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MIC Mission News

To sow seeds of joy and hope

Since 1923

Zambia

Healing and Happiness

Peru

The Young *Samuels* of Pucallpa

In Focus

TO YOUR HEALTH!

PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS – 2016

APRIL
For African Christians

That Christians in Africa may give witness to love and faith in Jesus Christ amid political-religious conflicts.

MAY
During the Month of the Holy Rosary

That families, communities, and groups of people may pray the Holy Rosary for evangelization and peace.

JUNE
For Seminarians and Novices

That all men and women entering religious life may have mentors who live the joy of the Gospel and prepare them wisely for their mission.

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

Live a Healthy Life

As I reflected on the theme of this issue, I thought of all the new immigrants arriving in Canada and who are being welcomed by many families in Quebec. We could say that we are in good health because being healthy is not only watching our weight, but it is also thinking of others, being open and sharing the best we have.

I was touched by a Vietnamese's point of view expressed on the T.V. talk show *TOUT LE MONDE EN PARLE (EVERYBODY TALKS ABOUT IT)*. She related how warmly she had been welcomed, upon her arrival as an immigrant, some years ago. Now well integrated in our society, she highlighted the richness of our country's intercultural population. The "world" walks on our streets, takes the metro, lives next to us. This openness is a sign of healthiness!

As missionaries we have widened our space, we live the element of interculturalism in our hearts and in our houses. Some time ago, during a funeral service in our chapel, one of our Haitian Sisters made a reading; a lady came up to me and said: "You also have emigrants here?" Surprised, I spontaneously replied: "No." She answered: "Why yes, she made a reading during the funeral." Without hesitation I said: "She is our Sister!" To live fully the notion of internationality is to welcome the other wholly without reservations. One day, walking by a school yard, I saw children playing together; they were from all races and nations. They laughed, ran, expressed happiness. There were no questions of turbans, veils or headscarves. It was life in its fullest, a healthy way of life.

During His public life, Jesus of Nazareth never made a distinction in regards to the nationality of a person. He welcomed the Samaritan, responded to the request of the Canaanite woman, healed the blind from Jericho...

In the eyes of God, every single individual is precious and important; in his article, André conveys this truth. Émilien, for his part, saw his people in Romania crying out for a better life. As for the lay missionaries who are preparing to go serve abroad, they are trained in the light of being open to the people they will journey with. And what about the many little *Samuels* of Pucallpa?

Integration into interculturalism begins at birth. In his monologue, Fred Pellerin, a Quebec writer and storyteller, tells us very well: ***Let the shadows fall and let us live fully in the light.*** To find the positive side of each person is to find happiness; it is the magic formula to be transformed and to live a healthy life.

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

DÉLIA'S COLUMN

Mother Délia was a great missionary even though she never realized her dream of going to the missions due to her ill health. She knew the cost and advised her Sisters very well in regards to keeping healthy and preventing illnesses.

Please take care of your health as you would take care of mine. The human machine cannot be replaced as we would do with a sewing machine. (April 11, 1910)

Take good care of your health so as to use it uniquely for the glory of God and the salvation of the dear souls He confided to you. (April 11, 1910)

Please, do not overtax yourself. Do what you can during the day and let the Lord do the rest at night. (May 19, 1915)

Heal the sick and prevent the healthy ones from becoming ill. (1916)

Autumn is already here, do not spare on food and heat; so little time is left for us to serve God. (1917)

Do not delay in having Sister's eyes examined because nothing is worse than being without eye glasses when they are needed. (February 15, 1933)

Take a good tonic and eat well balanced meals. (April 29, 1925)

Springtime, with its sunshine, will help restore your physical strength. (January 29, 1925)

If you want to work and be productive for many years, you must take the means: sleep well and eat well. (February 26, 1928)

Joy is one of the best remedies. (February 27, 1929)

Foster holy joy, it is a great health factor. (July 25, 1931)

Since the attic will be transformed into rooms, make sure there will be enough windows for all the rooms to receive light and fresh air. (September 16, 1932)

ERRATUM !

MIC Mission News - winter issue 2016, page 18 - photo credit: *Daniel Lebel* should be *Daniel Abel*.

TO YOUR HEALTH! A WORTHY TOAST

If, in Matthew 5:3, you replace the word "blessed" with "healthy", the results are wonderfully surprising: "Healthy are the poor... healthy are those who mourn... healthy are the merciful..."

By André Gadbois

"Sin is manifest in all its destructive power in wars, in various forms of violence and abuse, in the abandonment of the most vulnerable, and in attacks on nature." I must admit that this bold statement made by the Bishop of Rome does not inspire me to raise a glass to good health. Pope Francis is right: his statement is accurate, true, and realistic; the media reminds us daily of this sad and disheartening reality. With time, I have become accustomed to toasting successes and celebrations. In my mind, a toast "to good health" is reserved for coronations and gold medals, for great joys and proud winners. Why is it that those who come in last place are never showered with the words "to good health"? I've thought long and hard about this expression and its cultural significance. Recently, I wondered if Jesus of Nazareth ever took the time to toast good health. ***Certainly!*** the response came as I read through "Laudate Si"[1] and contemplated the radiant face of the author.

