

MIC MISSION NEWS

VOL. 44, Nº 4 | OCTOBER • NOVEMBER • DECEMBER 2017 | \$5.00



To sow seeds of joy and hope

SINCE 1923

PERU

AN UNFORESEEN DISCOVERY

CANADA

ROSE'S GARDEN

IN FOCUS

Promises of Life



MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS – 2017

OCTOBER

Workers and the Unemployed: That all workers may receive respect and protection of their rights, and that the unemployed may receive the opportunity to contribute to the common good.

NOVEMBER

Christians in Asia: That Christians in Asia, bearing witness to the Gospel in word and deed, may promote dialogue, peace, and mutual understanding, especially with those of other religions.

DECEMBER

The Elderly: That the elderly, sustained by families and Christian communities, they may apply their wisdom and experience to spreading the faith and forming the new generations.

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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

Nuggets of Gold

Who would not go running, sieve in hand, to find gold at the bottom of a river? Yet, this precious gold we are searching for might not be where we think it might be... Did you ever consider that in the heart of people is where the precious gem can be found? Sometimes it is difficult to find, but once the mystery is uncovered, the gold nuggets of friendship are much more valuable than all the material wealth in the world. John Foley, S.J. in his song *Earthen Vessels*, tells us that *we hold a treasure, not made of gold, in earthen vessels, wealth untold...*

In this issue the *Promises of Life* show us that, throughout life, there are always treasures to be discovered. Hence the creation of our museum which testifies to the life of Délia Tétreault and to the missions carried out by missionaries all over the world. Today, more than ever, the call of Christ's mission beckons to us.

Such was the experience of André and Odette. They did not go to Peru to find gold, but to discover the hearts of the Andean people. Despite the difficulties one expects to encounter when interacting with a new culture, they found more than gold in Cauday, in the great mountains of Cajamarca—they discovered a friendship with the people there.

Similarly, André and Diane received a warm welcome, and joyfully shared the exchanges they had during their pilgrimage in the footsteps of Mother Marie-Anne, Foundress of the Sisters of Sainte-Anne.

For Audrey, the length of her beautiful golden hair did not stop her from taking scissors to her mane to bring joy to little girls with cancer.

On the banks of the Prairies' river, a special Rose has flourished despite the difficulties in life. With words of encouragement and shared friendship, see how this flower was able to bloom and grow.

When the Lord gave his great commandment to love, he knew the power of his words. *Promises of life, promises of God*. Let your joy be perfect. If we knew how to listen, to love... there would be no more attacks on the front pages of our newspapers, spreading fear and death. Jesus' words give life: as missionaries, we seek to live out these words in our daily lives. We know that material riches last only a short time. Inner joy is the eternal treasure that lies at the bottom of the rivers of our hearts. Collecting these nuggets of gold is the promise of life offered by the Lord.

If ever you drive by Laval, QC, you are invited to stop and come visit the Déliat Tétreault museum.

Marie-Paule Sanjean, m.i.c.

DÉLIA'S COLUMN

When the year is close to its end, we might think that, one day, life on earth will also cease existing. In the face of death, Mother Délia knew how to express Christian hope which was comforting.

Upon the departure of loved ones, she wrote: That makes us feel a great void around us. We will all be together again in heaven. (October 11, 1910)

You have learned about the death of your dear sister... She has fallen in the arms of God, as a father once said who had just lost his child. (February 17, 1911)

When those we love precede us to Heaven, it is good to know that we will join them there and that in the heart of God, family ties and affection will become even closer. (April 21, 1915)

Writing about the epidemic which was taking place, she wrote: Death takes its toll right and left... Courage, confidence and abandon yourself to the Providence of our good Master. (October 11, 1918)

Your family will already have told you about the death of your dear elderly brother... Miss Clementine told us that their consolation was to think that he had been a good Christian and charitable... I would want to console you, my dear Sister, but it seems impossible, only God can do so. (April 21, 1927)

The departure of your dear father is a great trial for you; however, he is now with your good mother and in God's eternal love. Be assured that your beloved parents will help you more from above than they could have done here on earth. (May 6, 1933)

**FOR ALL FAVORS
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Laval, QC — Canada H7G 1A4

E-mail:
causedtetreault@gmail.com

We must believe, friend!

