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MIC Mission News

To sow seeds of joy and hope

Since 1923

Taiwan

Fruits Beyond Our Borders

(Quebec) Canada

Comfort Food

In Focus

What Is There to Eat?

PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS – 2016

JULY
Latin America and the Caribbean
That the Church in Latin America and the Caribbean may announce the Gospel with renewed vigour and enthusiasm.

AUGUST
Living the Gospel
For all Christians, that they may live the Gospel, giving witness to faith, honesty, and love of neighbour.

SEPTEMBER
Mission to Evangelize
By participating in the Sacraments and meditating on Scripture, may Christians become more aware of their mission to evangelize.

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

Bread of Life

Our grocery stores offer us an astounding variety of bread: white, brown, rye, multigrain, baguette, and even home-baked.

In many countries, bread is the primary source of food, much like rice in Asia. But bread is also a symbol of everyday life: *we work for our bread and butter* and *to put bread on the table*; *we break bread*, or *take the bread out of someone's mouth*. All of these idioms demonstrate how fundamental bread is to our daily lives.

Sharing bread at the dinner table is a ritual of friendship and fraternity. We talk about our day, enjoy communion with our guests, and even address difficult problems that must be resolved. In these moments, bread becomes a symbol of love, understanding, and kindness.

The Lord understood the importance of bread and offered us the Bread of Life, bread that transforms us from within. Today it is given freely to the crowds at the Eucharist. Standing to receive it is a gesture that transforms us into spiritual nourishment for others.

During the summer season, families and friends gather under the warmth of the sun for picnics or celebrations. They share bread, as Jesus did at the Cenacle, and it becomes a symbol of their friendship; it is bread that nourishes.

What are we eating? Nourishment is much more than the food we enjoy. While food keeps our bodies healthy, the Bread of Life keeps our hearts open and welcoming.

The following essays invite you to taste the bread that has a special flavour—a bread that was prepared with exceptional love by the Head Chef Jesus.

Happy reading!

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

DÉLIA'S COLUMN

Mother Délia would say, "good things are for good children." She wished her spiritual daughters to accept everything with gratitude; meals were meant to nourish the body as well as the mind. Thus, she insisted that healthy food be on the menu as well as spiritual reading.

When news came to Mother Délia that some of her daughters were sick, she wrote: Do not save on food for the Sisters. Your first worry, after that of becoming a saint, should be the health of each one. (April 11, 1910)

Writing to her Sisters in China: Choose the food that is more adapted to the climate and to your stomachs. (November 24, 1910)

In various instances, she wrote to her missionaries: It is necessary to have wholesome and appetizing food... (Canton, China - November 3, 1915); ...nutritious and sustaining meals should be served... (Japan-April 26, 1927); ...but without superfluity... (Japan - February 6, 1931); ...let there be no waste... (Vancouver, B.C. - March 4, 1933); ...eat well to maintain your physical strength and to grow even stronger so as to work with energy and be at the service of God and of those He entrusts to your care. (Shek-Lung, China -June 10, 1926)

Our *Precursor* should be read during dinner time. (April 17, 1931)

Our souls as well as our bodies need to have sustaining food; we have a good number of fine books in which there is abundant spiritual content to nourish our souls. (November 27, 1931)

I count on each one of you to work a long time for God's interests, for this you must eat well, sleep well and be joyful. (February 5, 1932)

When spiritual reading takes place during meal time make sure it is well done, thus the souls will be nourished - like the body finding its proper nourishment. (December 6, 1932)

FOR ALL FAVORS RECEIVED-OR-DESIRED

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What is there to eat? I'M STARVING!

By André Gadbois

Cooking shows and culinary magazines have never been so popular, and yet around the world there have never been so many starving people. Perhaps our hearts need to rise up, like a freshly baked loaf of bread.

On the morning of Saint-Valentine's Day, the sky was clear and sunny – but the thermometer read -29C! Ouch. As I cleaned the dishes in the kitchen sink, I looked outside and noticed a colourful flutter of wings. I had recently refilled the long, narrow birdfeeder hanging from the patio ledge, and the birds were crowding around excitedly – like people flocking to the dinner table. The frail little juncos and sparrows were pushed aside by the larger blue jays, and they in turn were chased off by the mourning doves. Finally an imposing grey squirrel drove all the birds away. From a distance, the cardinals watched and waited, tentative and cautious. The woodpecker and chickadees pecked out their soft, savoury dinner from the suspended log feeder, far from the commotion. Was this the law of the jungle? The nature of things?

In his apostolic exhortation *The Joy of the Gospel*, Pope Francis writes: ***"The thirst for power and possessions knows no limits. In this system, which tends to devour everything that stands in the way of increased profits, whatever is fragile, like the environment, is defenseless before the interests of a deified market, which become the only rule."***[1] Outside on my patio, the strong had unconsciously imposed their rule over the weak, leaving the smaller birds nothing

[1] POPE FRANCIS, *The Joy of the Gospel*, Ed. Médiaspaul 2013, No. 56.
[2] Idem, No. 92.
[3] LEBEL Robert, CD *Messe du soir*, Ed. Pontbriand, Thedford Mines.
[4] POPE FRANCIS, *Laudato Si – On Care for our Common Home,* No. 98.

but crumbs. I could almost hear them crying out: "Mom, when are we eating?" or "Dad, there's nothing left for us!" In our conscious and humane society, little ones cry out in towns, villages, and cities alike. Their parents are defenceless against the faceless superpowers that progressively reign over them. Are we aware of "the sacred grandeur of our neighbour?"[2] The power struggle I witnessed at the birdfeeder made me think about the inequality of our so-called "civilized" society.