A NEED FOR LIFE MENTORS

"Misfortunes are never wonderful. But when an ordeal does come, do we have to succumb to it? And if we fight it, what weapons do we have?"[2] Boris Cyrulnik, a French psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, spent his life studying how different people (children and adults) recover – or fail to recover – from trauma. Those who fail are not the most damaged, he concludes, but those who are the most isolated, who lack a strong support system are the ones who suffer the most. They don't have mentors, they don't have people to say, in some form or another, "to your good health!" Jesus was not "an ascetic set apart from the world, nor an enemy of the pleasant things of life." He explored every corner of his social sphere to offer Life in abundance, the best of what life had to offer. He acted as a life mentor, fighting isolation and rejection. He brought together different people and threaded them together as a quilt-maker would, creating a pattern of mutual support and warmth. Of course, he was tempted to make a quilt for himself (Luke 4:1.13) but instead he welcomed his Father's Spirit and returned to Nazareth, where he was raised. He visited the synagogue to read the scriptures and read from the scroll of Isaiah: ***"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor"*** (Luke 4:16.21).

Pope Francis "raises a glass" to the health of those around him almost daily and not only in religious contexts. By doing so, he brings joy and good feelings, but also a deeper meaning can be interpreted. He is saying: "I want to be with you when you succeed or rise to a challenge, when you try hard and when you fail. Hold on, here is my hand to congratulate you or lift you up. I want to share your happy moments and reassure you that everything will work out. You have worth in my eyes even when you fail."

What would happen if, one day, during the Eucharist, the leader of our assembly suggested that, instead of thinking about our own personal losses and failures, we raise a toast in unison "to the health of the Syrian refugees" or "to the health of Cedrika's friends and family"?

HEALTH TO THE CAREGIVERS

Body, wine, bread, health… These are more than just words; they are realities, chosen by Jesus to be present among us and communicate with us: ***"This bread is my body, share it; this wine is my blood spilled for you"*** (Luke 22: 19-21). He spent his time with the sick and the handicapped, the marginalized and vulnerable. ***"I am among you as one who serves"*** (Luke 22:27). Jesus did not want to create a new religion; he wanted to help those around him, to denounce those who allowed sickness – in all its forms – to wreak havoc. He asked his disciples to care about the lives of their brothers and sisters; He inspired the Sisters in New France and Quebec to dedicate their lives to the treatment and care of their brothers and sisters. To their good health, let us toast and say: "we honor and thank you"! When we raise a glass and say "to your good health", we are expressing our solidarity, our closeness. We are conveying our joyful presence in all circumstances, our daily fellowship, and our affection and care for that person.

[1] POPE FRANCIS, Bishop of Rome, *Laudato Si (On Care for Our Common Home)*, Mediaspaul 2015, p. 50

[2] CYRULNIK, Boris, *A Marvellous Misfortune*, Ed. Odile Jacob—2002, p. 7

HEALTHY ITINERARIES, Paths Leading to Mission

By Agathe Durand, M.I.C.

The author is a member of the intercommunity team committed to the formation of lay missionaries (PIFM).

The life of a missionary is a life of "going forth". It wasn't until Pope Francis spoke these words that we began to integrate them into our contemporary vocabulary and our everyday lives.

The mission comes to us like a voice, asking us deep and personal questions, speaking in communion with others who have heard the same call. Doesn't the word "mission" evoke a distant elsewhere, a journey that brings you far beyond familiar borders? Those who have taken the missionary path –in the biblical, Christian sense –know that a personal journey must be made. You must travel beyond your own prejudices about certain communities, religions, peoples, and periods of history. Visiting Jesus and his Gospel is, first and foremost, a personal journey, where you move beyond your own preferences and habits to meet the others on their own cultural terms.

Something else to consider is the feeling of cultural displacement and disorientation that the mission entails. You are constantly beckoned towards the outskirts and outer limits, to the places nobody wants to visit – unless you are particularly gifted. Our mission is to "go forth", but the hidden implication is that we must embark on an inner journey and slowly but surely, learn to welcome all that is different.

I had the pleasure of listening to a group of lay missionaries share their views on the hard realities of the mission. They spoke about their experiences abroad, or about forthcoming missions they are currently learning about and preparing for. These stories are more than just simple reflections; they are the foundation of the two-year formation sessions which lay missionaries must follow before being sent abroad.

"Retirement felt like a wasteland", said Lise, a recent retiree. "I couldn't stay home alone. Now, the mission gives my life purpose, no matter where I am. Learning about current affairs makes me want to listen to people, to young people, and help them if I can. I want to continue along this path."

André who is preparing for his imminent mission to Peru, stated: "I'm going to try to help people understand how the Lord is present in their everyday lives." He then added: "The Lord has prepared me well; I've traveled many times, and I currently work with aboriginal communities. I'm confident that all of this has not been for nothing."

Nicole's mission to Hong Kong was a turning point in her life. "I recognize that I've been spoiled," she said. "I have a lot to give back. My mission is wherever I find myself, but I really want to work with children."

Odette who has been two years in Cauday, Peru, stated: "I always wanted to be a missionary; I'm attracted to people living in marginal regions. My presence there seems to make them happy; it's surprising and gratifying. After a day's work I come home feeling happy and energized."

Natalie lived in Madagascar for three years. "My mission is to be faithful to my deepest inner self," she said. "Sometimes this means going beyond the law, that is, being with God and aware of His presence, reaching out to others and recognizing that I've been sent. It takes humility. Sometimes, doubt filters in and I wonder if I'm wasting my time; but then I come to realize that my mission is about creating relationships with others and with God. I am not called to appraise or judge others; I am called to journey with others.

Dominique was a missionary in Bolivia. "Today, I believe my mission is to follow the values of the Gospel," she said, "and to live in the world with a new perspective. I'm worried about the current atmosphere of hostility and resistance towards new cultures and religions. It's important to stay open, to try to understand these differences."