Walk forward! Always forward! Like the pilot, be a mechanic, radio operator, and navigator, all at once. Stay standing when others sit down, smile when they grit their teeth, offer your water when they are thirsty and your heart when they are in need. Carry the fatigue of the weak, shed light on those who are in the dark, hope to help six and pray to help ten. And at night, when all is quiet, speak to the Lord for them.¹



By André Gadbois

*I*t feels like just yesterday I was twenty years old! With my surprising (and off-key) voice, I loved singing pieces by Christiane Oriol. Her voice, her lively music and, above all, her hopeful lyrics encouraged me to sing along. Lyrics like, *We must believe, friend, that spring will come... in this country that we will build... We must believe, friend, that flowers will grow from the triggers of guns, from the mouths of canons in this country that we will build...* We must believe, friend, that together our strengths will brighten the night and give

everyone the passion for Hope... in this country that we will build. I recently rediscovered this record while absentmindedly rummaging through my numerous LPs (vinyl!). Was it really a coincidence? Christiane's record inviting me to believe in spring, in budding blooms filled with promise, despite the discouraging reality of our failing planet? What future awaits us? What barriers await us? Where are we going? I worry.

Shortly after this surprise brought on by an old vinyl, my partner of forty-two years

and I were invited to WALK the path of Marie-Anne Blondin, born Esther Blondin on April 18, 1809 in Terrebonne, QC. We spent April 28-30 of this year with thirty-five other walkers, equipped with backpacks, travelling a distance of 40 km from Terrebonne to Lachine. Marie-Anne, who founded the Sisters of St. Anne in 1850 and learned to write at the age of twenty, would often travel this route despite the numerous obstacles placed on her path by noble ecclesiastics. Esther believed and succeeded in creating mixed schools in 1850 in Canada as much as I doubted my ability to WALK from Terrebonne to Lachine with a pack on my back for 40 km in the city. Wow! And yet for 40 km, we saw nothing but blooming buds and the promise of a flourishing future.

Nothing but blooming buds for 40 km, nothing but hope was born.

A COUNTRY TO BUILD TOGETHER

In this country that we seek to build, thirty-five people who didn't know each other walked *together* to reflect, to be humbled and to discover *together* the small and simple treasures hidden around them, like all the treasures hidden in the world. During our walk, we visited Laval's Muslim cemetery and were warmly welcomed as friends with doughnuts and coffee. We were also kindly welcomed at the temple of the Maronite church in Laval, had an honest exchange with the priest of the Catholic parish of Saint-Vincent-de-Paul of Laval and slept in the gym at Collège Laval. The next day, we learned about the history of Sault-au-Récollet from one of its residents, Lorraine Pagé; we discovered an exceptional Portuguese restaurant, wandered down Saint

Laurent Boulevard, ate ice cream cones in a Jewish shopping centre, admired the Town of Mount Royal's beautiful houses, slept in the modest bedrooms of Saint Joseph's Oratory and were tenderly and generously welcomed in Lachine by the Sisters of St. Anne. Waiting to greet us was Sister Christine, whom I played with in the same Montreal back alleys when we were twelve and worked with at the Notre-Dame-des-Monts summer camp from ages fifteen to seventeen. We returned to Terrebonne in a school bus, tired, but convinced that we must dare to walk *to reach out to others* who may help us discover the treasures of a possible future, of a possible country. Those different from us are our neighbours, just as the stranger or the foreigner is, and meeting them allows us to believe in the future. But coming together can be frightening or uncomfortable. *Flowers will grow from the triggers of guns in this country*, if we build it together and tear down the barriers: wasn't this what Jesus of Nazareth taught and practiced?

