. As many are still active and working in mission countries, we can presume that they know how to turn their thoughts into actions. One can hope that, as long as there is suffering, there will be nuns. 🌸



© Tukaram Karve / Shutterstock



The ongoing news coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis has stirred up strong emotions around the world. Sister Françoise recounts her experiences working in refugee camps in the Philippines, Zaïre, and Burundi.

FLIGHT for SURVIVAL



By Françoise Royer, M.I.C.

I remember that, after the genocide in Rwanda, many were quick to say “Rwanda, never again!” And yet, what is happening to the Syrian refugees today is eerily similar to what the Rwandans, Vietnamese, and Burundians experienced.

HAVE WE ALREADY FORGOTTEN?

When I was working as a nurse-midwife, I experienced first-hand the turmoil and chaos of refugee camps. I learned that the refugees’ psychological suffering often led to suicide, because all hope had been extinguished. For freedom and survival, you must be willing to do whatever it takes: to leave your country, your home, and your job, to give up your rights and your very identity.

We know that the conflict ravaging Syria involves different groups, including an authoritarian regime, rebels, Kurds, and Jihadists. How many people have died thus far? How many exiles have been thrown to the streets? The thought of these deportees brings up some painful memories.

I REMEMBER

I could write a novel with all the stories I collected from the Vietnamese refugees while I was working at a camp in Palawan, in the southern Philippines. The head count was close to 3,500. After the

fall of Saigon in 1975, one million people fled Vietnam. Some never made it to their destination, falling victim to pirates or violent weather. To leave Vietnam was to embark on an expensive and dangerous journey. Everything was done in secret, in fear of the communist police.

Try to imagine it—a wooden boat, no more than 12 meters long, with 84 people huddled inside. They had nothing but a bit of fresh water, cassava, and sweet potatoes to keep them alive. After a few days, all their provisions were gone. The survivors had to drink their own urine and eat algae, all the while trying to avoid shark attacks. The distress signals they sent to passing freighters were ignored. The boat, carrying the last 16 survivors, finally washed up on the shores of the United Nations refugee camp, where I worked from 1983 to 1988.

1994: THE AFRICAN CONTINENT

I left Quebec and went to Zaire where Rwandan refugees were being welcomed. The Rwanda genocide, one of the cruellest of our time, had aroused only vague interest from the international community. These devastated countries provoked unparalleled mass displacements, a horror caused by vengeance and the violation of human rights. This time I was work-

ing with CECI (Centre for Study and International Cooperation) in partnership with Care Canada. I will never forget the sight of all those blue tents set up by the United Nations—nothing but blue for twenty kilometres. Katala was one such camp in Zaire, where 350,000 Hutu refugees lived.

When I arrived, two soldiers escorted me to my workplace where I joined my team. A sea of people surrounded us; the sight was terribly sad. Many of them were in a state of shock. They had seen their loved ones being slaughtered, and many carried their own scars from previous attacks. They needed friendship, and especially hope. In the streets of Goma, you would find the bodies of those weakened by the long walk through the fields. Cholera had arrived before them.

WHAT ARE WE BECOMING?

After long months spent trying to save these people, the extremist attacks intensified, threatening the lives of the humanitarian workers. We were ordered to leave the camp, and so we fled to Burundi. I remember the night we spent at the Uganda border. The soldiers had stopped us near a park filled with wild animals, but I was afraid of the men. One night, a soldier came into our house and attacked us. He walked in and fired his gun to show that he meant business. He wanted money. When he fired for a second time, we gave in and handed over some cash. Finally, he left.

I eventually made my way to the Burundi camp, where 100,000 Hutu refugees were gathered. A hostile atmosphere hung over Burundi. There were several military checkpoints and a curfew was in effect. The refugees lived in fear, wondering if they would need to flee again. This is exactly what happened when, eight months later, the extremists attacked the camp during the night.

The next morning, I helped the *Doctors Without Borders*. In order to rescue the many injured, we treated those who required urgent care and set up truck transportation for those who needed surgery. When



To flee your country, you must want
to survive at all costs.

