

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 43, N° 4 | OCTOBER • NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 2016 | \$5.00



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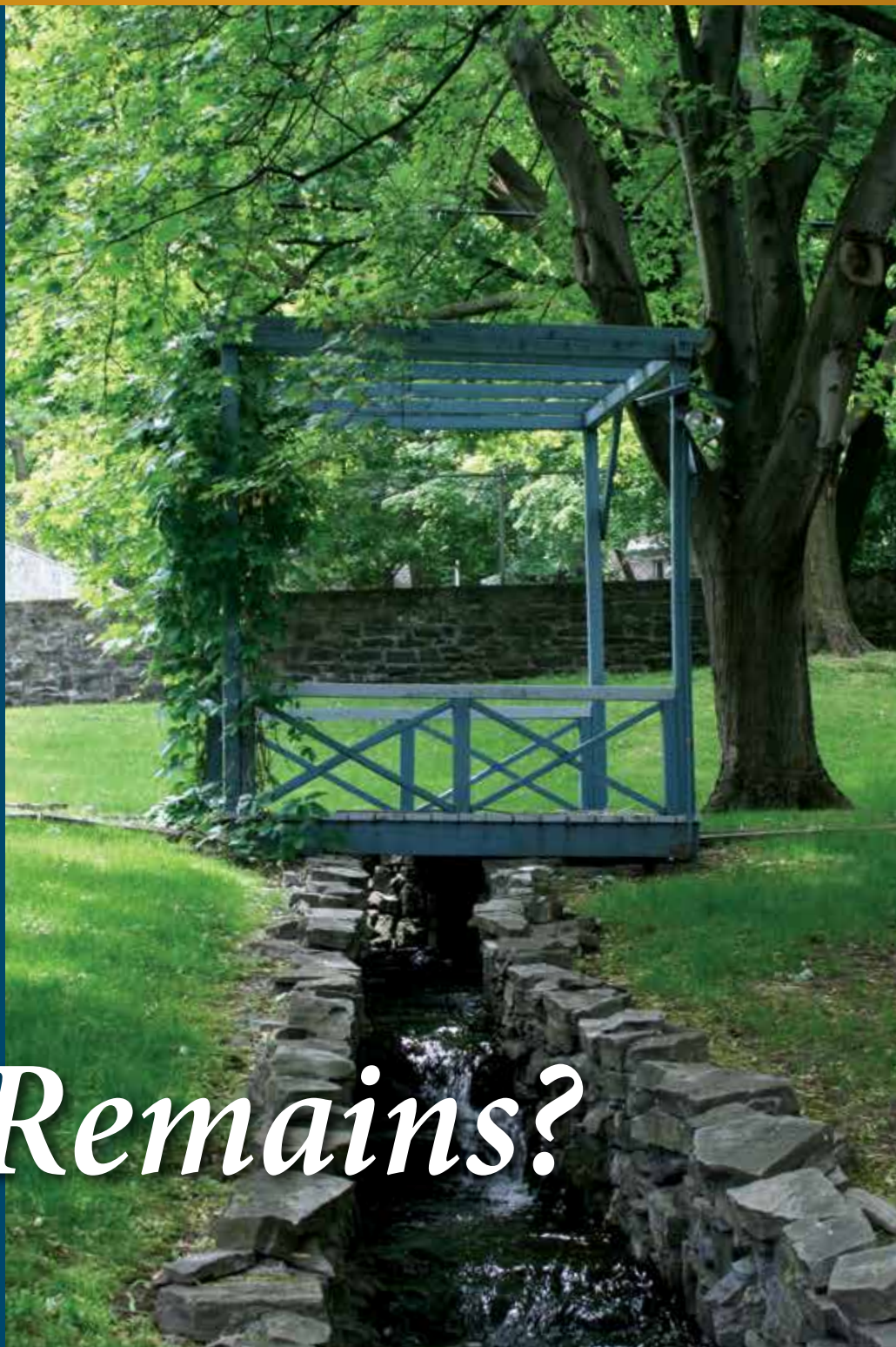
DO WE
REMEMBER?

PHILIPPINES

TRUSTING
THE FUTURE

IN FOCUS

What Remains?



PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS – 2016

OCTOBER

World Mission Day

We pray that the World Mission Day may renew within all Christian communities the joy of the Gospel and the responsibility to announce it.

NOVEMBER

Collaboration of Priests and Laity

We pray that within parishes, priests and lay people may collaborate in service to the community without giving in to the temptation of discouragement.

DECEMBER

Europe

We pray that the peoples of Europe may rediscover the beauty, goodness, and truth of the Gospel which give joy and hope to life.

Masses for readers' intentions offered in the following countries:

January: **Canada**

February: **Cuba**

March: **Philippines**

April: **Haiti**

May: **Canada**

June: **Bolivia**

July: **Malawi and Zambia**

August: **Hong Kong and Taiwan**

September: **Madagascar**

October: **Peru**

November: **Japan**

December: **Canada**



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MIC Mission News

Mission magazine published
by the Missionary Sisters of the
Immaculate Conception

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Cover:

Mini bridge - Mother
House – *Photo Credit:*
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Tax Receipt

Registration Number:
NE 89346 9585 RR0001
Presse missionnaire MIC

Legal Deposits

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

Subscription rates (4 issues)

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

*Member of the Catholic &
Ecumenical Media Association*

We acknowledge the financial support of
the Government of Canada Periodical Fund
of the Department of Canadian Heritage.

Canada

Letting Go

Life is filled with surprises, both good and bad. How should we approach them? Our deepest self doesn't always react well to changes that disrupt our daily routine. Letting go is realizing that, while we can't change life's unexpected events, we can change our perception of them. Letting go is about being flexible, accepting the inevitable, resisting internal struggles, and saying yes to life. During hard times, our faith is a bottomless well of happiness and inner peace.

When we chose the current issue's theme, *What Remains?*, we were thinking about all the difficult moments that eventually occur in one's life: the death of a loved one, a sudden illness, an unexpected move, a disagreement, etc. These moments leave scars. The Lord himself experienced it in the Garden of Olives: "*My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will*" (Lk 22:42). This was more than a mere acceptance; it was an acceptance in faith.

Presently, a page of our MIC history is being written—the sale of our Mother House. What remains? A multitude of memories are written on these walls, and especially in our hearts. We could cry and complain, but we won't. Today, life calls us to move forward, and we need to welcome it with unwavering trust. Let us rekindle our faith and look to the future. Each article in this issue asks us to let go and find enduring happiness.