COUNT ON PEOPLE... IT'S ESSENTIAL

During this three-day, 40-km walk, walkers had to follow in Esther Blondin's footsteps. We had to have courage, resist, count on people, reflect, believe in the presence of the Lord, carve out a path and stick to it. We had to believe in life's promises hidden in our neighbour's heart, *believe that opening our hearts to our neighbours will bring forth flowers and stars*, expect to shed tears while the country is being constructed—a way of living that is surely very similar to that of Délia Tétreault. These thirty or so pilgrims walked in the sun for three days. As we got onto the school bus to return to Terrebonne, it started raining cats and dogs. A burst of laughter filled the bus! I'll let you imagine the rest! ∞

¹ Michel Menu

PHOTO:

¹ *Together we take up the challenge*

Photo Credit: Vona Rooney



A little piece of me

Sometimes, certain events take place that seem to happen purely by chance. It's often difficult to immediately understand these "messages" when confronted with them; it's not until later that



everything seems clearer and more obvious. No matter what, a peaceful faith washes over us during these moments of confusion, faith in the strength of our beliefs and dreams. Moved by an intuition stirring from some unknown, mysterious place within me, I decided to leave behind a little piece of me...

By Audrey Charland

PHOTOS:

¹⁻² Audrey

Photos Credit: Gaëlle Heilig

A SURPRISING OPPORTUNITY

Chained to my desk while studying for an exam, I hear my friend sigh behind her screen. Always so absorbed in my work, I ask her what's wrong, why she seems so down and disappointed. *"I can't... it's way too short!"* she responds. I put down my pencil and turn toward her, visibly confused. Then she explains to me in greater detail what's happening.

For a while, she was looking for someone interested in her hair, hoping to cut it for the summer season. She met a man making wigs for sick children. What a noble cause! Yet, during their conversations, she realized her ponytail was not quite long enough; the scissors would have to cut about three millimeters from the head. Indeed, this was very, very short.

After she told me this, we spoke for a while and concluded that she was definitely not ready for this drastic change. Suddenly, one of her questions surprised

me: "What about you, are you game?" Before this moment, I had never thought about it. Faced with this surprising proposition, I remained quiet. Despite my obvious silence, an idea popped into my mind: perhaps I had to seize this opportunity.

Several days passed. The subject came up again, and I was overcome by the impulsive, spontaneous side of me. *All right. I'll do it.*

THE FIRST CUT

After establishing the terms of our contract, the fateful day was chosen: the 19th of April. The man in question was eager for the experience to be beneficial for both of us, worried about my sacrifice in cutting off so much hair. Either way, my decision was final. It was a calling. I did not see this as an act of bravery or recklessness, but a fair trade. It was so little, four or five strands of hair, compared to the eternal gratitude of a little girl reclaiming a small part of her childhood, a childhood so brutally tested by suffering and illness. Her joy would make me happy.

Wednesday finally arrived. The day was busy, a slight frenzy in my eyes. A strange mixture of eagerness, nervousness and slight uncertainty coursed through my veins. What if this wasn't a good idea? Would I regret it? These doubts, however, were fleeting; and on the contrary, they strengthened my resolve. This was not simply about aesthetics.

Before the first cut of the scissors, I let out a small sigh; I was as ready as I'd ever be. Again, silence washed over me, not because I was without words, but because I wanted to feel the weight of my mane one last time, before it became thinner, little by little.

A SECOND LIFE

For the first time in my life, I felt a total emptiness... At first, it seems odd, even completely impossible. How can an absence be, at the same time, a presence, a whole presence? Yet, in a way, this action allowed me to understand this powerful and troubling contradiction.

Past the meteoric rise of individualism and the exponential growth of technology ruling our lives, our modern society feels a certain... nervousness when it comes to physical integrity. We give by means of charitable works, we give a helping hand, we give our time... but one rarely gives of oneself, in the strict sense of the word.

Although heartbreaking advertisements for cancer awareness are everywhere, we are gradually drawn away from the significance of our choice. An altruistic decision, certainly, but also a spiritual one. How is cutting one's hair a "challenge"? How can we call it a gesture of solidarity if we turn it into a "circus" in which the scissors fly at full speed, with little regard for the quality of the collection? Many will disagree with this point of view, yet I have hope that it will at least lead to reflection on these questions.

What, then, was my motivation? It's true that when the illness affects someone close to us, it puts things into perspective. Four or five locks of hair, that's not much in and of itself. Until the day that they fall slowly, announcing a difficult time to come, a race through life, a race from which we do not always emerge victorious. For someone five or ten years old, the reality is all the more tragic. All these smiles make a difference in the recovery and healing process.

If an accessory created from my hair succeeds in causing a child to blush every time she passes by a mirror or receives a comment about her hair, this little piece of me will have accomplished its mission. ☺





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A NEW MUSEUM AND ITS STORY



2



By Jeanne Gauvin, M.I.C.