I finally returned home, it was night and I was exhausted. Suddenly I heard gunfire, screams, and crying. What was happening? Armed gang leaders were attacking the barrack not far from where we lived. I was afraid, very afraid. The night was long. Huddled in a corner of the hallway, I prayed. I expected to die. But at dawn, when the guns finally fell silent, I was still alive.

GRATITUDE

I was privileged to work alongside many brave, determined individuals. I thank God for the humanitarian workers of all nationalities who put their lives at risk every day without hesitation. I admit, there were times when my faith was shaken. *Lord, do you not hear the pleas of your people? Won't you come to their aid?* My faith was renewed when I witnessed the refugees' acts of generosity and reconciliation.

Canada has welcomed refugees in the past, and the help and compassion we can offer to the Syrians are invaluable. If we have the ability to act, let us answer the call. 

PHOTOS:

¹ Turkish-Syrian Border
– June 11, 2011

Photo Credit: Thomas Koch
(Shutterstock)

² Sr. Françoise Royer, M.I.C.
– Palawan, Philippines
Photo Credit: MIC

³ Refugees from Mozambique,
1966 – Sr. Ruth Bégin, M.I.C.
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MEDITATE TO MEND

TRUTH FOLLOWED BY RECONCILIATION

On June 2, 2015, the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* released its report pertaining to the plight of Aboriginal children who attended Canadian residential schools from the latter part of the 19th century to the closing of the last school in 1996. The conclusions were overwhelming.





By Émilien Roscanu

For over a century, more than 150,000 children were forcibly removed from the influence of their families, were placed in boarding schools and assimilated into the dominant Canadian culture; residential schools systematically undermined the Aboriginal culture across Canada. The unhealthy conditions of these institutions were such that more than 3,200 children died. Psychological, physical, and sexual abuses were widespread in those schools where children were coerced to forget their language, their culture. Poor sanitation, severely inadequate food and health care compounded the misery these little ones had to suffer. The harsh treatments and inhumane conditions left psychological and physical scars that even time cannot heal.

After seven years of hearings and testimonies from more than seven thousand survivors of the residential schools, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission report indicated that the Aboriginals lived through a “cultural genocide” over a period of seven generations. The publication of the report is an important step in recognizing the devastating harm that took place in those schools and the legitimate claims put forward by the victims; a process of healing has begun. This report should not be left unheeded, the least we can do is to expose it.

RECONCILIATION WITH A CAPITAL R

Seven generations were sacrificed in the name of a corrupt ideal. It will need more than a few days of media attention for the Aboriginal peoples to obtain reparation. Reconciliation between Canada and the latter is crucial and fraternal links must be reestablished with those nations we have been standing alongside for more than four hundred years. Their languages, culture and ways of living deserve to be protected and preserved in the same manner as all other nations of the world.

Unfortunately, the first obstacle to reconciliation is a chronic lack of interest in the Aboriginal plight. Not only are politicians indifferent but so is society at large. Notwithstanding the official excuses expressed by the prime minister in 2008, hardly anything at all has been done these past years to extend a helping hand to the Aboriginals, whether at the political or civil level. When certain files remain stagnant, no matter the reason, it is sometimes wise to take up the subject and show interest in the cause. If we expressed, to our elected members, our concerns about the plight of our native fellow citizens, that considering them as second class citizens is unacceptable, then perhaps we would oblige the members to look at the question more closely and follow up on their claims. Native demands are far from being exaggerated; they ask for a greater protection of their culture and their languages, as well as established measures that would ensure better financing of their health and education systems.

Of prime importance in the process of reconciliation is to affirm, in a clear way, our good will to treat the Aboriginal nations as our equals. And a priority is to break away from the attitude of superiority, assimilation, and paternalism which characterized our relations with the native peoples for too long.

TIME TO ACT

The *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* has touched upon one of the most somber period of our history, a time when the elite brought ethnic minorities to a cultural slaughter. The Commission also brought our attention to the problem that transcends the residential schools. That story is the symptom of a more serious illness which could be termed as a general indifference toward the Amerindians who have occupied the land forever. Before recon-



ciliation can take place, the damage done must first be acknowledged and then recognition of the other as an equal must be understood and accepted. Misjudging or refusing to know the ones who are different can lead to fear, to discrimination and even hatred.