Soon, we will be preparing for Christmas and celebrating the arrival of God incarnate, who came among us to share our joys and our pains. How many displacements did he experience? Very many! When he became a nomad, he rarely had a place to rest his head. (Lk 9:58)

When we are confronted by life's difficulties, let us turn to the One who understands our distress. Let us go with Him in good faith towards a better tomorrow. What remains? Good memories, forgiveness in our hearts, and shared loved.

These are our wishes for the New Year – ***Let 2017 be filled with joy, faith and spontaneity.***

A Blessed Christmas and Happy New Year!

Marie-Paule Sanjéon, m.i.c.

CHRISTMAS

Mother Délia offers us her wishes which are sometimes expressed in an original way.

My letter is going to reach you on time for the New Year greetings. What better wish could I extend to each of you than a fruit of the Holy Spirit? If this be granted, you will never have had a finer dessert on the first day of the year! (November 19, 1912)

We will rejoice at the Joy of Mary, holding in her arms the little Child who is at the same time her God and her Son... We will ask her to lend Him to us for a little while, and for sure she will put Him in our arms, as she did with the shepherds of Bethlehem; moreover, she will hide Him in our heart to warm Him up and console Him from the coldness and ingratitude of men. When you receive Him in your heart, ask, ask... on this Christmas night, nothing will be refused. (December 21, 1917)

A happy and holy feast of Christmas to you... May the Infant Jesus transform you into His likeness. (December 22, 1919)

May the Infant Jesus bring you... the joy savored by the Holy Family in the poor stable, celestial joy, a joy totally from God. (December 17, 1920)

May the Holy Travelers, Mary and Joseph walking to Bethlehem, offer their steps to sanctify and make fruitful our own steps in the works we perform either inside our houses or outside. (December 13, 1925)

May the Divine Infant in the Crib bless and sanctify you more and more. (December 15, 1931)

May the Divine Infant Jesus and His gentle Mother help you and fill your heart with fervor and holy joy! (December 17, 1931)

**FOR ALL FAVORS
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What Breath REMAINS?



By André Gadbois

What remains of the compassionate and tender-hearted people we've met along the way?

What remains of Lucien who, in 1952, after 18 months of lying in a hospital bed, alone and ignored, died on Good Friday at the age of 42? I remain – his son. I'll never forget his tenderness, his festive spirit, his beautiful drawings, and his generosity. I draw breath from these memories every day. What remains of the fire that burned in the middle of a snowy forest on Lac-des-Seize-Iles on the eve of Easter

1959, where I promised on my honour “*to do my best, do my duty to God and the Queen, help other people at all times, and carry out the spirit of the Scout Law.*”¹? My experiences remain: the joys of brotherhood, adventure, and the gift of self still make me smile today. What remains of the small house on Parthenais street, with its old tin shed and narrow third-floor gallery, the first home I shared with my beloved Diane? We started

our life there together, and there welcomed our daughter Marie-Claude into the world. Forty-one years later, a garden remains: love and friendship continue to grow and nourish us every day, comforting our tears and broken hearts.

What remains of the humble carpenter's son who, during Cesar's reign, refused to enslave his own by turning stones to bread? Who refused to dazzle spectators by throwing himself off the mountain? Who refused to kneel in front of money and power? From His crucified body hanging on a cross, a breath drifted onto men and women who decided together to pursue His project, to follow His example and learn how to "see the sacred grandeur of our neighbour."² As Pope Francis illustrated by pointing out Jesus of Nazareth, what remains is a demanding ideal that never fails to offer "compassion and closeness to the frailty of individual."³ Jesus accompanied the Samaritan woman and the woman caught in adultery; with mercy and compassion, he sought to uncover (I like this synonym of reveal) the Beauty of the world. Today, he invites his disciples to don their aprons and intervene once more by offering signs of hope and good news. Our world is disoriented: migrations, economic constraints, fanaticism, sexual exploitation, lack of decent housing and education, solitude, violence, and war threaten to overwhelm us.

Uncover The Beauty Of The World

AMONG OUR PEOPLE

In a letter addressed to Cardinal Ouellet, dated March 19, 2016, Pope Francis wrote: "What does the fact that lay people are working in public life mean for us pastors? It means finding a way to be able to encourage, accompany and inspire all attempts and efforts that

are being made today in order to keep hope and faith alive in a world full of contradictions, especially for the poor, especially with the poorest. It means, as pastors, committing ourselves among our people and with our people, supporting their faith and hope..."⁴ In January 2016, the bishops of Quebec wrote and distributed a document titled *The Missionary Shift of Christian Communities*, where they wrote: "Feeling confident in its 'Christendom', the Church in Québec at a certain moment, believed itself immune from being called into question. Contemplating the majesty of our church and convent facades and the sturdiness of their construction, we thought it was all eternal. Churches were at the centre of villages and of our urban neighbourhoods, and the Church had succeeded in carving a central place for itself in the life of society. There was nothing left to do but to dwell peacefully amid what we had proudly built, running the risk of becoming 'a Church concerned with being at the centre and which then ends by being caught up in a web of obsessions and procedures,' running the risk of 'remaining shut up within structures which give us a false sense of security, within rules which make us harsh judges, within habits which make us feel safe, while at our door people are starving'."⁵ (EG 49)

SPREADING HAPPINESS

Outside, there is a starving crowd. It's true; we've seen it before. After Jesus' teaching, after Pope Francis' request, what remains to be done? We must commit ourselves for and with the poor, with tenderness and mercy, to regain and rebuild the Beauty of the World (it must always begin again). We must welcome and accompany those who are injured as Jesus did, and always try to see "the grandeur of our neighbour." What remains? A few happy people whose happiness might become contagious and surely they will wish to revitalize us as He did with His breath of life; as my father did, as my scout's oath did long ago, and as Diane does; as all those who spread tenderness and compassion in the world do, every day. 🐾

¹ Scouts Law, Canada

² POPE FRANCIS, *The Joy of the Gospel*, P. 47, No. 92, USCCB Communications 2013

³ POPE FRANCIS, *The Joy of Love*, P. 26, No. 38, CCB Publications 2016

⁴ POPE FRANCIS, *Letter of His Holiness Pope Francis to Cardinal Marc Ouellet* – Vatican 2016

⁵ CATHOLIC BISHOPS CONFERENCE OF QUEBEC, *The Missionary Shift of Christian Communities*, February 2016, P. 8 - No. 1.1.

Do We Remember?

In our postmodern era, we have witnessed some amazing technological advancements. Only a few centuries ago, we never would have believed in such utopian possibilities. In this age of speed, ephemera, and never-ending novelty, forgetting the past is easy. The younger generations, eager consumers and seekers of strong stimulation, are often ignorant of the history that made them who they are. For this reason, it seems relevant to highlight a few Montreal institutions rooted in women's religious communities.