Délia Tétreault, a name known and recognized... But do we ever finish getting to know someone? A new museum has just opened in Laval and it bears her name: *Délia-Tétreault Museum*. The museum shares the fantastic story of this audacious woman who followed her dreams and, in 1902, founded the first female missionary community in the Americas, the *Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception*.

To have a museum bear her name today is to recognize that her radiance is universal and important enough to ensure her memory lives on.

Officially opened on April 18th in Laval, the Délia-Tétreault Museum took root in a new location and began its future. Mr. Marc Demers, Mayor of Laval, stated: *We are pleased to inaugurate a place so rich in culture and history in our city. The Délia-Tétreault Museum shows the remarkable contributions made by hundreds of women who, over the decades, have dedicated their lives to the education and health-care of populations severely in need.*

A PRECIOUS LEGACY TO DISCOVER

In this museum, artefacts, works of art, photographs and everyday objects from Asia, Africa and South America recount the missions carried out by Quebecoise nuns throughout the 20th century. Precious memorabilia and pieces of furniture that belonged to Délia Tétreault are also in the exhibit, as well as a gallery of colourful paintings inspired by the foundress' correspondence. This unique collection has only been made available to the general public on rare occasions. It is now permanently on display with regular hours and free access.

As Quebec becomes more and more of a safe haven, the Délia-Tétreault Museum is a meeting place for people from all walks of life and of diverse cultures. This exhibit, inspired by the values of brotherhood, solidarity and sharing, promotes a collective heritage that takes on a different color, depending on the experience of each visitor.

The Délia-Tétreault Museum is located at 100 Place Juge-Desnoyers, on the banks of the Rivière des Prairies, a ten-minute walk from Cartier metro station. Parking is available at the front and back of the house.

THE DÉLIA-TÉTREAUULT MUSEUM IS MADE UP OF THREE PARTS:

With hope-filled luggage, an exceptional exhibit created by the Quebec Museum of Civilisation, which always inspires wonder and new discoveries.

Délia's room, a journey to the past that tells of the modest beginnings of this community that is today present in 14 countries and unites 17 nationalities.

The gallery of 40 paintings, full of originality and freshness by artist Marie Bilodeau, M.I.C.



Official opening of the Délia-Tétreault Museum by the Mayor of Laval, Mr. Marc Demers. Jeanne Gauvin, M.I.C., director of the museum (left) and distinguished guests.
(Photo Credit: Martin Alarie)

OPENING HOURS

From Tuesday to Saturday:

9:30 to 11:30 am – 1:30 to 4:30 pm

Sunday:

10 to 11:30 am – 1:30 to 4:30 pm

(Monday: CLOSED)

TO PLAN YOUR VISIT

Contact Jeanne Gauvin, M.I.C.

450 663-6460, ext. 5127

OUR WEBSITE

www.museedeliatetreault.ca, includes helpful information and gives you full access to our publications. It also allows you to make an appointment.

WE LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU THERE!

Délia-Tétreault Museum
100 Place Juge-Desnoyers
Pont-Viau, Laval (Qc)
H7G 1A4



¹⁻²⁻³ Délia-Tétreault Museum (Photos Credit: Guy L'Heureux)

Young people – BRAVO!



Sr. Lucie Gagné and Sr. Irene Ferrer, school directress, with the two winners.
Photos Credit: MIC

When Sr. Lucie Gagné, MIC Assistant General, visited the Sisters in the Philippines, the primary school students from the *Immaculate Conception Academy (I.C.A)* wondered what original gift they could offer her.

To highlight her visit, they decided to draw the dream of Délia. A contest was soon organized and we have the pleasure of presenting you the art work of the two winners.

What imagination! But what is special is their understanding of Délia's particular mission. Indeed, Délia Tétreault wanted children of all nationalities to sing God's wonders. Portraying millions of wheat stalks that become children's heads is the perfect image of Délia's dream.

We encourage and congratulate the students, the teachers and the administrators. The school offers a holistic formation to more than 3,500 students. They learn to cooperate and to concretely help those who are in need. Bravo!