The *Indian Act* passed in 1876 and still in force with amendments, is a remnant of an unsavory era of our history. Recently, the statute has been judged as discriminatory against women. Time and time again, this Canadian law is questioned, criticized and disputed; it should be completely reformed and all anachronism should be eliminated.

A long process of dialogue should begin between legislators and members of the civil society from all horizons. For Canada, the subject regarding the Aboriginal nations is like a huge elephant in the living room. Conflicts that date back over hundred years cannot be resolved in one night; therefore, a movement has to be launched and crucial dialogues must begin.

RESPECT NEEDED

Canada cannot boast being the best country in the world when an important minority of its population is discriminated, eradicated, deliberately forgotten. To speak about the atrocious and unhealthy life conditions of certain Aboriginal communities and to acknowledge more than a century of neglect and 'laissez-faire' in the residential schools is not a popular topic. It is not pleasant to show people what they do not want to see. However, a time comes when that which is not popular must be brought to the forefront. A time comes when we must assume our errors of the past and together build a future where such atrocities will never happen again. With much courage and good will, like those men and women who came to the Commission to testify, it is possible to sensitize the popula-

tion in terms of this important issue, but it remains an enormous challenge.

It is important to remember that we owe much to the Amerindian nations and that we have more in common that we can possibly believe. Our rapport with nature and the environment, our ecological vision, our society that thinks in terms of consensus... These traits we inherited from our historical contact with the First Nations. Questioned on the documentary *Footprints*, the actor, Roy Dupuis describes his search of the French Canadians' origins and then states: *If the French are our cousins, the Amerindians are our brothers.* 🌿





Our Passion for Christ's Mission

During our General Chapter, last May, we had the opportunity of assessing our mission ministries in the countries where we are currently serving. Concerning South America, the Provincial Superior, Sr. Rosario Zari, M.I.C., gave us a profile of the Sisters' commitments and an overview of the political, social, and ecclesial context.

By Rosario Zari, M.I.C.



Meanwhile, in Peru, we have a neo-liberal political system. In spite of their ideological differences, both countries are experiencing similar problems.

ON THE SOCIAL LEVEL

The people are more aware of the injustices being done and they are not satisfied with the manner in which the fruit of economic growth is distributed: the rich are getting richer and the poor are becoming poorer. Hence the rise of conflicts, strikes and claims of all kinds. In Bolivia, there seems to be a better distribution of wealth. The many social programs seem to tone down the social conflicts for the moment.



AT THE POLITICAL LEVEL

There are always conflicts between the State and the native people. The latter populations totally reject the presence and expansion of the extractive industries (mining, forests, hydrocarbons, etc.) in the Andean and Amazonian territories. The governments do not consider their opinions, their rights, or their defense of the environment. However, the mining workers are more and more aware of their rights and claim them more forcefully.

For example: In Espinar, where the MIC Sisters worked for twenty years, the miners carried their struggle to a successful conclusion and obtained major benefits for Espinar and the Cusco region. More recently, the Natives of Pichanaki got the great Argentine oil company to back away. Fortunately, the government managed to maintain social harmony throughout this struggle. In Bolivia, because of his Andean roots and the political option of his government, President Evo Morales seems to be more attentive to and respectful of the native population; therefore, he exerts better control of the extractive industries.

ON THE ECONOMIC LEVEL

In spite of the global economic crisis that has taken place, the economy of Bolivia and Peru was not shaken. These countries are considered a success in terms of economic growth and macroeconomic stability (low inflation rate, abundant reserves, lowering of the public debt).

We are present in Bolivia, Peru and thanks to two groups of Associates (AsMIC) we are also involved in Chile. For several years these three countries have had a democratic system, which means that “coups d'état” and military dictatorships are things of the past. However, there are serious political, social and economic problems. Bolivia and its president Evo Morales are going through a process of change supported by the history of native cultures expressed by “the good life”. Many natives and country people have been feeling in recent years that they are a part of government policies. But there are also great deceptions.