By Audrey Charland

PHOTOS:

¹ Catholic Institute for the Deaf and Dumb – Montreal, QC

² Hôtel Dieu Hospital – main entrance, 1940 – Montreal, QC

³ Congregation of the Sisters of Saint Anne – 19th century convent – Montreal, QC

Photos Credit:

Congregations' archives

AN INEVITABLE VOCATION

Since the beginning of time, one of the most important social preoccupations has been, unsurprisingly, the treatment of the sick. While certain illnesses can be relieved with homemade remedies, others need more than benevolent care and homespun concoctions. Religious congregations, aware of the health care sector's growing needs, devoted themselves, body and soul, to the treatment of the sick. Among them were the Sisters of Charity of Montreal in their famous grey robes, and the Religious Hospitallers of St. Joseph.

The latter were pioneers in their field, and manned the helm of the Hôtel-Dieu de Montréal for decades. The Hôtel-Dieu survived three fires, and was the only hospital in the city until 1882. The building is a true museum, and once you step inside its impressive walls, it becomes clear that religious Sisters played a leading role in the shaping of Montreal. They faced some of the worst epidemics with amazing courage, and thanks to them and their devotion, many people were saved from death. The Sisters were always up to date on medical progress and knew how to implement their knowledge with efficiency and charm. In 1962, under the Lesage government, the situation changed dramatically. Quebec adopted a new law that gave the State control of the health care sector.

A SHARED MISSION

In 1963, the education sector was also secularized following the Parent reform. While education has shifted directions many times throughout our province's history, the role religious congregations have played is far from negligible. For years, most francophone schools were filled with teachers proudly wearing veils, crosses, and rosaries. Let us highlight the important work of the Sisters of the Congregation Notre-Dame, known for their pointed cornets, the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary, and the Sisters of Saint Anne, both established by Monsignor Bourget during his glorious years of apostolic work.

Esther Blondin's dream of contributing to the education system and fighting illiteracy is an appropriate example of the Sisters' vibrant work. With a few friends, Blondin founded the Sisters of Saint Anne in 1850. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, her small congregation grew, as did the mixed-gender classrooms. While the Sisters were known for the quality of their education and the discipline of their students, control of their main ministry was eventually revoked, and secular personnel progressively took over.

Saint Anne College in Lachine was once an all-girls school. Since 1988, it welcomes both genders. Recently the building was renovated, and the chapel was converted into a digital library for graduate

studies. Today, the religious community's charismatic spirit is still felt within the school's walls.

TAKING ON MANY ROLES

Besides health and education, women's religious congregations have been involved in many other ministries. Work varied according to their expertise and the populations they reached. They provided help wherever it was needed, and were not afraid to go against established social norms, often challenging the prejudices of the time. For example, the Sisters of Mercy contributed significantly to the de-stigmatization of "unfortunate" unwed mothers. Acting as both midwife and social worker, these wise Sisters saved the lives of many women and their children, offering them a future filled with hope.

Similarly, people who were born deaf and mute were considered a family "burden" at the time. In fact, it was believed that their handicap limited their learning abilities. Nonetheless, the Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows mission, founded by the Sisters of Providence in 1887, preached the contrary. They ran the city's Institute for the Deaf and Mute until 1975, giving women the possibility to learn and develop their skills. Once again, the religious Sisters were able to overcome such obstacles and draw potentials where others saw only weaknesses.

Through this brief portrait, we can begin to see how thousands of devoted women from different religious congregations have shaped the city of Montreal, in various sectors and professional domains. Flexibility and charity were necessary qualities in their line of work, and they faced many difficulties. Thanks to their unwavering determination and initiative, Quebec was able to develop administrative structures essential to the well being of the people. Hospitals, schools, and local organizations have benefitted from the important and fruitful work of religious Sisters of then and now. In this retrospective, we



can see that the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception played a pivotal role in bringing the universal mission of the Church to Quebec. As their successors, let us be thankful for this burning flame they passed down to us, remembering how difficult it was to light, and how carefully it has been tended. ☺

Our Future's Heritage

Who are we? Where are we going? These are important questions we sometimes forget to ask ourselves. They're fundamental, frightening, and often lead to other broad and troubling questions. To understand who we are and where we're going, we first need to know where we came from.



By Émilien Roscanu

Where *do* we come from? The answer has become increasingly complex in our globalized world, where cultures cross and intersect at a frantic pace. Our modern society is made richer by all these different influences; nonetheless, it is our duty to remember where we came from and preserve our cultural history. We must protect it from dissolving into a worldwide American “monoculture” perpetuated by new communication technologies. To fight hegemony, we must remember our origins, preserve our culture, and communicate our distinct heritage with respect for others.

We must be conscious of our origins. I myself am the product of two cultures, with parents from different countries. I can't deny my Romanian or Quebec roots. It's my duty to preserve them in order to contribute to the society that I belong to and identify with. Our heritage should neither divide us nor homogenize us. Rather, it should help us enrich and expand our humanity. Today's Quebec unites people from all over the world around a shared language and set of values:

freedom, sharing, collaboration, compassion, and community. We must strive to reach a place of harmony by bridging the old and the new. Together we can build a society that remembers the past, but also looks to the future.

STRENGTH THROUGH UNITY

There are many doomsayers in the world who speak only of intolerance and live off the fear they instill in others. They would like us to believe that there are many classes of citizens and categories of people. Political divisions distract us from the true issues our society faces. All around the world there are forces trying to distance and divide us to better rule. As the gap between rich and poor widens, we dig trenches of suspicion and contempt. As our democracies falter, we point accusingly at the *Foreigners* and blame them for all our troubles. Ignorance and intolerance come with a steep price, and we need to remedy the situation before it's too late. If in the land of the blind, the one-eyed man



is king, in the land of the intransigents, the demagogues rule. One of the greatest challenges of our time is to resist the irrational call of demagoguery as it spreads destruction like wildfire. I believe that solidarity and empathy are innate to all humans and can serve to unite us. Instead of building walls (or promising to do so), we should be building bridges. Let us build hope rather than division.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO ROME

Earlier this summer, I had the opportunity to visit Rome. While the city is known as a hub of Catholicism, I was struck by the coexistence of countless churches from different backgrounds and beliefs. Far from being chaotic, the eclectic cohabitation occurs in harmony, with respect for the city's history and sacred spaces. Rome's inclusive and peaceful atmosphere complements the policy of openness and dialogue implemented by Pope Francis after his election. It is encouraging to see such an important figure – not only in the Catholic world, but also in international diplomacy – calling for open dialogue and understanding between nations. His desire to bring people together is admirable, because he's betting on unity and peace rather than resistance and exclusion. No matter where we come from, whether we're rich or poor, young or old, let us be tolerant and open to others, because it is the only way our societies can evolve. This

is the message we need to transmit. We are all human, and temporal or geographical coincidence should not dictate what kind of life we are able to lead.