Kateri also worked closely with at-risk youth in Bolivia, and remains an active supporter of programs for street kids. "The mission requires us to step outside ourselves and reach out to others, to welcome them," she said. "The lack of options for the poor really struck me. I think it's important to always see what's around us and to question our role. To feel connected to God, and humbly recognize our own limitations. We can't change the world. In my current job, I feel like my mission is extremely relevant; when you work with kids, you realize that love changes everything."

> The mission comes to us like a voice, asking us deep and personal questions, speaking in communion with others who have heard the same call.

Frédéric who works in an aircraft manufacturing plant expressed the following: "For me, the mission is about making human connections. Working together, supporting and listening to each other. I like being available to help new employees; being willing to drop everything for someone in need. I'm someone who isn't afraid to break societal rules. I've seen what kind of effect it can have on others. That's my mission, every day."

It isn't easy to identify and name the trajectory of our Catholic faith; currently, the topic is not very trendy and is far-removed from the spotlight. However, all you need to do is a quick search to discover a diverse network of belief systems, of spiritual currents, each offering many attractive paths. The "missionary disciples" have learned how to guide others onto the path of discovery, almost like GPS system guiding you home. "Coming out of oneself" to rediscover what life has to offer will sometimes lead you towards lectures, sessions, faith related studies or even travelling. These might help you find happiness and comfort. Thankfully, the joy of the Gospel is often passed on to the people you meet, through hearts and minds and helpful hands.

When you feel that someone is happy in their faith, you want to spend time with them and create something together; to journey further, and discover the outskirts as Jesus did. In the end, we find ourselves nourished by the same basic principles. We draw strength from the same intrinsic hopes. We realize that a healthy journey and solidarity go hand-in-hand.

PHOTOS:

[1] A meeting of lay missionaries at 'Lac Joly'
Credit: R. Desrochers, P.M.É.

[2] Discussing the Mission at meal time

[3] A Eucharistic celebration

Credit[2-3] M. Marcoux, M.I.C.

An Invigorating Presence

Trou-du-Nord ("hole of the north") is a veritable hive of activity. The little commune, situated just north of the Cap-Haïtien Diocese, opens up Haiti's entire northern region, and was hence nicknamed "la Trouée du Nord", meaning "gap of the north". Because of the river, trucks passing through Trou-du-Nord are at risk of sinking or stalling, and the town's nickname was eventually changed in honor of these sink "holes".

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

This year, the MIC Sisters will be celebrating their sixtieth year at Cap-Haïtien. I have so many fond memories of my time at the commune. I can still see myself riding my motorcycle, a Honda 50, with the Good Lord in the rear basket. I used to leave early in the morning to visit the chapels, celebrate the liturgy of the Word, distribute communion and spend my Sundays with friends. The Haitians are simple, sympathetic, and philosophical people. They are close to nature and wear their hearts on their sleeves. While with them, we had such wonderful discussions about our lives. During the week, Catechism classes were carried out in public schools, and the students were all crammed together. Some days, catechists from rural areas would come to the village and attend classes, then carry their knowledge back to the children at the chapels. Sometimes I went to visit them on my motorcycle or on horseback, winding through the narrow, rocky roads that twisted through the mountains.

1

THE ROAD TO GOOD HEALTH

Back then, nurses received patients at the clinic. Those were hectic days. In the afternoons, the nurses would jump on their motorcycles and visit those who were too sick to travel, and the complicated cases were sent to the hospital. Rain or shine, patients had to be transported by jeep; the torrential rains would often turn the roads to mud. So many risks were taken to save lives! So many roads were travelled for vaccination campaigns; nurses and attendants would take the road to five chapels to vaccinate the population, hoping to stop the spread of contagious diseases. On Saturdays, food was distributed to those less fortunate: oil, flour, sugar, bulgur, etc. The

village went wild with joy when a healthy baby was born. Day and night, the sound of a pebble hitting the gallery's metal post signalled when a patient needed help, and a nurse would go to their aid.

Many children did not have the means to go to school, but a great team of teachers did their best to help the "privileged" children pass their exams and chart out a successful future. The headmistress corrected the assignments beneath the light of her bedroom lamp. Every day at noon, the school canteen assuaged the children's hunger. They were thrilled to receive a good helping of rice, vegetables, fish or meat. As a matter of form, the families paid 10 'kobs' for these meals, about 5 Canadian cents; it was a way for the parents to feel like they were contributing to their children's education. In Trou-du-Nord, parents make very many sacrifices to send their children to school, so when they have the opportunity to send them to a school run by the missionary Sisters, they are very happy.

LIFE'S SYMPHONY

When you live in a small village, you must develop a close relationship with the people. Friendships are created and trust is forged on both sides. You share everyone's joy as well as their pain. At four in the morning, trucks honk their horns and idle on the road, waiting for the animals to be loaded and taken to the slaughter house. The pigs emit strident cries as they're hung from their feet, while the feeble squawks of chickens and roosters add to the cacophony. Students slowly fill the schoolyard, memorising their lessons and practicing them aloud. Every morning this symphony repeats itself, like the sun rising to meet the day.

TODAY

Life goes on, and our mission continues to evolve. It is here that our MIC formation house is located and we are still working closely with the people of Trou-du-Nord. The younger MIC Sisters continue to oversee education and pastoral works, but the Haitian government now takes care of health services. The infrastructure has also changed for the better: a new bridge gives access to the north of the country, roads have been repaved, and electricity is widely accessible. The Sisters' school now offers high school classes to help students pursue their education. The Sisters are still very close with the people of the village, and as such, everyone is happy to celebrate the 60 years of missionary work in Trou-du-Nord, a place very dear to the MICs hearts.