ON THE ECCLESIAL LEVEL

For the Latin-American Church, the two meetings of Pope Francis with the Peruvian theologian Gustavo Gutierrez, author of the *Theology of Liberation*, brought about the end of any doubt or censure regarding this theology that has marked the life of the Church, especially the Latin-American Church.

During the year 2014, the Peruvian government enacted two laws: therapeutic abortion and civil union between same sex persons. These caused an outpouring of writings and animated discussions. Believers and practicing Christians rejected the laws and protested in support of traditional values. Finally, the government withdrew the two laws.

As Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, we experience the anguish and the hopes of Latin America, especially with the people among whom we are: Bolivians, Peruvians and Chileans.

LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND MINISTRIES

Our Province has twenty-one Sisters including four scholastics and three novices assigned in six local communities. Our current ministries include: working on a pastoral level at Marie-de-la-Providence College in Peru as well as at the Institute of Rural Education in Bolivia; presenting pastoral and vocational youth sessions; coordinating the mission awareness program at the level of the vicariate; involvement in various parish ministries and coordinating religious education programs; training rural catechists and pastoral agents; providing pastoral health-care where and when needed; reaching out to peasant communities; maintaining the “Délia Tétréault” alternative education center.

POSITIVE AND REASSURING POINTS

The Sisters understand the importance of the above commitments and sincerely try to reflect the MIC charism. They try to give the people they meet a prophetic witnessing to the gratuitous love of God. They are faithful to their calling and to the MIC identity. We have at heart the integral formation of the young girls who attend our institutions; our aim is to prepare them in taking responsibility and shaping their future.



As MIC, we experience the anguish and the hopes of Latin America.

As a Province, we are currently at a key moment for shaping the future. We wish to practice intercultural living as a sign of the Kingdom of God in a world which seeks unity in diversity. This means trying to create a community life that goes further than mere tolerance of cultural differences among us, a community life that motivates us to enter into a process of personal and communal transformation.

In 2013, we welcomed in our Province two new Sisters from Haiti and Madagascar to be part of the Inter-Provincial Novitiate; their presence among us has enriched our Province. Lay people who have come to serve on a long or short term basis have also been a source of missionary dynamism. We realize that the MIC gift does not belong to us. It also belongs to the Church, to the world and it is to be shared. In this sense, we think that in order to keep alive the missionary spirit, the young scholastics should live a mission experience outside the Province.

A quick glance at the road travelled together has helped us understand the current reality of our Province. We have perceived the presence and fidelity of God in all circumstances; we have witnessed His loving care for all peoples we have come across in our ministries. ☺

PHOTOS:

¹ Market place

– Cusco, Peru

Photo Credit: Christian Vincens (Shutterstock)

² Miners taking a pause

– Potosi, Bolivia

Photo Credit: Jess Kraft (Shutterstock)

MUSIC: A HEALING BALM

Restorative justice is founded on respect and human dignity, and peoples' need to live in harmony with themselves and their surroundings. Music is therapy for the soul; it helps restore self-esteem and confidence. For the past 40 years, Sister Rollande has brought music to Quebec penitentiaries. How does she do it? Let us hear her story.



By Rollande Ouellet, M.I.C.

THE BEGINNING OF A PROJECT

In July 1971, Mr. Cartier, a psychologist, escorted an inmate to visit a group of Catholic Sisters. Surprised at how beneficial the music-filled afternoon was, he asked if I would be willing to give music lessons to the inmate who was preparing for release after 13 years of incarceration. First, we needed to convince the penitentiary director that music could help offenders reintegrate into society. In the end I was given permission to teach music, provided that I offer group lessons. And so, I found myself standing in front of ten inmates at the St. Vincent-de-Paul Penitentiary. The end of year assessment was stunning. My music and singing lessons had affected these “hard-as-nails” inmates much more than I expected. The experience led me to work in different penitentiaries, teaching singing and music as a form of therapy. I started with the prison chapels, where I could accompany the church service and, slowly but surely, form a choir.