Distinguish yourself by nourishing your neighbour.

FOOD FOR THE BODY AND SOUL

During his lifetime, John the Baptist was aware of his society's inequalities – the imbalance at the birdfeeder, so to speak. He vowed to improve the situation in the name of God, and asked the people to change their hearts (John 1:19-28). He announced that a man was already amongst them who could help: the gentle and humble Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus removed the heavy, individual gourds from the shoulders of those who asked for help, and instead gave them a lighter, shared load (Matthew 11:28-30). ***Love each other***, he said, ***this is the only thing my Father desires***. He left the Temple and walked down the streets, he witnessed the increasing selfishness and suffering of his people. He saw men oppressed, enslaved and exploited by other men. He saw discrimination and loneliness. With compassion, Jesus began to share meals with his people, supporting them in their search (bread, wheat, fish, lamb, wine, water, and salt – but also dignity, justice, peace, and kindness). He wanted to help them understand the importance of gathering around a dinner table, of resting together and sharing a moment of joy, reconciliation, and solidarity with the weakest and most vulnerable. Eating together encourages sharing, awakens and nourishes the conscience, and forges strong friendships. The Son of God knew that a good meal fortifies the body as well as the soul. Before his death, condemned by a frenzied tyrant, he spoke of a simple supper: a fraction of bread. He wanted to guide his disciples and help them understand his ultimate desire: that all be one; that everyone be fed; that they distinguish themselves by nourishing their neighbour (with food, medication, water, kindness, knowledge, justice, or forgiveness); that their joy may nourish those around them. During this last supper, in order to reveal God's Mind, Jesus washed the feet of his disciples in remembrance of the liberation of his people in Egypt. This gesture demonstrated how far his disciples needed to go to feed their fellow men. ***This you will do in memory of me***.

TYING MY APRON, AS HE DID

Setting the table, as He did; tying my apron, as He did; waking every morning and serving with love, as He did. This is how Robert Lebel[3] describes Jesus' disciple: someone who hears the question "what are we eating?" and sets the table so that all can be one; so that hunger can be satiated, starting with those most often forgotten. Small, daily meals can become important events that nourish the body as well as the soul – much like the large-scale meals prepared by non-profits for the crowds of people who are cold and hungry. Our daily meals are great occasions for nourishing the hearts and consciences of those around us. We nourish their bodies without forgetting their souls. We nourish the way Jesus of Nazareth did: not as an ascetic separate from the world, or as an enemy of all that is good in life[4]. Like leaven in dough, he sought to nourish; he refused to transform stones into bread and instead offered us freely his own Bread of Life.

These words sound like something straight out of a fairy tale, but they were spoken by Mother Marie of the Holy Spirit, the Foundress of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. She was describing a dream she'd had: a vision of a wheat field extending as far as the eye could see, and sunlight illuminating all five continents. The thousands of miraculous wheat heads bloomed and became the faces of smiling children. The smooth gold sea suddenly became an array of skin colours, expressions, and languages. At the heart of this collection of cultures, the Malagasy people were answering the call. Amongst them, Sister Catherine's voice could be heard: singing hymns and teaching the ways of the heart.

The clamour of a colourful field

By Audrey Charland

A NEW VOCATION GENTLY BLOOMS

Born in Masoarivo, Madagascar, the parents of little Henriette Catherine Raveronomenjanahary raised her with love and Christian values; her faith would later be strengthened during her time at the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception Boarding School. She had a calm and jovial temperament, and slowly but surely she learned the meaning of thanksgiving, a lesson she applied throughout her religious formation and during her many activities.

Inspired by Délia's life and dream, she always knew how to make her spiritual mother's message tangible and relevant. Sister Catherine is one of the first MIC pioneers of Madagascar. Although there was still much to do for her community, she was asked to spend some time in another country greatly in need: Cuba. However, "out of sight, out of mind" was never a phrase that applied to Sister Catherine.

LENDING A SYMPATHETIC EAR

For twenty years, Sister Catherine worked in the West Indies, dedicating her body and soul to Christian formation, tirelessly pursuing the Gospel ideal. She helped both the young and the old, and families welcomed her guidance readily. She knew how to win over their hearts. As she walked through the streets, doors opened without her needing to knock. The secret of this generous sister was her bright smile and sparkling eyes, and the charity she brought to her simple surroundings.

During her missionary work abroad, Sister Catherine did not forget her native country's troubles. Her return to Malagasy soil was far from relaxing. Filled with thanksgiving, she spent part of her holiday visiting different neighbourhoods and continuing her work with youths at the Notre-Dame-de-la-Salette Parish, in Morondava. In particular, she prepared many of them for confirmation. Eager to participate in the great project shared by all Christians – spreading the Gospel – the young adults expressed an idea that had slowly begun to form within their group.