PHOTO:

Panoramic view of Rome
Photo Credit: E. Roscanu

A self-respecting society remembers its history and has strong foundations.

DREAM

Cynicism and defeatism are barriers against all types of evolution. We need to dream. Dreaming sparks a desire for progress, which in turn leads to action. Telling ourselves that our society cannot change because things have always been this way, and will continue to be this way, is extremely damaging. Sometimes changes are necessary, and believing in them is the first step towards realization. A self-respecting society remembers its history and has strong foundations. Our memory is just as important as our ability to adapt. We must be like the reed in the fable as it faces the storm – with deep roots to hold us in place, and flexibility to tackle adversity. ♡



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Witnesses of the Mystery

By Monique Fortier, M.I.C.

I was on the mountain where the shepherds live, contemplating my difficulties, disappointments, worries and fears in the growing darkness, when a shepherd approached. He touched my arm and pulled my attention toward a light shining in the valley. It flickered mysteriously, as though asking me to step outside myself and come closer. Wordlessly and respectfully, the shepherd invited me to investigate with him and the others. With my last bit of faith, I joined the group in their trek down the mountain. The closer we came, the brighter the light burned, and I felt my heart fluttering with every footstep. We noticed the stable, its door wide open. We approached in silence. I sensed a mystery in the deepest part of my being. I stopped thinking and let my emotions overtake me, feeling the joy flowing freely once again rising from a place within me no one and nothing will ever alter. The closer I came, the stronger my joy became. I could tell that the shepherds surrounding me also felt the same inner fullness, as though we had become 'one being' turned towards one single experience.



Then, we saw the Mystery. In the light that had beckoned us from the darkness, we saw the Child. He was there, in front of us, in all his humility and simplicity, with his parents watching over him tirelessly. The LOVE we felt was whole and given without restriction. We kneeled in wonder, filled by the event and overwhelmed by prayer. We touched the Fullness, the Infinity. In silence and immense poverty, we met our God.

And then we left. We had Good News to share with the world. We had witnessed joy, love, sharing, and the Kingdom to come. We had become Missionaries. 🌸

PHOTO: Young Bolivian girl with her lama
Photo Credit: MIC

IN FOCUS

What Remains?



Out of *NECESSITY*

When time comes to plan the future it means looking reality in the face, studying the situation, making the right decision, and following through, sometimes at a heavy cost. Nowadays, many seniors must go through this difficult process. The same goes for us missionaries. Today, we are saying goodbye to our Mother House, located at 314 Côte-Sainte-Catherine Road, Montreal, Quebec.



By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon,
M.I.C.

FROM FICTION TO REALITY

Perhaps you've seen *The Passion of Augustine (La passion d'Augustine)*, a French Quebec film directed by Léa Pool and starring Céline Bonnier? It was well loved by audiences and won several awards. The movie depicts a very relatable experience: when the music school she has devoted her life to shuts down, Sister Augustine finds herself at a crossroad. This fiction is a reality for our aging population; unfortunately they are faced with these kinds of displacements every day.

I often think about those who once had a house and children, little ones that filled the rooms with their small joys and growing pains, their lives full of vitality. Eventually these children grow up and move away. The parents are left alone, and the discomfort of their old age creeps in. Soon they can no longer live without assistance, and reluctantly, they are forced to leave their old house behind, venturing

into warm but unknown environments. These decisions are made out of necessity.

The MIC Sisters know what it's like to be uprooted. Throughout our lives, we've experienced many difficult departures: firstly, from Canada, as we left our families behind for 5 to 10 years at a time; and secondly, from our mission country, as we said goodbye to the wonderful friendships we had forged. Life called us elsewhere. We know what it's like to live out of a suitcase.

A DIFFERENT TOMORROW

As we say goodbye to our Mother House, we are also saying goodbye to part of our heritage. This was where our Foundress, Délia Tétreault, lived for 32 years; where she once meditated over the Gospels, counselled her fellow Sisters, and lived out her missionary life. These walls are imprinted with countless precious memories.

The MIC Sisters lived in Outremont for 110 years, from 1906 to 2016. During this time, 314 Côte-Sainte-Catherine Road often changed vocation. Originally, the Sisters cultivated a large field near the house, growing fruit trees and raising a few cows and chickens. The house and little farm welcomed hundreds of retreatants from all over the province. In 1973, it became the official Mother House, hosting countless departures to mission countries accompanied by the traditional farewell song: *Ave Maris Stella*.

These last few years, the large building and adjoining garden housed nearly sixty Sisters who shared the simple pleasures and pains of everyday life. The presence of the Lord was always felt in the charitable attention of our companions. Every day, three fraternities gathered for prayer, community meetings, and much-loved celebrations.

This was the large house where Chapters, Institute Council meetings, MIC intercultural discussions, big decisions were made and ideas were shared around the table. Every year, the Sisters' retreats turned the building into a house of prayer. These walls have also witnessed

our youthful enthusiasm; early mornings the Sisters walked down the many stairs to catch the 51 or the 129, riding the bus to work or to deliver copies of the MIC Mission News. What a beehive of activity! Back then life was bustling.

Slowly but surely, things began to change: the Sisters got older, successors were rare in Quebec, and the cost of living increased. Faced with all of these factors, we were forced to make a difficult decision: sell the Mother House. The Sisters accepted their new reality in a spirit of faith. Today, Délia's words are especially relevant: *"It is not big houses that make people happy, but big hearts."*

LIFE CALLS US ELSEWHERE

A new home was found for the missionary Sisters. Suitcases came out of the closets; everyone packed and followed the mission's call. Mother Délia often said: *"courage and faith."* The Sisters were well informed and they understood that the decision was for the best. Peace continues to live in their hearts.

The original Mother House and garden have been acquired by real estate developer Demonfort Inc., and will be transformed into an intergenerational housing complex.

Despite important renovations, the land's natural beauty will be preserved. The little brook and bridge, once an intimate meeting place, will add a touch of beauty to the complex nestled in the heart of the city. The young developers, originally from Outremont, are familiar with the neighbourhood and will ensure that their project does not disturb the peace and quiet.