ENCOURAGING RESULTS

Let me give you a few examples of how singing helped to improve the lives of the inmates. You can't be afraid to approach someone and ask him or her to join in. I can still see Denis, sitting in the back of the chapel, his criminal past tattooed across his face. He wanted to change his life. Embarrassed, he showed up during

Mass. I invited him to sing with the rest of the group and he shyly accepted. I quickly discovered that he had a beautiful voice. Singing helped bolster the little self-esteem Denis had—it became an important source of comfort for him, a soothing balm on his heart. As he moved away from life's ugliness and nurtured something beautiful, his soul was filled, and this lifted up his prayer. He was able to sing Robert Lebel's song with passion: *Lord, what do you want me to do? (Seigneur que veux-tu que je fasse?)* His experience in the choir led him to eventually lead the liturgies, and his old friends were able to witness his profound transformation.

When inmates are immersed in music or song, their minds escape their prison cells. They are carried to an oasis of peace and fraternal love. Experiencing these moments of camaraderie are essential for individuals who have lived so much violence. Our friend Conrad conveyed this idea through his drawing of a musical stave. The stave is drawn in movement, passing through the prison bars, moving from inside to outside. This drawing perfectly illustrates the inmates' psychological escape through music. A quarter note and an eighth note symbolize the time spent learning music: a full day and a half day. A bright, shining cross represents Conrad's newfound relationship with God. These music classes allowed the inmates to look

inside themselves in order to heal and find inner peace.

COMFORTING RESULTS

The relationships forged during those choir lessons were strong, and sometimes lasted years after a prisoner's release. For many, I'm still a friend, ready to lend an ear no matter what they've done or attempted to do—even murder. Being able to help

someone grow and change, to help them discover their faith, their hidden talents—these are the reasons that compelled me to work with prisoners.

FEELING TOUCHED

In the following poem, an inmate from the Federal Centre shares his experience of music and healing (translated from French).



“You are the body of Christ, what have you done with him?” (John Littleton)

I messed it up! I cried! I regretted everything!
But today, my heart is filled with gratitude, and I feel good.
I see and accept the forgiveness that I was missing to be complete, whole,
but especially true to God's will.
I was rejected, scorned by the newspapers, and condemned by society (...)

After some time, a religious Sister invited me into her starlit world,
And I wept at such true tenderness.
I finally understood that I was hungry for kindness;
I was hungry for understanding, for appreciation. (...)

When I see your benevolent gaze, it feels like a healing balm;
A balm that welcomes me to a full and happy life.

When you welcome me unconditionally, without judgment,
The knots inside me loosen, and even if it hurts,
Your example inspires me to be opened to life.
Even though it's hard, I try to share with others what you've given me.

When you shared your table with me, I was overwhelmed.
Try to imagine how I felt when you invited me to sing God's hymns,
To join your choir and to sing in your company.

With all of your fearless, intentional, sincere love,
I purify my suffering, my shortcomings, my fears and my poverty.
I humbly admit having felt the presence of God in this sacred place.
I was nowhere, not elsewhere, not in any moment.

Thank you for sharing,
For this new page in my life
That will make all the difference,
Separating yesterday and today,
Hate and love,
The eyes of God and the eyes of another.

Signed: *Gold Pen* (Meaning: poor, but sincere)

The MIC Imprint on History



© Daniel Lebel

As the year comes to a close, we remember the many touching celebrations commemorating the 150th birthday of our Foundress Délia Tétreault. It was an occasion to leave a lasting imprint on history and defy the passage of time. So many events marked this important day for the members of the MIC family, and what better way to commemorate Délia than to create something tangible and permanent?



By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

SPECIAL EVENTS: Outremont

At the Saint-Viateur church in Outremont, the Feast of Pentecost took on a new dimension to highlight Délia Tétreault's 150th birthday. Msgr. Michel Parent, Vicar General of the Diocese of Montreal, presided over a solemn Mass, with the help of Father Robert Lachaine, the parish priest. Honourable guests such as Mayor Denis Coderre happily joined the congregants and the MIC Sisters in paying homage to this exceptional woman.