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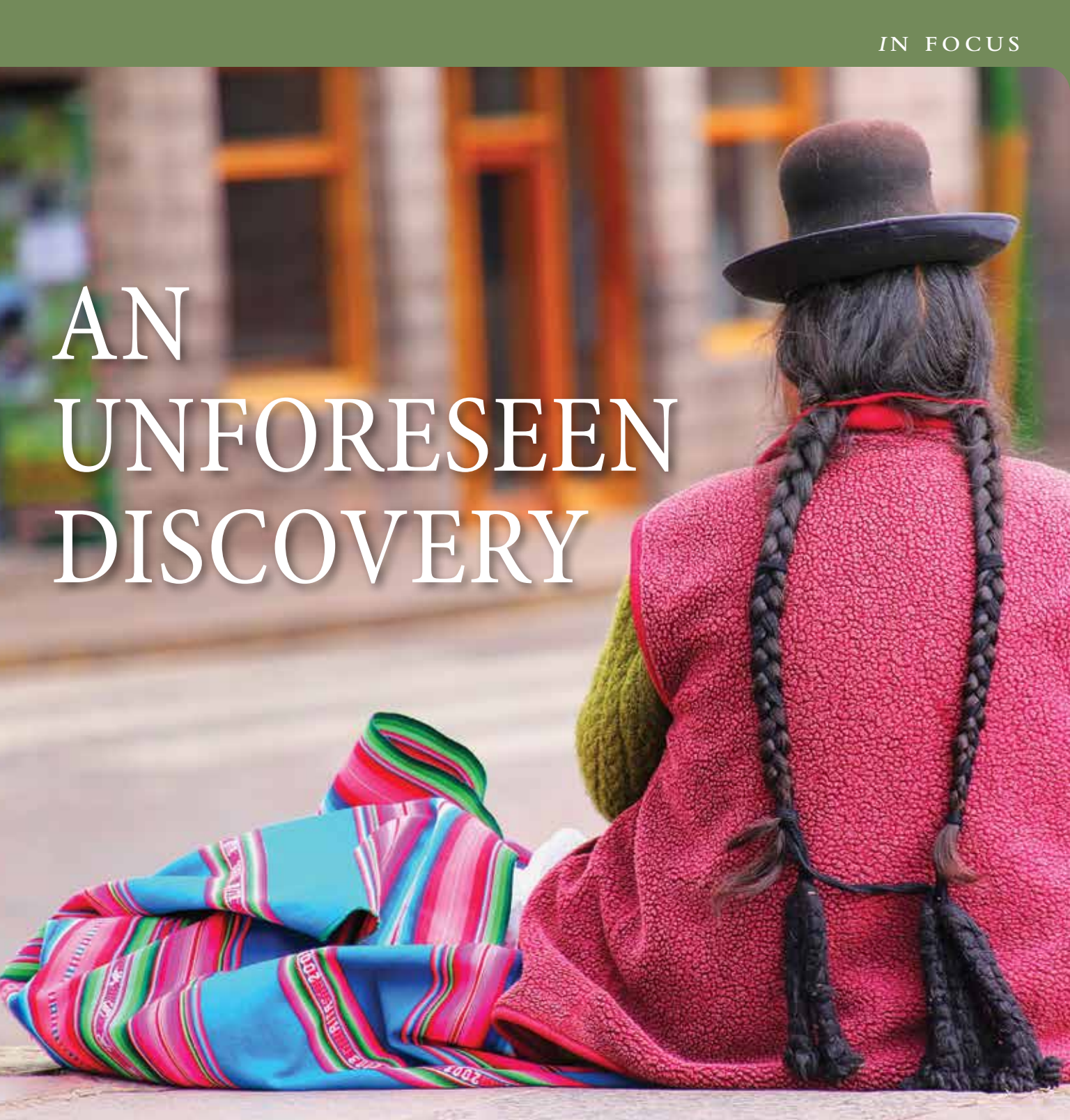
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A person is seen from behind, sitting on a paved street. They are wearing a vibrant red poncho with a textured surface and a black bowler hat. Their long dark hair is styled in two thick braids that hang down their back. To their left, a colorful poncho with horizontal stripes in shades of blue, red, green, and yellow is draped on the ground. The background is slightly blurred, showing wooden structures and a street scene.