THE BIRD WHO LEARNED TO SING

Not long after, in 1985, a choir called *Kéroubim*[1] was put together. Once again, Sister Catherine guided her protégés through this enterprise, introducing them to the singular art of singing hymns to

[1] *Kéroubim* means *cherub* in Malagasy language.

PHOTOS:
[1] Sr. Catherine, M.I.C.
[2] Kéroubim Choir
Photos Credit: MIC

God. She was very talented in this respect, and was happy to share her passion with them – a passion that seemed to be contagious. When she returned from Cuba for a visit a few years later, she was delighted to find that the small group of singers had grown significantly.

What better way to honour God...

Today, Sister Catherine still talks about the choir with emotion, and borrows the words of Mother Marie of the Holy Spirit: ***"What better way to honour God, as far as small, weak creatures are able to do in this world, than to give Him children who will sing his praises for centuries to come."*** She experienced such joy when she met the new choir members and renewed ties with her original "disciples".

The *Kéroubim* choir is still very active in its original parish. The members are on the lookout for new challenges and are constantly trying to improve themselves. Many activities have been added to their program: every week they sing during the Sunday Eucharist, and will often perform during large outdoor celebrations. They also give various concerts and participate in "Gospel Galas". During their liturgical formation, these young people were able to harmonize notes and chords, and share their faith through a variety of songs.

There is every reason to believe in the perpetuity of these actions. Sister Catherine has an interesting analogy. She compares her choir to *a tree planted in fertile soil that grows stronger and more beautiful year after year. The person who planted the tree does not know that the Lord made it grow.*

This is testimony of an event in the life of a missionary, Sister Henriette Catherine Raveronomenjanahary, an event that does not diminish the small gestures and words of comfort that characterized her existence. She is the perfect incarnation of a woman who ages without others noticing. But very little noise is needed to create an echo. In this era of speed and transience, we underestimate the value of small bites. Let us remember that we travel farther and easier with only a humble daily morsel, savoured with our loved ones, than with a feast in our bellies that could feed a continent, gobbled up greedily, all alone at the table.

Just Out of the Blue

I am an ordinary person with an ordinary life. But in that commonness, the Lord invited me. As far as I can remember, I was at the age which psychology describes as–one having a "quarter-life crisis". I was feeling incomplete and restless, looking for some pieces in the puzzle of my life, searching for meaning in life. To state it plainly, I was at a crossroad, a very important one, as if to say 'you better choose wisely since it is for a lifetime'.

By Katherine Broso, M.I.C., scholastic

A rewind in my story goes this way. I was in my second year of college when a Sister came for a vocation talk in our class. Just out of the blue, my best friend invited me to join her to become a Sister even if it was an impulsive whim. I said "yes" without thinking. When I came home, I asked my mother if I could be a Sister: she gave me a sad face and a big no. I did not feel bad after our conversation. But I remember that I was drawn to the peaceful countenance of the Sister and I wondered why there was a mysterious joy in her when, in fact, she looked poor. I kept it in the innermost part of my heart.

SEARCHING FOR MORE

After graduating from college, I tried and failed the CPA board exams. This seemingly ill-fated event encouraged me to find work so I could move on with life and help my family as well. In spite of the Asian financial crisis in 1997, I was able to work for the China Banking Corporation in Makati City.

In the midst of living a good life I came to a point when I asked myself if what I had and what I was doing was all that life could offer. I reckoned that God was rocking my comfort zone. Then an angel in disguise invited me and my friends to join a "Life in the Spirit" seminar given at a Catholic Charismatic Community. I did not hesitate to participate. During the "baptism of fire", a profound religious experience inspired me to search for something more. From that day, I decided to know more about this God whose voice I kept hearing in silence.

I started to find ways that helped me be more connected to God: not missing daily mass, listening to the homily attentively and attending the prayer meetings. In short, I tried to be a better person. The peace and serenity I felt later moved me to search for a religious congregation because I became drawn to silence and solitude.

Leaving home and friends was very difficult because they were everything to me.

A STEP TOWARDS A CHOICE

Then my boss at the office, an AsMIC, (Associate of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception) invited me for a vocation awareness session at the MIC Provincial House in Greenhills. It was my first time to meet two MIC Sisters and to stay at their place for a day; there, I felt a sense of belongingness. I asked the vocation directress for some sessions and later during the vocation discernment retreat, I found affirmation that this was the congregation I wanted to risk my life with. Actually it was the spirituality of Mother Delia, which is Thanksgiving, that fascinated me and made me decide to try their "come and see".

Leaving home and friends was very difficult because they were everything to me. I even foolishly asked the Lord for a "sign" and He lovingly did so. My sister had her first pregnancy, and my mother came to half-heartedly accept my decision even if it caused all her tears to fall. It was a grace-filled moment for us.