Why this church in particular? Délia lived in Outremont for 33 years in prayer and discernment, trying to understand the mission that the Lord had imparted to her.

In 1902, Outremont became the birthplace of our Institute. Our headquarters remain there to this day.

An Exhibit in Outremont

For three weeks, an exhibit entitled *With Hope-filled Luggage* was open to the public at the Art Gallery of Outremont. The exhibit, a collection of hundreds of objects, documents, photographs, art pieces, and artisanal creations, told the story of Délia Tétreault, as well as the founding of the Institute, and the humanitarian work done around the world. Ms. Marie Cinq-Mars, Mayor of Outremont, shared these words: *We are proud to welcome such an accomplished exhibit in our borough.* Young

and old were able to journey through time with us and discover our history. More than 1,275 people visited the exhibit.

Marievalle

Naturally, we cannot forget Marievalle, Délia's lively and charming hometown in rural Quebec. On the 28th of June, Canon Gérard Ouellette welcomed several of our sisters into his parish, and Msgr. François Lapierre, bishop of Saint-Hyacinthe, presided over the Eucharist. A torrential rain flooded the guests with the sky's blessings. Despite the unfavourable weather, everyone sang with enthusiasm and joy. Ever since, a photograph of Delia, aged 19, has been given a place of honour at the Saint-Nom-de-Marie Church, symbolizing the special place Délia has in the heart of the Marievalle community. A monument in Délia's honour was erected near her childhood home.

ACTIVE ON A GLOBAL SCALE

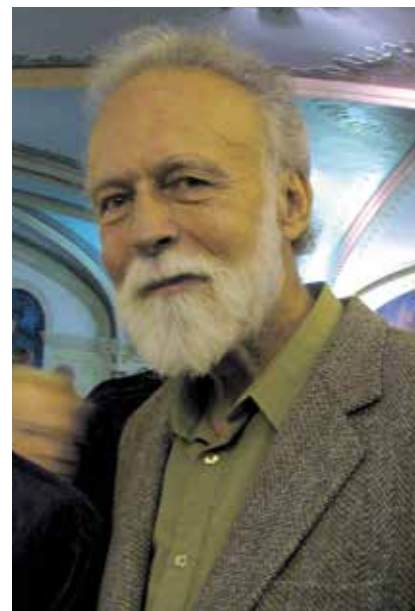
The MIC Sisters organized celebrations in every country where they work. Why? We are Délia's daughters; we recognize our Venerable Foundress' Christian virtues, and we hope to eventually see her canonized by the Church. As we spread her story, more people will pray to her, and her saintliness will gain recognition. It is up to us, her daughters and her associates, who follow in her footsteps, to speak about the spirituality of Thanksgiving. We want to share the legacy that our foundress passed on to us: a spirituality that feeds our lives and our mission, regardless of where we are or the work we do.

A PLACE OF HONOUR

The celebration took an unexpected turn. Through chance, or perhaps Délia's will, Pierre Lussier, a local painter, joined our project. One thing led to another, and a painting—no, a portrait—began to take form. We contacted Father Desrochers, from the Basilica Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, who encouraged us to find a place of honour for the lovely Délia. Unfortunately, there was not enough room inside the

Mary Immaculate Chapel, whose alcoves were already filled with the images of saints or other founders. We asked ourselves: *Shouldn't the Venerable Délia Tétreault have a place amidst this historical lineage?*

There are no empty walls left, Father Desrochers told us. *But we've found a place of honour for Délia. Come with me!* We followed him outside the chapel, our hearts filled with hope. There, just above the door, was a prominent empty space. It was wonderful! Délia Tétreault, Foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate-Conception, is now hanging above the front door of this magnificent chapel, as though she were inviting us to visit her source of inspiration, Mary the Immaculate. What a privilege the Lord had in store for us!