PHOTOS:

[1] Sr. Pierrette Gagné, M.I.C. at the dispensary
Photo Credit: MIC

[2] Under scorching heat, people walk to the dispensary.
Photo Credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

When you live in a small village, you must develop a close relationship with the people.

A FROWN is worth a thousand words

By Audrey Charland

PHOTO:
Mégane and Daphnée sample the rhubarb.
Photo Credit: A. Abel

Imagine a child's happiness as she discovers spring for the first time, watching the leaves and flowers bud and bloom as though awakened from an enchanted sleep.

Two young sisters bounced out their front door to welcome the day, covered in sunscreen and ready for adventure. Their journey took them through tree groves and bushes and muddy spring puddles. Suddenly, they stopped at the sight of a magnificent leafy plant. It was enormous! The girls leapt up in unison and ran towards their mother, who was straining to keep up with her intrepid daughters. "Mommy, can you eat this?" they asked, gesturing towards the green giant. "Yes, but..."

As soon as their mother confirmed that the plant could be ingested without turning into a mushroom, the girls sank their teeth into its fibrous stems. But they quickly discovered that the plant's beauty masked a terrible taste. "Yuck! It's so sour!" they exclaimed in surprise and disappointment. "Rhubarb tastes much better when cooked," their mother said. "Why don't we make a pie for dessert?" She smiled in amusement as her daughters stuck out their tongues in disgust. A categorical "no!" was chanted in unison. Clearly, they had learned their lesson.

As the two budding gardeners watched in bewilderment, their mother gathered a bunch of long rhubarb branches. Despite her daughters' insistence that the plant was "even more disgusting than broccoli," she brought them home and prepared the ingredients needed to bake a pie. The girls followed her around the kitchen, exclaiming in protest and scrutinizing her work with profound disapproval.

When it was finally time for dessert, their mother served herself a generous slice of pie and asked her daughters if they wanted some as well. Or were they still swearing off rhubarb? Her daughters shook their heads emphatically.

Nonetheless, when they realized that their mother was savouring every bite of her pie, spoonful after spoonful, with a smile on her lips, curiosity finally got the better of them. Two small slices were placed in front of the girls, who looked at their dessert with resolute scepticism. But it wasn't long before the resounding "yucks" became "yums", and in the end, they were glad they had tried something new instead of shying away after their first bad experience. Sometimes all you need is a bit of time and sweetness to reveal all of life's flavours.

A country's policies should above all address the needs of its citizens, and a politician's only ambition should be to serve the interests of his or her people.

ROMANIA: AT A CROSSROADS

Romania is a small country in Eastern Europe, counting less than 20 million inhabitants. The country has not been under soviet control since the Romanian Revolution in 1989; nonetheless, Romania has experienced many political conflicts in the past few years. In 2012, the government announced plans to reform their health and social services systems by decreasing social benefits, reducing health insurance, and privatising hospitals. These reforms sparked controversy and raised the wrath of many Romanians, who took to the streets to protest the adoption of such drastic measures. Their protests eventually led to a retraction and the resignation of the government.

2

By Émilien Roscanu

In 2013, the protests resumed with new fervour when Gabriel Resources, a Canadian mining company, announced its plans to develop an open-pit mine in Rosia Montanã. The company planned to use cyanide, an extremely toxic and environmentally harmful chemical, to extract large amounts of gold and silver from the mine. An unprecedented popular uprising against the mining project quickly became the largest civil movement since the revolution. The thought of a new cyanide mine, with all its inherent dangers, brought back memories of the tragic 2000 Baia Mare cyanide spill, one of the worst non-nuclear environmental disasters in Europe's history. Several areas of land and water sources were contaminated, including the Danube, the second longest river on the continent. The protests and popular resistance movement forced the government to step back once again, and the mining project was turned down for good.

POLITICAL TURMOIL

Last November, an explosion of violent protests broke out in Romania following a fire in a discotheque in Bucharest, leading Prime Minister Victor Ponta to resign. Ponta had until then been clinging to his position of power despite numerous accusations of corruption and misappropriation of funds. The investigation into the fire determined that the security and licensing regulations had not been respected. The tragedy resulted in 55 dead and over 100 wounded. The Romanian authorities' silence only fuelled the people's indignation and quest for answers.

A mass mobilization of the population followed. Representatives of the Romanian Catholic Church, a minority in the predominantly Orthodox country, joined the protesters and asked the victims for forgiveness. This speaks to their profound sense of empathy. By shouldering the responsibility for a tragedy that couldn't be attributed to them, they took the blame for humanity's imperfections and society's mistakes.

> "I have seen freedom raise men up, and tyranny stultify them."
>
> - Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

Many Romanians are fighting for change. To symbolize their feelings of discontent, a road sign was erected at University Place in Bucharest, reading ***"zero kilometer of freedom and democracy"*** and ***"zone free of neo-communism."***[1] The protesters who took to the streets last November have shown unwavering determination in their fight for a transparent democracy, a greener economy, and a less corrupt nation. They represent the will of the people, especially Romanians in their thirties, who want to be freed from the current socio-economic slump and the rampant corruption that is paralysing the country.

The Romanian nomenklatura did not disappear overnight. When the Communist rule was over, economic elites took up the torch, and today the disparity in wealth is enormous. Romania is still one of the poorest countries in Europe. Nearly 22% of Romanians are living below the poverty line, and this percentage has seen a marked increase since the beginning of the new millennium.