WHAT REMAINS?

Welcoming the will of God has helped us through this painful displacement and we bring with us the memories of what has been. The mission will always continue, calling us forth, in the smallest of gestures, because it is not what we do that matters, but how we do them. We've found new places of residence for our Sisters, like our house in Pont-Viau, Laval, and rented rooms at the Sisters of Providence. Slowly but surely, these new locations will start to feel like home and as the journey continues we can say:

Happy moments – PRAISE GOD.

Difficult moments – SEEK GOD.

Quiet moments – WORSHIP GOD.

Painful moments – TRUST GOD.

Every moment – THANK GOD. ☺

PHOTOS:

^{1,2} (page 11) Mother House and its garden

³ Délia Tétreault, Foundress

⁴ Délia's room and souvenir display

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



4

All You Have to Do Is Look



The Apostles needed to “learn how to look” at the world around them. Jesus often asked them to look at “the birds in the sky” or “the lilies of the field”. Is it possible that we, too, need to look with renewed eyes? Nowadays, faith is dwindling. The bowed heads in church are all silver and white. Louise Lemire helps us gain a new perspective filled with hope.



By Louise Lemire

SEEING AS A MOTHER AND GRANDMOTHER

As a mother of four and now as a grandmother, I want to share how I see our world, our youth, and our Church. All you have to do is look! Our gaze makes us happy or unhappy, confident or fearful. Seeing things on ground level doesn’t give us any perspective; we see the pebbles, but not the flowers. We need to stand up to see the sky and the sun, the mountains, the trees, the frolicking rabbits and nosy squirrels, the world in all its beauty. Let us stand and walk together.

Sometimes we’re disappointed when we realize how much has changed: religious splendour has faded, church attendance has declined, and sacraments are less frequent. But is this not the case in all civilizations? Our world’s ocean is agitated, but the deep waters are calm. In the depths, I see a promise of hope and joy.

SEEING THE ESSENTIAL

I am surrounded by young people who, despite being Catholic, do not practice in the traditional sense. However, they are generous and empathetic, always ready to help out and make the world a better place. They take care of the environment, think about justice and inequality,

and defend the vulnerable. Of course, we could focus on all their flaws, criticize the importance of new technologies in their lives, and make a lengthy list of our grievances. But instead, I think we should remove our dark glasses and realize that there are thousands of stars: in the eyes of our young ones as we sing them lullabies; in the eyes of the seniors we visit; and in the eyes of those sharing a festive meal.

As a painter, I’ve kept my eyes sharp to better see the world around me: nature, people, colour palettes, lines and proportions, etc. My painterly gaze is useful when it comes to my faith and hope: I seek harmony, and sometimes I need to look below the surface to see it.

SEEING THE LIGHT

I believe that paradoxes are part of life: without the contrast of black, white is invisible to the eye. When catastrophe strikes, solidarity and human sympathy are mobilized, and strangers become brothers, reaching out to those in need. In these extreme situations, I see the love God instilled in our hearts. My parents imparted their faith to me, and I passed it to down to my children. I’m certain that it will take root in time, and know that the Spirit blows where it wills. I sometimes

think that we let ourselves be carried away by our fears instead of simply having faith. If the Lord said He would be with us until the end of time, who or what are we afraid of? One day He boarded a boat and “there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being covered with the waves; but Jesus himself was asleep” (Mt 8:24). I will let him sleep, and have faith. I know that he is here, and that’s all that matters. I want my gaze to be filled with hope.

SEEING THE FUTURE

The Lord’s Good News asks us to consider the meaning of life. I want to be a bringer of hope, not an indifferent spectator: let us learn to accept the inevitable changes of our existence, be they personal, religious, civil, etc. How many riches do we have? How many resources? We were created in the image of God, and it shows up in our smallest gestures: smiles that lead

to laughter, greetings that become long conversations, blunders that spark fits of giggles. To see all of it, our eyes need to be open to hope, and amazed by the love of each individual. What remains in our world today? Everything remains – Love remains.