Painter: Pierre Lussier

Photo Credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

A TRADITIONAL PAINTER AND POET

Before he began his painting, Pierre Lussier took the time to learn about Délia's life. The texts he read with a prayerful spirit, and the conversations he shared with the Sisters were his inspiration. Sketches began to take form, and Mr. Lussier wisely chose the one that stood out. Délia, standing in the centre, contemplates in thanksgiving the evangelizing work her daughters have carried out around the world. Délia, despite her giant heart, never left her own country. In her writings, she confesses: *The day I was supposed to leave for Africa, the rain was coming down in buckets, and I think I cried as many tears as there were drops of rain.*¹

Délia allowed the Canadian Church to carve out a place for itself in the great missionary wave of the early 20th century.² With her apostolic zeal, we considered her Quebec's Pauline Marie Jaricot.³ This is what Pierre Lussier came to understand, and he expressed it perfectly on canvas.

If you are ever passing through Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré, take a moment to visit this painting and pray to Mary Immaculate, so revered by our Foundress, Délia Tétreault. ∞

¹ *Dreams of Soul Harvests Come True*, P. 19

² BARRETTE, Georgette, M.I.C. *Délia Tétreault and The Canadian Church*, P. 5

³ JARICOT, Pauline Marie, 1799-1862, *Foundress of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith*, France

THE SPONTANEITY OF CHILDREN

We never know how much influence we have on others, and particularly on children. Our words and actions have repercussions. In other words, it's important to meditate before acting, to avoid having to mend. Mizuko Komada, from Japan, recounts her experiences as a grandmother and AsMIC (Associate of the Missionary Sisters of Immaculate-Conception). Monique Cloutier, who was a missionary in Japan for 60 years, translated this article.

By Mizuko Komada, AsMIC



OUR MODERN SOCIETIES

Today, the lives of young couples are becoming increasingly hectic, with both individuals working hard to support their family. Every day is a race, from morning 'til night. Whether you live in Japan or elsewhere, the frantic pace is unavoidable. This is where grandparents come in. Today, they will often take on a parenting role with their grandchildren. Thankfully, seniors are often the best companions for the very young. Children instinctively trust their grandparents, and it is a true joy for them to spend time with their grandchildren.

The same goes for young students and their teachers. Even after many years, happy (and sometimes bittersweet) memories are forever engraved in their hearts. How wonderful it is to think back on those times... *I remember when I was at school... my teachers, etc.* Who hasn't thought about that time in their life? As the comedian Boukar Diouf says: *My grandfather always said...*

A FLOWERING FRIENDSHIP

On December 6, 2014, in the Parish Church Chapel of Koriyama, Japan, I

attended the annual MIC ceremony, where the new AsMIC members were being welcomed into the organization.

I graduated from university when I was 22. The day after I received my diploma, I started to work full-time for the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate-Conception, teaching at the St. Francis Xavier Catholic School. When I retired at 65, I was asked to stay on as the coordinator of the learning centre; until then, the building had been used as a residence for the Sisters.

Four years ago, due to a lack of personnel, the Sisters had to close their convent in Koriyama and move to Wakamatsu. I had given my body and soul to the children's education for nearly 50 years, and the loss I felt was immense.

When I look back on my life, many memories rise to the surface. Some faces I see more clearly than others, and they stir up many emotions. I see Sister Kyoko Takahashi, who led me to baptism when I was 34, and Sister Janet Delisle who, despite her rudimentary Japanese, did her utmost to teach me English. I remember Sister Kazuko Sumitani, the school principal, who supported and encouraged me during my last five years, when I was in charge of the high school students. Finally, I remember Sister Monique Cloutier, m.i.c., as she left Japan for Canada. She was my colleague for

2

many years. When the Sisters left Koriyama, I lost the spiritual guidance that had supported me for so long. I found myself alone and filled with trepidation about the future.

A SPIRITUALITY THAT LIVES ON

I felt a profound desire to strengthen my friendship with the Sisters by embodying their spirit of thanksgiving. And so, I requested to become an associate of the Missionary Sisters. I spent a year preparing with the help of Sister Myoko Kofuji, who taught me all about the MIC history. Finally, I was able to fulfill my promise. Now, I am committed to realizing the dream that the MIC Sisters started nearly



My mission is to share Délia's spirit
of love and gratitude.