AN UNFORESEEN DISCOVERY

When lay missionaries hear the CALL to go beyond their own boundaries, to be missionary disciples, the story of their experience is unique. Still journeying in a new land, André and Odette mull over their months abroad and they share with us their thinking and their discovery.



By Odette Beaudoin,
André Larivière

PHOTOS:

¹ Lifestyle in Cauday
² Odette observes the
outdoor activities
Photos Credit: MIC

Leaving... An ambiguous word that could mean a positive change, with new joyful challenges but it could also mean experiencing sadness, doubts, sacrifices, especially when it means leaving behind our children, our friends, our family, our job. All this because we want to respond to a beckoning CALL that is present in our heart. Without knowing why, that CALL is there, every day, every night, since our youth.

TAKING ACTION

We want to understand what this CALL is all about. Therefore, we knock at different doors, we approach some religious communities, we inquire, we attend some missionary presentations, we are in contact with witnesses, receive some mission-oriented training without even knowing if we will have the possibility of responding to the CALL. Very much like the rich young man in the gospel who asked Jesus what he had to do to follow Him; there is a choice to make, sometimes difficult and heartbreaking. We finally decide to follow the CALL and accept whatever may come along the way.

One day, a website page appears: It's the *Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception*; this seems to be the sign we were waiting for from the Lord. We respond and follow a two-year mission oriented formation. Every month, we drive 5½hrs. from our home town to Montreal; no matter the weather, the road conditions, we are faithful to the CALL.

A LEARNING PROCESS

Our mission begins. It is a breathtaking adventure: to reach the remote villages, we must drive along hairpin bends, sheer mountain drops which make us shiver. But the outstanding beauty of nature inspires us to thank the Creator for such wonders. We finally reach our destination. What do we see? A very colorful culture; and of course, our presence in these villages arouses curiosity. We see questioning eyes, some are fearful while others are perhaps prejudiced, we are not sure. However, to our surprise, we are always given a place of honor at their table. We humbly accept.

With time, we realize something is missing; there is an inner emptiness. Our expectations are not met. We feel far apart from the people. Our wish to do more and know more is dampened. We are no longer in a society where competition obliges us to achieve immediate success: we must wait, be patient, and take time to observe. But this is also a time when doubt creeps in, we wonder what we are doing in this far away place, distress is omnipresent, we pray to understand the reason of our CALL. The honeymoon feeling, portrayed during our training years, is not always there. We want to be closer to the people, closer to the mission we have come to accomplish. We want to answer Christ's CALL which is always strongly present in our heart. We wish our mission to be a true sign of love.

A DEMANDING WAIT

While solitude takes over and profoundly affects us, while we truly doubt our choice, here comes a poor person knocking at our door and who wants to know us. He wants to learn from us and share with us. He wishes to welcome us to his house. Thus, we discover the welcoming attitude and hidden generosity of this person who is capable of sharing his bread with us. Through such grateful actions and unexpected love, the Lord reveals His presence.

Solitude has been conquered, distress has vanished but doubt remains. Our expectations are not being met. We still question our presence in this far away land as well as the purpose of our mission, and all this because we have not mastered the language and communication is difficult.

NEW DISCOVERIES

Without counting the numerous challenges we come across, we must adapt: long trips, changing from one city to another, new residence, fraternal life to which we are not accustomed, difficulties in communicating, adapting to a people, food, meals difficult to digest, strange ways of doing things and especially mutual incomprehension, somewhat like the apostles who did not understand Jesus. Notwithstanding all these seeming obstacles we give thanks for this very unique experience. One day, the Lord blesses us with friends. Like angels falling from heaven, they come to refresh us, to help us take a pause because doubt and discontent are omnipresent. These angels help us clarify our thoughts and live new experiences. We are thankful!

With time, we have become more integrated. We go beyond our limits: we learn, we have a better understanding of certain customs and why things are the way they are. Residing in this small village is a grace; it allows us to develop not only true relationships with the people but also friendships with marvelous, generous individuals, especially the children. These special bonds are a balm and they remove the tension that had been created due to our unreal expectations which had no reason to be. We must accept to take time to learn.