When I formally entered in 2007, it felt like I was walking into a different world, but the Lord graced me with enough courage to persevere in a way of life I so dearly wanted for the rest of my life. The pain I endured the most was detachment from my family and friends, although I knew I had chosen the better part. The integration sessions helped me to face my issues, my shortcomings and to focus on my formation. The innate sense of gratitude gradually blossomed. At the novitiate, I had an early taste of internationality with Chinese and Vietnamese companions. I pronounced my first vows in 2010, on the MIC Thanksgiving Day!

THE MIC INSTITUTE – COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

Now fast forward… towards the end of 2015, I arrived here in Montreal, the land of the MIC foundation. It was surreal for me. With ease I was able to adjust to the weather; instantly I fell in love with the snow, which for me is a special manifestation of God's presence in nature. Adjustments? It takes patience to dress up during winter and it's not that comfortable going out of the house bundled up like a "sausage". I got accustomed to the food and neither am I deprived of my comfort diet. Honestly speaking the only difficult thing for me is the language. But God provided me with very good French teachers. I will be forever grateful to them.

Now, I live the present moment by being immersed in the French language, a pre-requisite prior to the Formation Program in August. I am glad that my Sisters are supportive, life-giving and loving companions on my journey. I am constantly reminded by God's messengers how lucky and privileged I am to be here in the land of Mother Délia, whom I love very much. Every day, I choose to do my best to understand her language. It's like when I fell during a snowy morning on Beaubien Street, I quickly picked myself up and I learned how to walk safely in the snow. This experience reminds me that God will never abandon me. I believe He will always be with me as he was in my past. I am up and ready for this adventure in my MIC homeland. Merci Seigneur!

PHOTOS:

[1] Sr. Katherine, M.I.C.
Photo Credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

[2] Katherine with her family
Photo Credit: MIC

"Thank You" from Madagascar

The Literacy Center – *Photo Credit:* MIC

In the *MIC Mission News*, Volume 42, No. 4 - December 2015, a request was made to help fund the new bush school in Madagascar. Through your generous donations, a sum of $10,000 was collected. This fund will help build a new classroom at St. Joseph's school and assist children who now come to the Literacy Center in Tsaramasay.

A message from the MIC Sisters in Madagascar:

To all who extended a helping hand,

We have received your generous contributions and we are most thankful. The donations will help us build a new classroom and thanks to your support we will be able to welcome the students who will begin their fourth year. We hope that many children will enroll at Saint Joseph's School.

May the Lord bless you with His finest Gifts, and to each one of you, a most sincere "THANK YOU".

Sr. Miriama Ranorosoa, M.I.C., Ambatofotsy-Est, Madagascar

Thanks to your generous donations, students now have a clean, appropriate space to learn and play. We bought books and educational materials for the teachers and students. I am most grateful and I thank you wholeheartedly.

I will now be able to teach some notions in computer science. The classes will be subdivided in small groups and each student will be able to work on laptops at least once a month – the fact we have few computers, sessions have to be limited.

Hopefully, if God wills, we project being able to replace the existing dilapidated roof and heighten an existing wall behind the school which is too low and dangerous as it can easily be climbed over.

Again, a very sincere thank you for your generous support, we are most grateful.

Sr. Nadya Rakotonirina, M.I.C., Tsaramasay, Madagascar

We express our most sincere "THANK YOU" to you all, dear friends and benefactors, who have responded to the request presented in our magazine *MIC Mission News* (Vol. 42 Oct.-Dec. 2015). To give to the illiterate youth a chance to be educated in a space they can call their own, their school, is to give them hope that one day they will be financially independent, it is giving them an opportunity to learn about their own culture and of discovering a world beyond their own borders. Your support will give them a chance to acquire knowledge in science, art, history, and many more subjects which will enrich their lives.

It is said that education is a passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs to the people who prepare for it today. (Malcolm X)

MERCI

IN FOCUS

What are we eating?

A recent trend in television has been to showcase top chefs from around the world. They have taken center stage and are more popular than ever. *What are we eating?* has become a pivotal question at the centre of our culinary activities.

Chefs have many responsibilities besides cooking. They must know how to manage and lead a team. They must be creative and versatile to design menus that follow the seasons and please a wide range of tastes.

Chefs are also concerned with the health and wellbeing of their customers, for the good of the body as well as the soul.

Didn't the Lord say: *"Human beings live not on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"*? (Matthew 4:4)

Orlok / Shutterstock.com

Let us gives thanks to God for the meals we are given, and remember the thousands of others who are not asking themselves "*what are we eating?*" but rather, "*will we be eating?*"

After completing a degree in hospitality and tourism at the "Institut de tourisme et d'hôtellerie du Québec" (ITHQ), Martin St-Jean worked as a cook and food service director for various senior residences and catering companies. Today, he is the head chef for the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. We met with him to discuss his culinary journey.

Comfort Food

Interview by Carole Guévin

Carole: What sparked your passion for cooking?

Martin: To be honest, I've always been a bit of a glutton, and I loved sharing my favourite flavours and smells with others. I was trained as a butcher and for a while I worked in a grocery store, but what I really wanted to do was to cook.

Carole: Throughout your career, has there been a chef that inspired you?