80 years ago, when they first came to Japan. Motivated by Delia's fervour, they were filled with the desire to share God's love with all of the world's children.

A SURPRISING TURN OF EVENTS

Following the Sisters' wishes, the Koriyama convent was transformed into a daycare for children who take remedial courses and need to wait for their parents. We also began to offer religion classes to parents and teachers. Since the convent is named after Délia and was built in her honour, I hung a large portrait of her in the entrance. The other day, my 4-year-old grandson, who often stays at the daycare, came up to me and said proudly: *Grandma, I know who that is! That's Délia Tétreault!* I said: Yes, but do you know who she is? And he answered: *Of course! She's the one who founded my daycare!*

Ever since, I am convinced that my mission is to share Délia's spirit of love and gratitude with as many people as possible, starting with children and their parents.

A MEMORABLE COLOUR

On the day of the ceremony in Koriyama, when I was welcomed into the group of associates, I was wearing a green two-piece suit. I always wear this suit when I embark on a new journey or start something new. Why? Because for me, the colour is like a green light beckoning me to move forward and telling me that it's time to 'go'. This time, I really had started down a new path—a spiritual path.

I want to repeat how thankful I am to the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate-Conception. During the nuclear disaster that rocked the prefecture of Fukushima in 2011, the Sisters supported us with their prayers and friendly assistance. Thanks to you, dear Sisters, the St. Francis Xavier Catholic School is up and running and continues to share the Good News. As an associate of the MIC family, I want to live my life in the spirit of Délia Tétreault. 🌿

PHOTOS:

¹ Grandson of Mrs. Komada

² Mrs. Komada (center) with a group of Associates

Credits: MIC

Eternally Happy in His Kingdom

*There was a great multitude that no one could count,
from every nation, tribe, people and language. (Rev 7:9)*



Gilberte Bleau, M.I.C.
(Sr. Théophane-Vénard)
1937-2015
Montreal, Quebec

Called to the Father's House last September, Sr. Gilberte leaves us with a beautiful souvenir of love. Her caring presence toward her family and MIC Sisters will long be remembered. Sister Gilberte loved nature and would often contemplate its beauty. Her deep spirit of faith, which she inherited from her family and shared through various Christian commitments, gave her the strength to courageously accept illness throughout her adult life. For many years, our magazine *Le Précurseur* benefitted of her linguistic talent which was officially recognized upon receiving a Linguistic Award of Excellence. With you, dear Sister, we sing the Magnificat! May you now enjoy eternal rest.



**Lorraine-Mary Laflamme,
M.I.C.**
(Sr. Lucien d'Antioche)
1930-2015
Chicopee, Mass. U.S.A.

Born in the United States, Sr. Lorraine-Mary consecrated her life to the Lord at a very young age. As a missionary, she went to the Philippines; she radiated joy through her special giftedness as a chef-cook. At the *Davao Seminary* she trained cooks who had to serve 275 guests every day. Devotedness, competence, joyfulness, enthusiasm, creativity were ingredients which she shared through her teaching. A solid devotion to Mary gave her strength for the day's work and it is on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, October 7 that Sr. Lorraine went to receive her eternal reward. It is now your turn, dear Sister, to be served by your Lord.



**Ka-Lok Magdalena Leung,
M.I.C.**
(Sr. Maria-Joseph)
1932-2015
Hong-Kong, Chine

Reared in the Buddhist tradition, Sr. Magdalena, adolescent, discovered the greatness of Catholicism while studying with the Canossian Sisters in Hong-Kong. Secretly, she prepared herself for baptism. Though her family was opposed, she was baptized on December 24, 1948. Religious life fascinated Sister Magdalena; following her desire to become a missionary she entered our Institute on June 5, 1959 at our Novitiate in Baguio, Philippines. Having earned a Master degree in Education she had a successful teaching career. However, the grace received at her baptism radiated through her apostolic outreach. The Chinese communities in Hong-Kong, San Francisco, Vancouver and Montreal were the happy beneficiaries of her teaching and faith. Mission accomplished, dear Sister Magdalena, may you now rest in Peace.



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