We now realize that even though the mission did not unfold as we were expecting, it is unfolding the way Christ wants us to understand and live it. In retrospect, it is unbelievable all we have been through, all that we have learned and how much we journeyed with Our Lord and this people. We still have one year to live this mission. We can imagine what is in store for us. A heartfelt thanks to our children who allowed us to leave home so as to respond to the CALL. Also, thank you Sister Agathe for your support and presence. 🌿

ROSE'S GARDEN



Every individual is blessed with an inner secret garden where seeds of life wait to grow and prosper. During her missionary life in Guatemala, Bolivia, and Peru, Sr. Rose-Alice Brochu went through many trials which with time she was able to overcome. During those difficult years she always kept hope in the One who walks with her every day and she became aware she had a special gift. Within her inner being, Sr. Rose-Alice discovered she had a green thumb for plants but most importantly for people who came across her path.

By Marie-Paule
Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

¹ Ica is located on the Ica River about 300 km south of Lima, along the desert coast of southern Peru.

PHOTOS:

¹ Sr. Rose with her plants

² Sr. Rose with her sibling, Sr. Ida

Photos Credit:

M.-P. Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Q. Rose-Alice you are originally from Rimouski, Quebec. Where and when did you feel attracted to missionary life?

At the age of twelve; when the mission magazine *Le Précurseur* would arrive, I would be quick to be the first to read it. I made a collection of each edition and would reread the articles that interested me. In my heart, I wanted to be a missionary; I wanted to tell people about Jesus. I would contemplate the holy picture of Jesus portrayed with his disciples in a wheat field. I was fascinated and wanted to be with Jesus in His mission. One day, my sister Ida and I met Sister Saint Gaétan, a *Missionary Sister of the Immaculate Conception*. Her joyful attitude and enthusiasm influenced me. At the age of twenty, I asked to be admitted in that Community; how happy I was when I received the positive reply.

Q. After your religious training was completed, you left for Guatemala in 1971. What memories do you keep of this mission?

My missionary dream had finally come true. I quickly adapted to Champerico where I felt close to the people and where I taught sewing and catechesis. In 1973, three years after my arrival, a terrible earthquake perturbed our lives. The Sisters and I travelled 223 km to reach the capital, Guatemala City, the epicenter of the earthquake. Our help was needed to rescue the many disaster victims. So much suffering, so much despair, so much debris everywhere, and the fear of another earthquake perturbed the lives of the local people as well as my own life. In 1976, I came back to Quebec for a rest from this tumultuous event. I took time to pursue my studies at the *Dominicans Pastoral Institute* in Montreal.

Q. In 1982, you received a new mandate; the destination was Bolivia. Did you see a big difference in mentalities and what was your mission?

I lived two years in Cochabamba where I taught sewing to the Quechua Ameridians; they have a very different culture from that of the Mayas in Guatemala. At first, I had a difficult time to adapt; then I went to Baurès, a small village of 5,000 inhabitants where it was very hot. I worked there for three years, teaching sewing and catechesis. The people were simple, welcoming and warmhearted, I was happy to be in their midst.

Q. When you came back to Canada, a surprise was awaiting you. After a period of rest, you were sent to Peru. Luckily, the Spanish language had no hidden secrets for you!

In Peru, most of my time was dedicated to teaching, sharing the faith. I prepared young people for their first communion, also gave marriage preparation courses to couples who were planning to get married, and I instructed parents who were to have their children baptized. Then, on my birthday September 11, 1997, without any warning, I collapsed. I was completely lifeless when they transported me to Ica's hospital where I was refused because my case was too serious. The ambulance drivers brought me to Lima's hospital, a 4½ hr. drive from Ica and there I remained unconscious for six days. An MIC companion, Sister Rose-Alice Rousseau stayed by my bedside during all that time. When I returned to consciousness I could not speak nor walk. I was completely dependent and had to be repatriated.

Q. What had happened?

I had a major stroke. Upon arrival in Quebec, I had open-heart surgery; then, I had to learn how to speak, read, write, and to walk straight. I had many sessions in physiotherapy but after hardly twenty minutes I was exhausted. My sister Ida helped me tremendously; she encouraged me and supported my efforts, her dynamism and positive outlook gave me hope. After many years of exercising as best I could, I decided to re-learn how to

sew. I became good enough to be among the Sisters who worked in our sewing room at Pont-Viau.