THE FORGOTTEN

The Romani people, a cultural minority in Romania with remote Indian origins, are often absent from public debates. Access to public spaces is limited for the Romani, and their culture is severely stereotyped and stigmatized. In such a hostile environment, the Romani are not often heard. They're labelled as delinquent and dishonest, and many struggle to avoid marginalisation and illegal activity. To this day, many Romani are victims of racism, and their experiences lead to a vicious circle of intolerance, alienation, and exclusion. In this time of political upheaval, when their society is evolving on so many levels, the Romanian people must be willing to take strong and pivotal action. The problems their country faces are unarguably complex, but an open mind can sometimes make all the difference.

LOVE AND SOCIETY

All Romanians want a better future for their children, but sometimes this future is hard to see. In Romania, the earth is not fertile enough to sprout the seed of opportunity. Corruption and inaction snake through the land like weeds, while a lack of love and empathy dry out the soil. The elite of the world need to feel empathy, but also a profound love for all people, for the entire human race. Too often, those who are only concerned with their own interests use political power as an instrument of oppression. A country's policies should above all address the needs of its citizens, and a politician's only ambition should be to serve the interests of his or her people.

Regarding Romania's political future, we can only hope that the people will let themselves be guided by love and tolerance, feelings that should dwell inside us at all times. ***You shall love your neighbour as yourself.*** Sometimes we forget this simple but fundamental lesson. Let us have the courage to love; the health of a country depends on it.

[1] In this statement, neo-communism is to be understood as the corruption which existed during the soviet era and nowadays has only changed its façade.

PHOTOS:

[1] Bucharest, Romania - Sept. 22, 2013; people come together, 22 days in a row, to protest against the project of exploiting Europe's largest open-pit gold mine at Rosia Montanã. (Photosebia / Shutterstock)

[2] Bucharest, Romania - Nov. 5, 2015; a three-day manifestation, at University Place, against corruption within Romania's government. (Radu Bercan / Shutterstock)

[3] Countryside lifestyle
Photo Credit: É. Roscanu

THE MAGIC OF TRANSFORMATION

Marie Valiquette is well known among the MIC Sisters. As a child, she went to school at 2900 Chemin de la Côte Ste-Catherine, in Outremont. She attended college at 5620 Darlington Street, and in 1963 she finished her degree at Jean-de-Brébeuf College, an all-boys school that had only just opened its doors to women. Sister Léonie Therrien was one of Marie's teachers, and she recently had the pleasure of interviewing her former student about her experiences as a psychologist and the importance of mental health therapy.

Interview By Léonie Therrien, M.I.C.

Sr. Léonie: Marie, Psalm 84 says "Blessed the man who finds refuge in you (...) As they pass through the Baca valley, they find spring water to drink." This is what I see when I look at the path your life has taken. You earned a doctorate in psychology and practiced for many years. I'm sure you've helped many people find their "spring".

Marie: Yes, I was a psychologist for 38 years. Often, at the end of the therapeutic process, patients would tell me that the mostly helpful part of our sessions had been the relationship we developed; they had felt loved and valued, and these feelings were at the heart of their transformation. They learned how to believe in themselves, how to love themselves and discover their hidden strengths. I watched people rediscover their lives and always felt extremely privileged to witness their change. My goal was always to help people find their own strengths and passions. I encouraged them to forge their own path in life and take control. Your own motivation is essential. If you cultivate happiness, happiness will grow. Someone once said "if you love your job, you won't have to work a single day in your life", and that's how I approached my practice. I loved my patients, and when I retired, I wrote a song in their honour.

During my career, I discovered and reported several cases of sexual abuse by therapists who had taken advantage of their patients. Whether you're a physical or mental health therapist, respect for your patient is crucial, and your interactions must occur inside certain limits. Having an intimate relationship with a patient is not only against the law; it can cause serious harm to the patient and the therapist. I've spent hours listening to patients describe intimate experiences they've had with therapists, and what these experiences cost them. My colleague Hélène Lapierre and I wrote a book about the phenomenon, where we explore various case studies on the subject.

Sr. Léonie: When I look at all you've done since your retirement, Marie, I can see that you've opened up many springs within yourself as well: joy, warmth, support, and creativity... I remember your very first performance. It was magical.

Marie: Yes, that's true. A friend of mine once said "Marie, you never do anything halfway. When you decided you wanted to sing, you joined a choir, signed up for singing classes, wrote your own songs, and organized an entire solo performance." I feel like I have a *Spring* of inspiration inside me. When I follow it, the magic of Life flows through and guides me. I'm very passionate about Life. My first performance was created in a kind of beautiful madness.

What can I say about my pottery classes at La Fourmilière? I have three grandchildren, and when the first one started going to the alternative learning school, I quickly offered my services as an art teacher. I wanted to introduce the children to the magic of pottery. We start with nothing but "mud" – the clay – and make simple bowls. I fire them and apply a layer of enamel paint. At this stage, the colours aren't visible. After the second firing, the children discover a brightly coloured cereal bowl that they can use every day. You should see their faces! They love watching the transformation take place. Of course, everything changes. It's the first principle of life. The children are so generous and loving, they've completely charmed me. They started calling me "Grandma Pottery", how wonderful! Last year, I made *inukshuks*[1] with all the children at the school. The theme was "follow your path". We exhibited them afterwards. It was wonderful.

I'm also a volunteer at Pallia-Vie, a residential hospice in Rivière-du-Nord. At first I worked closely with people who were nearing the end of their life. For the past two years, I've been leading grief counselling therapy sessions. I believe that your Life is your health. As long as I am the creator of my own life, and can find sources of inspiration, good health and happiness will follow. I also believe that a spiritual life that is cultivated and renewed throughout the years is necessary to maintain balance, harmony, and therefore good health.