Martin: Definitely! Mario Julien, head chef for *Club de golf Le Mirage*. He works directly with local producers and always promotes Quebec products. I find him very inspiring.

Carole: What culinary creation are you most proud of?

Martin: I made my very own wedding cake. It was far from perfect, but it was still a very special moment in my life.

Carole: In your opinion, what qualities are essential to become a great chef?

Martin: Passion for the job. Attention to detail, because the little things make all the difference. Good organisation and time management skills. Most importantly, you need to listen to your customers.

Carole: And who are your customers?

Martin: I cook for a group of very caring women. They've dedicated their lives to serving God and those less fortunate, and I'm lucky to work alongside them and learn about all they've accomplished.

Carole: Are they difficult to please?

Martin: To be frank, they are the most thankful customers I've ever had the pleasure of working with. They make me want to become a better chef, because they deserve the best!

Carole: What challenges do you enjoy most about being a chef?

Martin: I'm the head chef for Aramark at the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. The challenge is to be available for the customers while also making sure the kitchen runs smoothly. I'm in charge of managing personnel, ordering supplies, and creating menus for special events, such as religious holidays.

Carole: Is it difficult to prepare three meals a day?

Martin: Yes, definitely. Serving nearly 210 meals per service for a total of 630 meals per day requires a lot of discipline and organisation. Every service point has its own peculiarities, and sometimes I need to respect certain dietary restrictions. What's more, up to 60 meals per service are brought directly to the Délia Tétreault Pavilion care unit, and I'm responsible for registering and updating their menus. We have a 5-week menu that rotates with the seasons. Each year the menu is updated with the help of a small committee.

Carole: Tell us about your team.

Martin: Oh yes! Teamwork is crucial in this line of work. Success always depends on group effort. I try to practice humane management and focus on the strengths of my team. I have 17 employees. Every day, 8 of them service 3 different distribution points. They are a wonderfully diverse group, both in their cultures and life experiences. Diversity is definitely one of my team's strengths.

Carole: Does working in a religious community inspire you? If so, in what way?

Martin: Simply being able to grow in this serene community is calming. I'm an anxious person by nature, so the comfort and peace of the environment does me a world of good.

Carole: Do you think of your work as a mission?

Martin: Of course! Cooking is about listening, serving others, sharing, and learning. These tasks are part of our daily lives, and the same goes for every MIC throughout the world. Our work is necessary.

Carole: What's your favourite food?

Martin: I like everything, as long as I can share it with my family.

Carole: Who cooks at your house?

Martin: At home, I'm not the head chef! My wife Mélanie is a wonderful cook, but sometimes my skills and experience help her save time. We also love cooking as a family with our teenage daughters. They're fourteen and fifteen. Cooking is a great way to gather everyone together and enjoy something delicious.

Thank you, chef, for this interview and your time!

PHOTOS:

[1] Martin St-Jean, head chef (P. 11)
Photo Credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

[2] Syrian refugees families (P. 11)
Photo Credit: Orlok/Shutterstock

[3] Martin and his team – left to right: Martin St-Jean, Michel Choquette, Sébastien Charron, Valdomira Ferreira, Mona Eshac
Photo Credit: M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

After ten years of working as an animator for the *Faith and Light* organisation, Sister Adrienne decided to lend a hand at the Maria Goretti residence in Montreal. There, she listens to the daily struggles of young women who have come from all over the world in search of a better life.

Who you are makes a Difference

By Adrienne Guay M.I.C.

The Maria Goretti residence offers 220 rooms for women between the ages of 18 and 40. About 65% of these residents are immigrants who want nothing more than to live in a country where the economic, social, and political conditions offer opportunities for the future. Some prepare for the arrival of their families. The residence offers them a safe and affordable place to live, and recognizes their individual needs. Every year, between 500 and 600 young women stay at Maria Goretti. A few Canadians pass through as well for various reasons.

CHALLENGES FOR NEWCOMERS TO MONTREAL

Filled with determination, newcomers to Montreal are faced with many difficult challenges. They need to learn French in order to find a job, validate their diploma, take university courses, or sometimes they need to start their education from scratch. When they struggle to meet these challenges, I offer my support. So many difficulties lie ahead! Many feel discouraged because they've left everything behind, such as prestigious careers or government positions. For others who dreamed of an easy life in a golden Promised Land, the reality of their situation is a brutal awakening. Many had high expectations because Canada was advertised as a place of easy living. In reality, job searching is a lengthy process. Candidates start at the bottom because they need to gain basic work experience in Quebec before moving forward. Often, volunteer work gives them the opportunity to become familiar with our customs.

Yet another challenge to face is solitude. Newcomers are homesick, and living alone in a large residence breeds individualism. What's more, reconciling cultural mores, customs, and traditions is a difficult task, especially in a shared kitchen. Each person must choose their own time to cook their meal.

THE MISSION CAME TO ME

The insecurity of some and the ease of others reflect the residents' different circumstances and perspectives. The Maria Goretti residence is a neutral and secular space. Only the veil reveals the religion of some residents. How do I approach and communicate with them? I believe in

being quietly present: always ready to collaborate, help, inform, answer questions, or give practical information. My MIC formation, my years in Madagascar, my participation in World Youth Day events, my experience as a spiritual guide for Jesuits, and my commitment to the Centre Le Pèlerin have opened my mind and helped prepare me for my work with young immigrants.