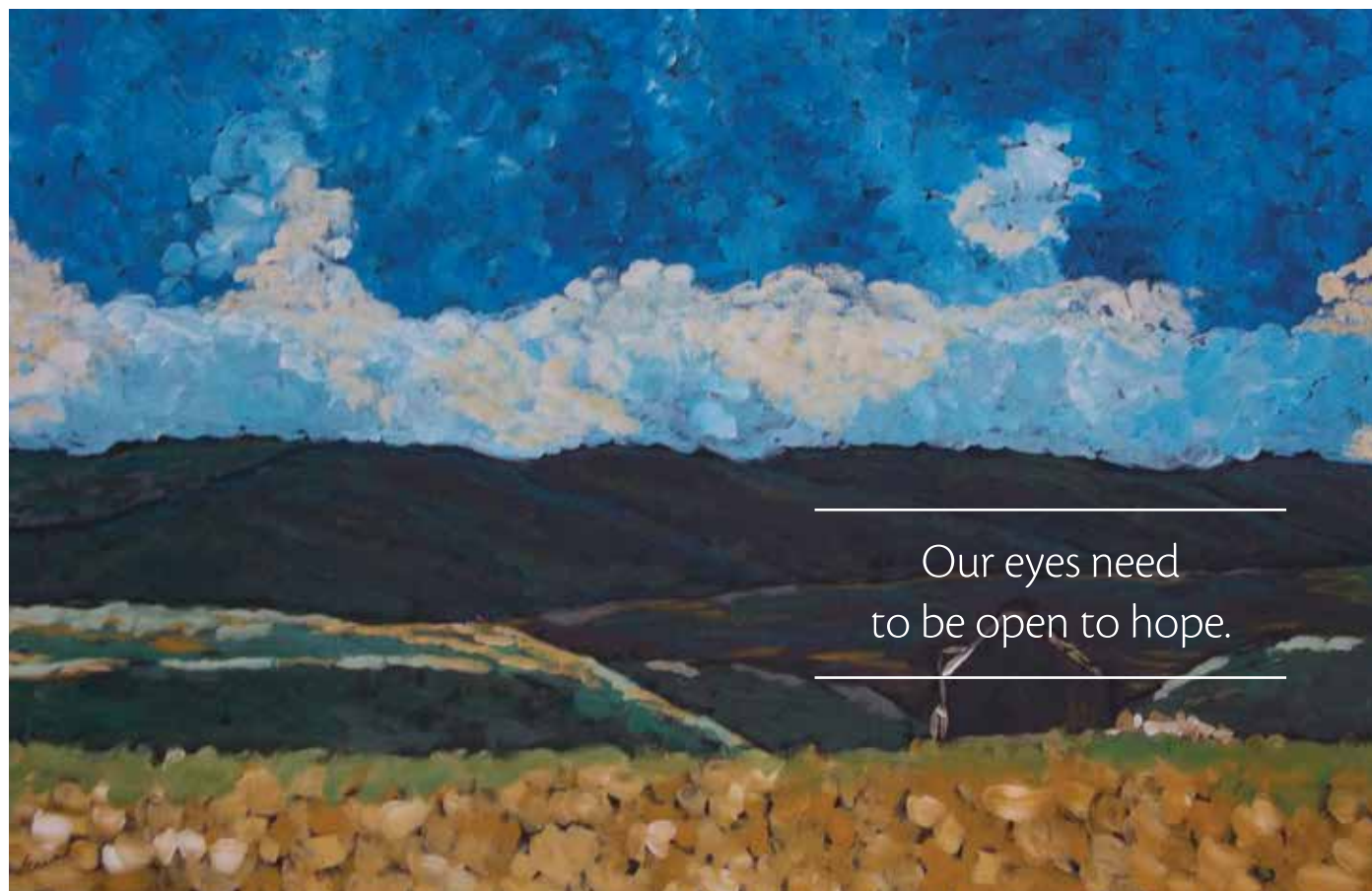
SEEING IS BELIEVING

If, like me, you’ve been able to see the colours of our world with sharp and discerning eyes, perhaps we can take notice of the wonders at our fingertips, of all the hope available to us. Yes, all you have to do is look, and perhaps you too will find joy and faith. Soon, we will be celebrating a time of hope. We will be celebrating Advent and the **Joy of Christmas** – Mary’s joy as she traveled to Bethlehem, despite all the obstacles on her path – the Three Magi’s joy as they looked towards a distant star with unwavering faith. ∞

PHOTOS:

^{1,2} Paintings by Louise Lemire

Photos Credit: L. Lemire



Our eyes need
to be open to hope.

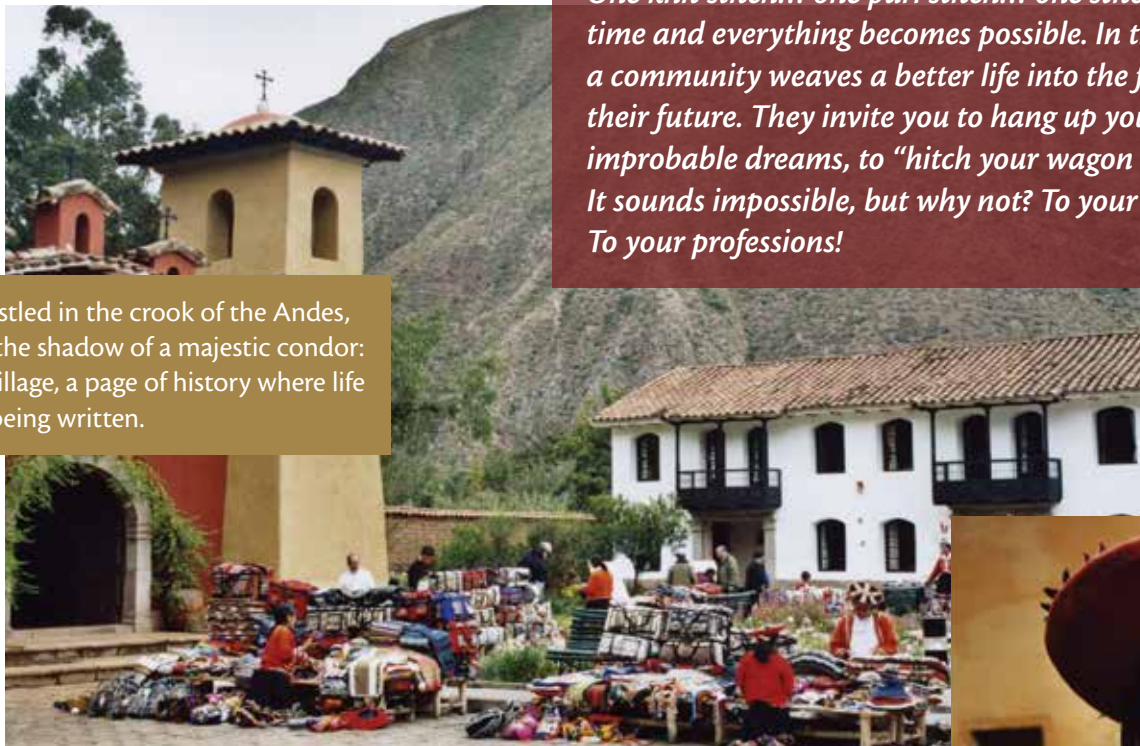


Spin the Wool - Spin the Days

By Monique Bigras, M.I.C.

One knit stitch... one purl stitch... one stitch at a time and everything becomes possible. In the Andes, a community weaves a better life into the fabric of their future. They invite you to hang up your most improbable dreams, to "hitch your wagon to a star!"¹ It sounds impossible, but why not? To your knitting! To your professions!

Nestled in the crook of the Andes, in the shadow of a majestic condor: a village, a page of history where life is being written.



In the high plateaus of the Andes, greenery and wildflowers are rare. Inhabitants dress in a kaleidoscope of colours to brighten up the Pachamama.

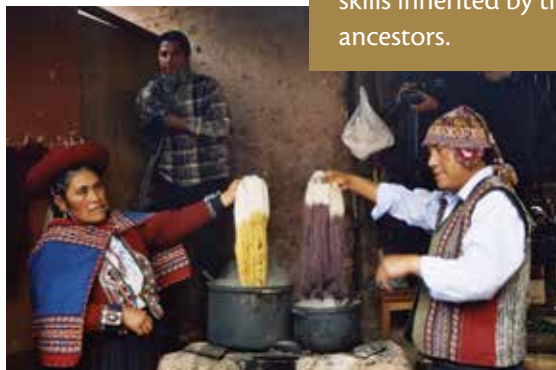


Warmth in their smiles and sparks in their eyes.



Head held high and proud, much like the land itself. Here, life dares to challenge the winds of the high plateaus.

The inhabitants have mastered weaving and plant-based dyes, skills inherited by their Incan ancestors.



Their different songs and chants are works of art in a variety of colours. With courage, they prepare for tomorrow.



Interwoven like the many threads of a quilt. Interlaced like the dreams of a single hope.

The lives of the aboriginal people are filled with important ceremonial rituals and small, daily gestures that have survived through the ages.