Sr. Léonie: Marie, your life is truly full. Listening to you talk about your experiences, I can see that you've lovingly transformed many Baca valleys into spring water. Thank you! Your life is vibrant and inspiring, like a fresh spring day.

Marie: You're right. My life is very full. I never know what tomorrow will bring. I thank God every day for his help and guidance. I don't have any regrets, thank goodness! Today, I'm the sum of all the experiences life has offered me, and that's just fine.

[1] An *inukshuk* is a monument made of unworked stones built by the Inuit and Yupik people. The traditional meaning of the inukshuk is "Someone was here" or "You are on the right path."

PHOTOS:

[1] The children's first exhibition
Photo Credit: M. Valiquette

[2] Marie and Sr. Léonie
Photo Credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

[3] Inukshuka made by the children
Photo Credit: M. Valiquette

ONCE A Missionary, ALWAYS A Missionary

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My pen and notebook in hand, I made my way up to the third floor of Bloc A. My faulty sense of direction led me down several corridors before I finally reached my destination. Even though I was pressed for time, I had trouble quickening my pace. Everything about my new surroundings caught my attention. The moulding on the walls, the whispered voices, the peaceful ambience, the smiling faces I met along the corridors…

By Audrey Charland

When I arrived, the door was ajar, and I could see Sister Thérèse Déziel reading in her armchair by the window. I wasn't surprised to see that the room was arranged for my arrival, and an extra chair had been set aside. This first impression might seem inconsequential, but it set the tone for our meeting that day.

A MISSIONARY's BAGGAGE

Sister Thérèse entered the convent in 1949. She was 26 years old, and had waited nearly five years for her health certificate. She felt the call of God, but more than that, she wanted to be a missionary. Once she completed her formation, she was sent to Africa to begin her work; in her mind, this was an unknown land. Fair enough, she thought. She was determined to realize her ultimate goal: share the Word of God and introduce the Virgin Mary's role in the Mystery of Christ. She only had to figure out how.

For 39 years, Sister Thérèse worked closely with the Zambian and Malawian people, primarily in the field of education. During her time as a mathematics teacher, the possible parallels that could be drawn between teaching mathematics and teaching the Word of God inspired her[1]. Through experience, she quickly learned that Christian testimony is possible in all things and actions, as long as there is respect for everyone's spiritual beliefs.

RETURNING TO THE FOLD

A combination of unfortunate circumstances eventually brought Sister Thérèse back to Canada for good. Following a medical operation, she was told to send yearly reports to her doctor in Montreal to ensure her good health. For this purpose, she had to go to South Africa– a needless expense. What's more, Sister Thérèse no longer had the strength to lead a classroom of 45 students. Besides, her aunt and "sec-

ond mother" was also very sick, and hoped her niece would spend time at her bedside. In the end, Sister Thérèse had a long conversation with her superior, and both agreed that it was time for her to return to her native soil.

In 1995, Sister Thérèse retired as a teacher. She had worked tirelessly with young people, girls and boys alike, but finally had to leave their fate in the hands of the Virgin Mary. She was particularly fond of Mary, who had accompanied her throughout her religious journey. With unwavering faith in God's will, Thérèse undertook new and exciting projects. For a while she worked as a seamstress, then quickly became involved with the MIC Mission News. For 15 years she worked as an accountant, continuing her love of numbers.

A FLAME THAT IS NEVER EXTINGUISED

A hospitalization forced Sister Thérèse to take some time off. In hindsight, her failing health marked a turning point in her career as a missionary. Nevertheless, her work in Africa and in Quebec is admirable, and many of her fellow sisters have taken up the torch.

Many would believe that her story ends here. What a mistake! Retirement doesn't mean your life is over. According to Sister Thérèse, retirement is an inevitable stage in your life, and every Sister must find her own rhythm. At first, it's important to accept your age and limitations despite your frustrations. What's more, it's often difficult to leave friends and communities after decades of working alongside them. When you return home, you need time to adjust and get your bearings.

The question at the heart of my interview with Sister Thérèse had to do with her missionary work as a retiree. How does her missionary spirit take form, day in and day out? Her answer was complex and layered, but I've summarized the main points.

First of all, prayer is very important. Sister Thérèse mentioned that missionaries have access to an array of religious services, including the Eucharist, the Sacrament of the Sick, Liturgy of the Hours, etc. Access to these services facilitates and encourages contemplation; through prayers to God and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, they can stay in spiritual contact with their previous missions. Sister Thérèse also maintains ties with her fellow Sisters and the missionary staff members in an effort to stay on friendly terms. This allows her to help them according to her own abilities. She will often mark a page in a prayer book for a near-sighted friend, or repeat herself several times when speaking to someone who is hard-of-hearing. These small gestures, and smiles too, make all the difference.

For Sister Thérèse, and for many of her peers, the body gives out long before their good-will and generosity. The role these women play in the heart of their communities is so very important. But too often, their selfless life journey is kept in silence. Today's memories are sewn from yesterday's stories. We must recognize their important and precious commitment to the cause. Their actions and stories represent the very foundation of their Institute's history.

[1] She taught Bible studies and religion, but also animated the Y.C.S. (Young Catholic Students) in many schools.

PHOTOS:

[1] Sr. Thérèse, accountant, MIC Missionary Press
Photo Credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

[2] Posed with her parents, Sr. Thérèse's day of departure for Malawi

[3] Sr. Thérèse with some of her students
Photos Credit[2-3] MIC

We want to cultivate a spirituality that allows faith and justice to coexist in the daily lives of Christians and their communities.