At the residence, my mission is to understand the women's various perspectives and life experiences. How do I encourage interaction, dialogue, and exchange when each resident is so different, solitary, and reserved? One way is to organise social events, like movie screenings or bingo nights. I try to welcome and get to know the residents who attend, even if participation is low and inconsistent.

After two years of offering silent support and empathy, I had the opportunity to sit with a young woman dying of cancer, and accompany her as she returned to the house of our heavenly Father. ***Do you know where you're going?*** I asked. T***o the Good God…*** she answered. Yes, she understood the gravity of her situation. ***He's waiting for you!*** I said. She passed peacefully. Afterwards I realized that my being among these young women had an impact. The fruits of my labour were budding, slowly but surely. My time with some of the most sceptical residents had, in some cases, completely transformed them. And there were other positive results. One woman was handicapped and prone to depression, and had lost her job due to her physical condition. Surrounded by sympathetic ears, she was able to get back on her feet; today, she hopes to find a new job and stay in Quebec. She is thankful and filled with hope. Helping one another brought many residents together. A Muslim Iranian woman helped a deaf-mute African woman who was waiting for her CEGEP admission. In moments like this, the mission becomes a transmission.

HOPE INSPIRES ACTION

Not everyone knows how to use new technologies like tablet computers, smartphones, or digital music players. While these are marvellous communication tools, I often struggle with them. When I ask young people for help, this interaction brings us closer together. In all relationships, being able to listen and respect others makes all the difference. It's important to be available, to fight against solitude, and to leave your door ajar. Breaking the circle of indifference and welcoming those who seek companionship are attitudes that should be adopted. The young women at the residence should be accepted as they are, without prejudice, with their shyness, silences, and homesickness. To offer hope is essential. ***"Who you are makes a difference!"*** To read these words in a thank you card is most rewarding.

Simply put, I must be a significant and faithful witness by being benevolent, cordial, welcoming, and communicative. The most effective language is gratuitousness, love, and respect for each person's individual conscience. Upon hearing: YOU ARE MOTIVATED! I know that Someone dwells within me and I come to realize that my mission is to say, as many times as necessary, and often without words: YOU ARE IMPORTANT, WELCOME TO OUR HOME.

PHOTOS:
[1] Sr. Adrienne Guay and 2 young residents
[2] Young women living at Maria Goretti residence
Photos Credit: MIC

Three meals a day

By Émilien Roscanu

As a student who studies and works in downtown Montreal, I spend most of my time in a veritable urban jungle, one that is vibrant and brimming with life. Restaurants, cafés, grocery stores, and hangout spots are around every corner. There are theatres and cinemas, and a variety of stores offer all kinds of products and services. But the city's apparent prosperity is not shared by everyone, and hides an important societal problem. Thousands of homeless people roam the streets of Montreal, excluded and unable to taste the fruit of our Promised Land.

According to census data collected last summer, more than 3,000 homeless people are living in the streets of Montreal. While the count is lower than expected, it does not include the many "hidden homeless" who temporarily have a roof over their heads. The official count does, however, allow us to better understand the issue of homelessness. In most cases, individuals find themselves on the street due to financial troubles, addiction, or situations of violence. Every day, these 3,000 men and women have no other choice than to sleep under the stars or turn to shelters and community centres, places that are in high demand and seriously underfunded. In a society as wealthy as ours, it is unbelievable that so many individuals are left to fend for themselves – especially since this number does not account for those who struggle to keep a roof over their heads, and who often sacrifice their basic needs to make rent. Poverty is an important problem that is not limited to the 3,000 homeless. In reality, countless others are unable to feed themselves properly due to rising food prices.

FOOD AND INFLATION

Once again this year, the price of a grocery basket increased disproportionately, and might very well reach 4% in 2016. The increase is mainly due to the Canadian dollar's decline and has greatly impacted the least fortunate of our society, making it difficult for them to feed themselves. We can't optimise our budget forever, and certain food products that have become too expensive will invariably be replaced by cheaper, less nutritious alternatives. The predictions are overwhelming, particularly when you consider that the 4% rise will mostly affect fruits and vegetables. Their prices already increased by 10% in 2015. The United Nations (UN) recently announced that 2016 is the year of the legume, while the price of meat and substitutes are skyrocketing along with vegetable prices. The average over-indebted Canadian family will be hit hard by these increases.

Our system of wealth distribution has some serious shortcomings. At a time when we need to show compassion, love, and solidarity for our neighbour, we prefer to divide, marginalize, and isolate one another. Food banks are helpful for those struggling to make ends meet, but are also underfunded. In the future we should turn to social programs to avoid such last-resort solutions. To properly address homelessness, the social net needs to be tightened. Financial difficulties associated with addiction, mental health, and violence need to be tackled *before* individuals end up on the street, not after. We need to make the collective decision to help our brothers and sisters. We need to make concrete societal choices that have a broader scope than our small, individual gestures; only then will we be able to feed one another and put a roof over all our heads.