The people's distant past still echoes in their hearts when they salute their ancestors with this ancient song:

<i>Ama sua</i>	<i>Do not steal</i>
<i>Ama llulla</i>	<i>Do not lie</i>
<i>Ama quella</i>	<i>Do not be lazy</i>



¹ Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Civilization" essay

Photos Credit: MIC



By Lucie Gagné, M.I.C.

What remains of my MISSION?

"What remains of our love? What remains of those beautiful days? A photo, old photo of my childhood"¹ sang Charles Trenet – one of his most popular songs. After spending 30 years on Asian soil, Sister Lucie is asking herself a similar question.

What remains of my missionary work on the Asian continent in the service of Jesus' mission? I remember the chorus of a song I wrote back in 2014, to celebrate my Golden Jubilee year as a religious Sister: *Fifty years later, always the same refrain — remain in love, today, every day. Follow Jesus Christ, share His passion. Give your life to His mission.*

I certainly have wonderful memories of my missionary years spent in the Philippines, Hong Kong, and continental China. They are locked safely in my heart, but also immortalized in the many photographs, old and new, taken over the course of twenty-five years. I dare say, from my youth to old age. Let us revisit a few moments of my life as an MIC.

THE PHILIPPINES: A FANTASTIC EXPERIENCE

When I was twenty-nine, I left my native country for the Philippines. Moving from the West to the East was a wonderful adventure. I experienced many culture shocks that led me to question my own culture, and had the wonderful experience of living within an intercultural community. At the time, the MIC Sisters who worked in the Philippines were Filipina, American, Chinese, and Canadian. *What remains of them today?* The American and Canadian Sisters are no longer present, but the MIC Province has diversified, welcoming Sisters from Malawi, Zambia, Vietnam, and continental China, especially at the Inter-Africa/Asia Novitiate. What a beautiful cultural landscape! What a beautiful occasion to share in the spirit of intercultural dialogue! In the past few years, the young MICs formation in the Philippines has become diverse in colour and rich in experience.

When I was a young Sister, I was able to fulfill my dream of working in a non-Christian environment. With a fellow MIC I had the pleasure of living alongside an animist tribe. It was a fantastic experience, not to mention that we were pioneers in the field. *What remains today?* The missionary Sisters continue to be in contact

with aboriginal tribes in different regions throughout the Philippines. What's more, several of my Filipina friends heard the call and chose to join the mission *ad extra*, living in different countries around the world. By their presence they contribute and enrich community life; they witness the love given freely by God to all his children.

HONG KONG: THE JOY OF EVANGELIZING

After a decade in the Philippines, I continued to follow Jesus Christ and share His passion for His mission: proclaiming God's love for his children. This time, I went to Hong Kong. I was happily surprised to find a large number of migrant workers from the Philippines, many of them women working as servants in non-Christian homes.

A priest from the Quebec *Foreign Missionary Society* and one of our Filipina Sisters took it upon themselves to organize evangelization seminars for the migrant workers. The project, developed in the Philippines by Father Roger Bégin, P.M.E., was a big success and the idea eventually spread to different countries. I always admired the people who showed up every Sunday to attend the seminars. The meetings not only allowed the participants to pursue their Christian formation, but also to find friendship and support in their mission as witnesses of faith.

What remains of these evangelization seminars? The Good News is still being spread through talks and seminars. Recently, during a trip to Hong Kong, I was overjoyed to see the same individuals who had once attended my lectures and leader training sessions. Thirty years later, many of them are now instructing others. One of our Filipina Sisters even accompanies groups from different walks of life and contributes to their continued formation. We are so thankful for all the people who believe in the life of the Church in Hong Kong.

CHINA: RETURN TO THE MIC SOURCE

After some time in Hong Kong, I continued my mission in continental China,

working as an English teacher in a university of the Province of Canton. I was very pleased to find myself in a country that had welcomed its first MIC Sisters only a few years after the Institute's foundation. In 1909, our Foundress, Délia Tétreault sent over her very first missionaries. Throughout the years, we taught English in many different regions across China. *What remains of our presence in China?* Happily, our Sisters are still present, discreetly pursuing their missionary work and enjoying the fruits of their labour.

Recently, during a trip to Asia, I had the chance to visit Vietnam. I was warmly welcomed and was happy to see that the Church is flourishing. There are many religious vocations and God continues to inspire young people to join the Lord in the Mission entrusted to Him by the Father. By devoting their lives to Him, they in turn become missionaries.

At the end of the day, *what remains of my mission on Asian soil?* I strongly believe that the love we sowed remains. This love continues to bear fruit, each with a different colour and taste, each one honouring Jesus Christ and His Mission. ∞

PHOTOS:

¹ Sr. Lucie living alongside an animist tribe.

² With her students in continental China

Photos Credit: MIC





By Leticia B. Dotollo, M.I.C.

TRUSTING the FUTURE

Celebrating a fiftieth anniversary of presence within a country incites us to look at the road travelled, to give thanks and to continue the journey adapted to modern times. To better understand the MIC mission in the Philippines, let us ponder upon some of the realities this nation has to deal with.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC CONTEXT

The Philippine archipelago comprising 7,107 islands and islets has an estimated total population of 107,668,231 as of July 2014. The country ranks as the 12th most populated in the world and the median age of its inhabitants is 23.2 years. According to the Department of Education, there are more than 6 million people who are deemed to be functionally illiterate; many of these are found among the indigenous cultural communities which have no written tradition.

The Philippines, situated near the western edge of the Pacific Ocean, is in the direct paths of seasonal typhoons and monsoon rains which bring storms, storm surges, floods, landslides and other forms of destructions in the affected areas. The country is visited by an average of 20 typhoons each year. The Philippines also sits on the “ring of fire” where continental plates collide and thus experience periodic earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. During those destructive calamities, expressions of support and solidarity from our countrymen and other nations around the globe are profuse and heartwarming. In spite of these life-threatening disasters, the faith and resilience of our Filipino people are remarkable. Rising from their painful experiences, they patiently find ways to rebuild their lives and to move towards the future.

The Philippine economy has weathered global economic and financial downturns better than its regional counterparts. However, the country faces problems of massive poverty, exportation/migration of Filipino workers, massive graft and corruption in the government, ecosystem and ecological degradation. Moreover the country faces threats from several terrorist groups, intimidating people and keeping tourists away. On the international level, the Philippines has an on-going territorial dispute with China which claims ownership over nearly all oil-rich South China Sea, overlapping with large segments of territory being claimed as well by Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Our country is desperately crying for justice, searching for a clear vision and committed, honest leadership. The need to recover, to reunify and to rebuild is imperative.