Healing and Happiness

The MIC Sisters are currently initiating a new mission in the Province of Our Lady of Africa. They are very conscious of the socio-political context surrounding their work, and believe that the province requires healing before happiness can be attained.

By Theresa Katongo, M.I.C.

PHOTO:
Nurses at the dispensary of Kanyanga, Zambia
Photo Credit: MIC

WHERE ARE WE?

Zambia and Malawi constitute the Province of Our Lady of Africa; both countries are landlocked, making commercial imports and exports difficult. Local languages include Chinyanja in Chipata, Zambia, Chitumbuka in the north, and Chichewa in central Malawi.

BRIEFLY - THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL, AND ECONOMIC CONTEXT

I'm not going to attempt an in-depth analysis of the complex social, political, and economic realities of the area. Though there are some important differences between the reality of Malawi and of Zambia, there are recent changes in our respective governments that bring about a certain level of uncertainty.

Economically, poverty and its numerous negative consequences are still among us, even increasing due to corruption in so many obvious and subtle forms. Education, health services, and infrastructure development are all adversely affected.

Despite progress in technology and modernization in some areas, social progress seems to widen even further the gap between urban and rural life, creating tensions both in the cities and in the country side. HIV is still a reality, not to mention the issues of sexual behaviour resulting in violence, harassment, and abuse. Children and youth are confronted with these issues on a daily basis.

In both countries, there is an outcry for a true Democracy, one where the State, the Church, and the civil society are brought together beneath a flag of justice and peace. An appropriate civic and ecclesial education is necessary; several issues need to be addressed, such as workers compensation, general protection of the rights and obligations of Christ's faithful. We want to cultivate a spirituality that allows faith and justice to coexist in the daily lives of Christians and their communities.

AWARENESS AND GROWTH

Malawi and Zambia are part of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA). Their primary goal is to encourage collegiality between the different bishops of

the region. At one of the meetings, it was pointed out that while the Catholic Church seems to be getting stronger in Central and East Africa, AMECEA acknowledged that faith is superficial and not rooted enough in Christ, therefore fails to live and to proclaim the Gospel. The theme, New Evangelization through true conversion and witnessing to Christian faith, illustrates the work that remains to be done.

On their part, the Association of Consecrated Women in Eastern and Central Africa has focused their attention on the cultural traditions and values that have a positive influence on religious life and traditional weddings, funerals, and burial rites. We must rise to the challenge of integrating these cultural values into our religious formation programs and seminars.

THE MIC SISTERS' JOYFUL COMMITMENT

When we examine our lives and our vocation as religious missionaries, we are always thankful for the blessings we have received and willing to take up the challenges that are to come. We still have five missionary posts in Lilongwe, Mzimba, Mzuzu, Chipata, and Kanyanga, and two houses of formation. Our schools allow us to stay in close contact with families and their loved ones. The hospital in Kanyanga takes care of the country's poorest populations, promotes HIV prevention, and helps mothers feed their children. The center for human and spiritual growth in Chipata and the diocesan bookstore in Mzuzu also lend a helping hand to people in need.

We must not only think about what we are doing, but HOW we are doing it. Are we concerned for the people and do we have a human approach? Do we help them heal and bring them happiness? Do we encourage unity and peace? Are we focused on personal growth? How well do we work with children, youth, and the sick? What is our commitment to the ecology?

ALL TOGETHER

The quality of our community life is of utmost importance; working together in a family spirit, developing a sense of belonging wherever we are and in whatever we do must be a priority. We must always remember that it is our duty to bring the Kingdom of God to life among ourselves and with the laity.

Currently, we are lacking personnel. Many of our missionaries have returned home and the younger Sisters are studying. Our goal is to give the very best of ourselves, but our numbers are few and our tasks are multiplying. In the province of Our Lady of Africa, we are only twenty-seven Sisters managing seven households and several projects. To make this possible, we share the apostolic and community services. We make sure that our work conveys our desire to serve, and encourages personal growth and enthusiasm for the Kingdom.

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD?

In the next few years, we will no doubt see a wider variety of ministers who will address the province's current needs, such as private daycares, new schools and clinics.

Our future is in the hands of the Lord. Formation, responsibility, and transparency will continue to be challenging in a society where corruption and disloyalty are common currency. Honest work and simple living will be among our priorities. We know there will be difficulties, but our hearts are filled with the Spirit of Thanksgiving because we trust that God and the Virgin Mary will guide us. We will continue to explore new missionary paths with unwavering faith.

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The Young *Samuels* of Pucallpa (1 Sam 3,1-11)

In 2003, the Second American Missionary Conference (CAM2) took place in Medellin, Columbia. The conference is famous for its commitment to the poor and its support for the missionary cause, and ever since, Latin Americans have been filled with fiery enthusiasm. One of their slogans is ***"IT'S OUR TURN TO BE MISSIONARIES!"*** And aren't they right? Inspired by their momentum, Sister Ederlina, m.i.c. helps us relive the Children's Missionary Group festival.

By Ederlina Torres, M.I.C.

MISSIONARY WALK

It's Saturday, May 30, 2015 in Pucallpa, Peru. The city is celebrating Children's Missionary Group Day, a holiday created by the apostolic vicariate of Peru. More than 2,000 children from different elementary schools, parishes, and educational institutions around the world attend, accompanied by facilitators, parents, teachers, priests, and sisters. At eight in the morning, the entire congregation meets at Ovalode Sáenz Peña to start the missionary walk.