POPS IN THE STREET

While many systemic structural issues need to be resolved, we can't lose sight of the individuals who have fallen through the cracks. We need to be inspired by the courage and determination of our peers who have spent their lives fighting poverty and hunger with compassion and love. Father Emmett "Pops" Johns is a living example of dedication to the less fortunate, and his actions encourage us to think about our past and present values. After working as a pastor in different parishes in Montreal, Emmett Johns decided to dedicate his life to the homeless. He started *Le Bon Dieu Dans La Rue*, an organization which began with a large van that he would drive through the downtown city streets until the wee hours of the morning, serving food to street kids and offering them a warm place to sleep. Today, thanks to a hardworking team of volunteers, the organization continues to help those in need. Pops' legacy should inspire us, encourage us to give a bit of ourselves, and urge us to band together. Motivated by his faith, he changed the lives of countless people. It is up to us to follow his example of solidarity and love for humanity. It is our turn to do some good.

PHOTOS: Shutterstock

Dining at a crossroad of cultures

By Murielle Dubé, M.I.C.

PHOTOS:
Typical Bolivian foods
Photos Credit: M. Ruiz, M.I.C.

Welcome to our annual *feria*, a festival of veritable crossroad of cultures. On this day, students from the Institut d'Éducation Rurale (IER) wear their finest clothes and prepare delicious dishes to represent their countries of origin: Potosi, La Paz, and Cochabamba. Their presentations show how adaptable and creative their countries' cuisines are. The locals know how to make the most of their land and cherish their Pachamama (Mother Earth). There is a stark difference between Chapare's lush vegetation, the arid Andean plateaus, and the various regions in between; but wherever you go in South America, people are cooking, eating, and savouring delicious food. Read on to discover their exquisite dishes.

COCHABAMBA

Cochabamba is a city that was once known as 'Bolivia's cellar' because of its many corn and potato silos. Environmental issues such as global warming, water shortages, urbanization, natural disasters (hail), and irregular rainfall have made life very difficult for local farmers. Despite these challenges, food is plentiful in Cochabamba, and the vegetable on everyone's plate is without a doubt the potato. There are a multitude of potato-based dishes, including *lunca, huanch'a, imilla, runa, sutawaki*, and *ollo*. If you are lucky, someone will serve you *wathia* (potatoes cooked in the earth). An unforgettable dish! In Cochabamba, tubers like white or red *oka, walusa*, and *papalisa* are also common. They taste lovely and will leave you wanting more.

POTOSI

In Potosi, the poorest region of Bolivia, quinoa is everywhere. The healthy grain is increasingly sought-after in countries around the world. Wheat and oats are also central to the Potosi diet – and potatoes of course! In the Andes (Potosi, La Paz, Oruro) the temperature is frigid, so a

dehydration method is used to transform potatoes into *chuñoor thunta*. For a Bolivian, there's nothing more delicious!

SANTA-CRUZ

In tropical regions, there is an abundance of fruit, vegetables, cassava, and rice. The heat and humidity make the soil extremely fertile. Fish is also a mainstay of the local diet, but not seafood; unfortunately Bolivia has no access to the sea.

Have you heard of the *locoto*? Look out for this piping hot pepper! It will add some heat to your meals and make all the difference in flavour.

SELF-FINANCING

You can't visit the IER without checking out their chicken coop. With the help of a few Canadian benefactors, the coop was created to help the IER self-finance. The fresh eggs sell very quickly, and some of the profits are reserved for the students as many of them can't cover their housing fees. What's more, a vegetable garden allows the students to farm and eat what they've cultivated.

At the IER, we also love cake. Whenever there's a celebration, we indulge in a wonderful homemade cake baked by our expert chefs, Yolanda and Baciliza. Our last celebration was the 11th of February, when we honoured a few of our MIC members: Gisèle Lachapelle, born in Joliette, was celebrating her 60 years of religious service; Sonia Quispe, a scholastic Bolivian, was celebrating her sixth year; and Pierrette Ranomenjanahary (from Madagascar) and Rouseline Tirésias (Haiti) had just entered the noviciate. It was truly a wonderful celebration.

THE WAY TO THE HEART IS THROUGH THE STOMACH

The IER also sows the word of God: ***"Son of man, feed your stomach, and fill your body with this scroll which I am giving to you"*** (Ez. 3:3). Every morning, from 7:30 to 8:00, we meet and share God's words. Even though the students are a mix of Catholics, Baptists, Evangelists, and Pentecostals, we meet for spiritual nourishment. Our cultural and religious diversity doesn't separate us; instead it invites us to join forces and share the evangelical values the world so desperately needs: solidarity, mercy, service, and self-sacrifice.

There is a quote by Mother Délia that follows us everywhere: ***"Sow happiness with both hands; it is the bread most needed on this poor earth!"*** Let us be joyful! The Lord loves us and is always with us.

TO POTENTIAL BENEFACTORS:

The IER needs to purchase a new van. Our current vehicle has been in continuous service since 2004 and is no longer safe. We need the van to market our eggs and honey, to supervise nursing internships at different rural hospitals, and to transport food to the institute and to the missionaries living in remote areas. How grateful we would be to receive a helping hand.