ECCLESIAL CONTEXT

Today, approximately 83% of the country's citizens are Roman Catholic Christians. Of the remaining people, 9% are from other Christian denominations, 5% are Muslims, 3% are Buddhist or from different beliefs. The Catholic Bishops of the Philippines exhort us to prepare for the 5th centenary of our Christian faith with a nine year "Era of new Evangelization". In January 2015, Pope Francis made his pastoral visit to our country. He held an open-air mass in Manila's Quirino Grandstand before an estimated crowd of 6 to 7 million worshippers making the event the highest number ever recorded in papal history. In January 2016, the Philippine Church hosted the International Eucharistic Congress which was held in Cebu City.

PROFILE OF THE MIC ST. JOSEPH PROVINCE

As of March 2015, the Province had a total number of seventy professed Sisters, eight of whom are in mission ad extra: Canada, Hong Kong, Vietnam. The average age is 67.45; eight younger Sisters are in their initial formation years. The Province has important institutional ministries in education, pastoral care - supporting Indigenous People (I.P.); we maintain the MIC retreat house, and we are committed to youth ministry besides awakening and sustaining vocations.

REPUTABLE EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

We manage three schools: Immaculate Conception Academy

(ICA) in Greenhills, Manila which has an enrollment of 3,305 students from kindergarten to high-school. Immaculate Conception Academy of Manila (ICAM) has a student body of 1,070 and Immaculate Heart of Mary Academy (IHMA) in Mati, Davao Oriental has a co-ed enrollment of 1,686.

These three schools are considered as reputedly good education institutions because of their academic standards and our students receive the support they need to achieve success.

PASTORAL CARE – SUPPORTING INDIGENOUS PEOPLE (I.P.) Santa Cruz, Mindoro occidental

After some twenty-four years of missionary service and presence among the Alangan Mangyans, accompanying them in their struggle for respect of their human dignity and rights to their ancestral land, the Santa Cruz mission was finally closed in May 2013. It is heartening to know that we left this ministry in Mindoro with a sense of "victory" – first and foremost because the CADT (Certificate of Ancestral Domain Title) was finally awarded to the Mangyans on November 15, 2012. The formation given by the MIC Sisters has empowered leaders who now actively participate in decision-making for the common good of their community. The Christians among them have taken leadership roles in the emerging Basic Ecclesial Communities (BEC).

Kiburiao – Quezon, Bukidnon

Our pastoral ministry in Kiburiao, Quezon is one mission ad gentes in the South. Since its inception in 2005, the Sisters have continued their work of evangelization and catechesis among the poor, the adults, youth and children. They also serve in three neighboring parishes

in the formation of lay leaders, volunteer catechists, basic ecclesial communities and ministry to the indigenous people. Since two years, a Sister has been assigned full-time to minister to the Manobos and Matigsalogs, two indigenous groups in neighboring areas of Kiburiao, Kitubo, and Salawagan.

MIC RETREAT HOUSE

The MIC Retreat House in Davao City is our main ministry and it is administered by an MIC team. People from different parts of the country come for days of retreat or recollection. However, there are other retreat houses in the city; therefore, our own retreat house experiences stiff competition and is being challenged to find ways to maximize its use.

THE MIC ASSOCIATES

It is a source of joy and pride for us in the Province to see our Associates (AsMIC) increasing in number. Their monthly formation sessions with their respective MIC local coordinators help them grow more in the MIC spirituality of thanksgiving. Together, the Sisters and the Associates trust and find hope in the steadfast love and faithfulness of God; we look towards the future with audacity and boldness to wherever the Spirit is sending us and we give Him thanks. ☺

PHOTO:

Josephine Rallos, M.I.C., and Eufrosina Lee, M.I.C.

ICAM, Gagalangin, Tondo, Manila

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)*



Marie-Odila Plante, M.I.C.
(Sr. Marie-Odila)
1921-2016
Princeville, Quebec

With all her heart Sr. Marie-Odila kept the mission alive until the age of ninety-four. She entered our Institute at twenty-five and left for Madagascar in 1952. With four other Sisters, she opened the first MIC mission in Morondava. She faced many challenges, but her academic training and generous heart helped her through many hurdles. The Madagascan people charmed her! After twenty-five years of dedication, she came back to Quebec; Madagascans in Montreal and Laval regularly came to see her. Those meetings were always a joy. THANK YOU Sr. Marie-Odila for your great missionary heart.



**Marie-Josèphe Desrochers,
M.I.C. (Sr. Marie-Flore)**
1922-2016
St-Roch-de-l'Achigan,
Quebec

Born in St-Roch-de-l'Achigan, Marie-Josèphe lost her father at the age of four. As of her teen age years, she showed interest in the missionary life. In 1940, the MIC Novitiate at Pont-Viau welcomed her. During thirty-five years Sr. Marie-Josèphe taught in Quebec; also within her competence were mission awareness and parish pastoral work. At the age of retirement she opted to give private courses to young people who had difficulties in their studies; she generously dedicated her time to this mission which she held dear to her heart. In a spirit of Thanksgiving, may you be eternally happy Sr. Marie-Josèphe.



Jocelyn Guieb, M.I.C.
1973-2016
Baliuag, Bulacan,
Philippines

As a computer engineer, Jocelyn had a promising career. However, impressed by our spirituality of Thanksgiving, she decided to enter our Novitiate in 1998. On May 22nd, while working in Vietnam for the past four years, Joycelyn succumbed to a cerebral hemorrhage. She was only forty-two years old! Her family and the MIC Sisters were shocked! Throughout her missionary life, Joyce served with joy; in our schools as well as at our mission in Mindoro with the Mangyans, she gave her all. In Vietnam, her presence and influence were appreciated. Joyce, you left us too soon and too young! In spirit, we express our affection and our THANK YOU; we are united to you in your eternal MAGNIFICAT!



Cécile Savard, M.I.C.
(Sr. Saint-Laurent)
1917-2016
Montreal, Quebec

She was about to celebrate her 100th birthday when Sister Cécile passed away, leaving behind memorable souvenirs. Her actions spoke louder than words. At the age of twenty-one she entered our Institute after having been the family's support for many years. In 1946, her talents in maintenance, cooking, gardening, laundry was a precious help at our Mount Saint Joseph Hospital in Vancouver. In 1966, she was transferred to Bolivia, where she worked in Catavi and Cochabamba. Wherever Sister Cécile went, her patience, love, kindness facilitated the communication. A complete gift of self with love, humility and dedication resumed her life. Thank you, Sister Cécile and Magnificat

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