As Director of the Pontifical Missionary Societies of Pucallpa's apostolic vicariate, and as the leader of the organisation, I showed up early to greet the missionary children as they arrived by bus. Each child was wearing a color that represented their country of origin: Africa, Asia, the Americas, Oceania, and Europe. The children wore their colours proudly and with dignity. What a beautiful sight!

From the start, the joy of the congregation was palpable. I took the time to welcome everyone and explain how the day would progress. ***The missionary walk officially marks the beginning of the Missionary Festival: Together, we will share our joy in being Jesus' missionaries in communion with all the world's children. We will walk ten blocks to Commerce College, our meeting place for this year. Our trek should take about 30 minutes.***

Once the police escorts had arrived to ensure our safety, we began our walk. The children were thrilled to participate in such an exciting event. They sang and danced, and people in the street often stopped to watch and listen. The children complained that the walk was too short! There we were, already at Commerce College.

MEETING WITH GOD

The facilitators, Pilar Rojas and Susan Garcia, joined the children with great

enthusiasm. Throughout the day, they provided guidance and asked the children to think about the missionary cause and the children of the world. We wanted to raise their awareness and encourage their involvement. I explained the importance of understanding the missionary's role: ***Being a missionary means sowing the seeds of the Gospel! We are the witnesses of love, joy, truth, and forgiveness in the world. These characteristics open up your heart and illuminate your path to Jesus. Children, you are such good listeners. You can listen to Jesus' voice. He is calling you for a greater commitment, as he did with young Samuel*** (1 Samuel 3: 1-21). ***Today, we are also young Samuels, and we want to say to God: "Speak, for your servant is listening."***

This theme is meant to reach those whom God has spoken to. God speaks to everyone, but today, young ones, he is speaking to you in particular. From now on, as members of the Children's Missionary Group, you can carry and spread the light of Jesus to those who do not know him. We continue to pray that the Children's and Adolescents' missionary members will increase in all the parishes and educational institutions in the Pucallpa diocese. We pray that we will always recognize the need to spread the Gospel under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

I'm convinced that the Missionary Festival's positive energy and enthusiasm will follow us along our missionary path. I have complete confidence in you, in the goodness and generosity of your hearts. Always remember that Jesus came into the world to teach us to love one another as he loved us – unconditionally and with respect for our differences.

After this moving speech, I introduced the missionaries who were in attendance and presented photographs of the founders of the Children's Missionary Group. The children reacted positively and with animated applause.

Finally, Father Gregorio Chisholm, episcopal vicar, and Father Alejandro Cervantes, missionary from Guadeloupe, met with the children and read them the Bible story of young Samuel. The children listened attentively and were happy to ask questions.

MEETING WITH THE WORLD

The children were given a rest; drinks and snacks were served. The gesture was appreciated and gave everyone a well-deserved break. The children had the opportunity to socialize and make new friends. Afterwards, the children paraded their different continents: Africa, Asia, the Americas, Oceania, and Europe. As the continents filed past, the traditional clothes of each country were presented, and two characteristics were given. Finally, the Garden of Missionary Children put on an artistic gymnastics show. Seeing all those young missionaries was wonderful, and also deeply moving.

To conclude the festival, Father Gérald Veilleux, P.M.É., congratulated and blessed all the children. He thanked them for their active and enthusiastic participation in the Children's Missionary Group festival. The children were filled with joy and seemed happy to continue this meeting until the evening. Eventually the festivities came to an end. We gave thanks for all the day's blessings and hoped that Jesus' mission would forever be in the children's hearts.

PHOTOS:

[1] The missionary march, each continent is represented.

[2] In the bus

Photos Credits: E. Torres, M.I.C.

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)

Noëlla Brisson, M.I.C.
(Sr. Marie-Alvarez)
1916-2015
Casselman, Ontario

Sister Noëlla resumed her life as follows, "I was an instrument in God's hands." Born on December 24th, she was received by her family as a gift and grew up in a faith-filled milieu. At the age of twenty-one, she heard the call of God and opted for the religious missionary life. Bilingual, courageous, determined, resourceful, and joyful Sr. Noëlla took up many challenges. In Canada, Hong Kong, Philippines and Japan, she was involved in the education field and mission awareness, she worked in penitentiaries and assisted disabled youth; wherever she went, Sister offered hope to the hopeless. From above, help us dear Sister to pursue the mission with passion.

Noëlla Fréchette, M.I.C.
(Sr. Marie-Noëlla)
1931-2016
St. Apollinaire, Quebec

At the age of twenty, Sr. Noëlla entered our novitiate, thus fulfilling her childhood dream. The Holy Childhood movement in schools awakened her desire to be a missionary; this she was for forty years in Africa, either in Malawi or in Zambia. Her courage, generosity and great love motivated her in all her commitments: private courses in sewing and cooking, visiting the sick, and especially giving much of her energy towards the physically handicap—helping them to become autonomous was one of her priorities. Periodically, she went to pray at a monastery to renew her missionary flame. Dear Sister Noëlla, now in God's eternal presence, may you continue to pray for us.

Mrs. Jocelyne Dallaire

February 14, 2016, we received the sad news that Mrs. Jocelyne Dallaire had passed away. As contact person for our magazine *Le Précurseur (French version of MIC Mission News)*, she was known by many of our collaborators. Mrs. Dallaire was also a dedicated Associate of our Institute for the past thirty-five years; she will be remembered for her apostolic, missionary and generous heart. Her work and involvement, for a period of thirty years, at CECI *(Center for International Studies and Cooperation)* opened her to a world of partnerships and international solidarity; she graciously responded to many needs.

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