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The Fruits Beyond Our Borders

For the past sixty years, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (MIC) have lived among the Taiwanese people and shared the highs and lows of their history. Today, the MIC Community situated in the Notre-Dame-de-la-Visitation region includes eight Taiwanese Sisters and two Chinese Sisters, one of which is a scholastic. Their commitment to the country's 2.3 million inhabitants is a ray of sunshine, and the fruits of their labour can be found far beyond the borders of Taiwan.

By Mary Hsu Pei-Fang, M.I.C.

SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

During the 20th century, an important land reform stimulated Taiwan's economy and allowed the country to develop rapidly. This period of advancement is often referred to as the Taiwanese Miracle. Their high-tech industries and electronic products gained great global significance, and after decades under an authoritarian regime, Taiwan fervently hoped to become a democracy.

On January 16, 2016, independent candidate Tsai Ing-Wen won the presidential election with a large majority and became the island's first female president. She promised to create a transparent and responsible government, one that would listen to the needs of its people.

However, many questions remain unanswered, such as Taiwan's political status. The country claims complete and legitimate sovereignty of its territory. Despite increased economic and commercial exchanges, the relations between Mainland China and Taiwan have not reached the level of trust necessary for an open dialogue.

THE CHURCH OF TAIWAN

Nearly 10,000 people attended the Eucharistic Congress in June 2014. The theme of the conference was "LET THE LITTLE CHILDREN COME TO ME", and to mark the occasion, three hundred children received the Eucharist for the first time. The conference awakened the fire and love

of the Eucharist and encouraged participants to become true apostles according to the new evangelization.

In early August 2014, about four hundred youths between the ages of 18 and 35 came together for Taiwan Youth Day. Ever since, one of our Sisters at the Hsinchu Diocese has continued to organize meetings for young Taiwanese who want to discuss the meaning of life. The Eucharistic youth movement promotes a life of union with God and the commitment of Christians. Together, the leader of this movement and its members organize summer camps for children.

Under the direction of the Jesuits and an MIC Sister, retreats and personal guidance is offered to adults. Many people participate to deepen their sense of Christian identity.

During the MIC's 60th anniversary in Taiwan, the president of the Guansi Parish council praised the wonderful work the Jesuits and the MIC Sisters had accomplished together for the people.

The 25th anniversary of the ASMIC association (Associates of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception) was also celebrated. The association currently has 43 active members who contribute to the life of the local Church according to their individual talents and in the spirit of thanksgiving. We are apostolic Sisters working in collaboration with the dioceses and the diverse religious communities.

BEYOND BORDERS

China has always held a special place in the heart of our Foundress, Délia Tétreault. For this reason, the Sisters of Taiwan often visit the country and occasionally speak with young women interested in dedicating their life to God.

Religion is strictly controlled in China, and as foreigners we can't share our Institute's message the way we would like. Our mission in China is very difficult, but we think of it as a challenge, testing our charisma and our spirit of thanksgiving, pushing us to continue the work our pioneers started more than 100 years ago. By investing our time and money, we hope to inspire religious vocations and eventually form future Chinese MIC Sisters from mainland China.

Currently, a young MIC from Mainland China is a member of a Christian group in Taiwan, and yet another has begun to study Theology at Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei. We have high hopes that the young MICs will be able to meet the challenges ahead and complete their formation successfully.

Studying in English is their most difficult challenge because their Mandarin language is nothing close to English. However, English is necessary to attend religious formation in Baguio, in the Philippines. Our future novices need to be able to communicate and express themselves clearly in the language. What a challenge! Invariably, some candidates lack confidence and give up. Religious formation has never been an easy road, but with the grace of God, it is possible to attain our goal.

OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Our mission in China is strewn with pitfalls. Not only are unregistered religious activities prohibited, but the economic boom, consumerism, and materialism have drastically affected the Chinese way of life. There is a general indifference toward the Christian faith and religious practices. All of these factors affect religious vocations, which have considerably diminished in the past few years. Pursuing pastoral youth activity is truly a difficult undertaking.

Faithful to the call and inspired by the love of God, we will continue to rise to the mission's challenges with courage and creativity, but also with a realistic perspective.

FACING THE FUTURE

The Lord tells us: ***I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing*** (John 15:5).

PHOTO:
Sr. Marthe Lwo and children from the Eucharistic Youth Movement
Photo Credit: 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)

Thérèse Déziel, M.I.C.
(Sr. Saint Pascal-Baylon) 1922-2016
Montreal, Quebec

As a child, Sister Thérèse had a dream—to become a missionary. However, she had to overcome a major obstacle: illness! With courage and determination she won the battle and at the age of twenty-seven she entered our Novitiate. Her studies, her experience in office work and dedication to the Catholic Youth Movement were her assets as a missionary in Zambia and Malawi. Sister Thérèse excelled in the field of education and in finances. Her great love of the Church, her deep faith, her spirit of prayer, and joyful service were the cornerstone of her successful life. Dear Sister Thérèse, your Magnificat is now eternally sung.

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