Q. Your missionary life was very different from the one you had imagined. How did you begin taking interest in plants the way you do so well today?

I discovered my love for plants when I helped my sister Ida who was selling some of her own to help the missionaries. She would trust me and encourage me to take care of the ones she gave me. I loved them all, and could observe life unfold from a tiny bud to a beautiful flower. They reminded me of my great desire to bloom again and have a taste for life which is so marvelous in itself. Every day I would observe the soil, look at the leaves and buds, I would water each plant with much love and attention. I like to repot them with rich soil and offer them to those who are also plant lovers. I am always happy when someone asks me for a plant of some kind because I know that they bring sunshine in our lives.

Q. What connection is there between your life and that of the plants?

Life in plants fascinates me, because with a bit of love and care, they bloom. I realize that no matter what life has in store for us, the Lord is always there to help us through. When I take care of my plants I think how much more He cares for us. When I water my plants, I think of the many times He showered me of His goodness. He knows exactly what we need because His love is constant and forever. I thank my God, for being life-giver, to have given me back my love of life. I am happy and I keep in mind the leitmotiv of our Foundress, Délia Tétreault: *courage and confidence*. How true this is! No matter the trials that come our way, He is always with us. ☺

KANYANGA



Promises of Life

To the crowd who was listening to Him, Jesus said: I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full (Jn 10:10). Forty years in Malawi and Zambia (Africa) serving as nurse and mid-wife, Sr. Jacqueline Vachet takes us to Kanyanga. This is where, for thirty-three years, she has been devoting her time and energy.

By Jacqueline Vachet,
M.I.C.

¹ WHO – Maternal Mortality,
Nov. 2016

PHOTOS:

¹ (left to right)

Pauline Brodeur, M.I.C. and
Jacqueline Vachet, M.I.C.

² Maternity Ward

Photos Credit: Archives MIC

THE GENESIS

Kanyanga – a mission located in a remote region of Zambia, far from all commercial and administrative centers. The closest town is 36 km away; the dirt roads leading to it are often impassible during the rainy season. The people are mainly farmers, some have small businesses while others work for public services.

In 1957, when the MIC Sisters arrived at Kanyanga, they saw that health care services were non-existent; their first goal was then to set up a health care center. In the beginning, there were five rooms: an office, an outpatient clinic, a treatment room, a maternity ward with a delivery room. Outside were a few small mud huts for patients who needed to be under observation and receive special treatments.

The Sisters wanted to show God's love for His African children; therefore, from the outset all the aspects of life were touched: physical, psychological, and spiritual. We discovered a source of life deep within the hearts of a people who were longing to know more.

AS IT IS TODAY

In 1984, when I arrived in Kanyanga, the Center had progressed; it offered many services and had forty-three beds for its patients. The personnel, some of whom had specialties, had increased to twenty-eight. The population was then approximately 42,000 covering a 50 km area. Close-by two small government run dispensaries were operating: they responded to the women's child delivery and some general

health problems. With the years, the government constructed ten other small dispensaries. Thus, our Health Care Center has become the focal point of reference for all those small dispensaries; we welcome those patients who are in need of specific medical treatments.

During all these years, we have been working diligently to improve life on all levels: health-hygiene education in the villages, training traditional mid-wives, training volunteers and health care agents to provide medical help to home-bound patients, to diagnose tuberculosis, HIV, and malnutrition. It is a fact that in developing countries the risk of maternal death at birth is high. In 2015, the maternal mortality ratio in developing countries was 239 per 100,000 live births versus 12 per 100,000 live births in developed countries.¹ There are large disparities between countries, but also within countries, and between women with high and low income and those women living in rural versus urban areas.

Skilled care at birth makes a difference; we therefore provide the medical care needed by pregnant mothers who are at risk. We immunize children against contagious diseases although in the Kanyanga region as well as in Zambia most of these have been eradicated.

DEVELOPING AND WITHOUT LIMITS

At all levels, life is improving. The holistic approach is well developed and responds to the needs of the population. The Health Care Center now has fifty qualified employees. The specific vocation of Kanyanga is well known and the spiritual aspect is kept as a priority. The Center's logo is: *In the Name of Jesus, be healed!* Among the many committees, there is the Spiritual Care Committee; the members visit the sick, pray and share the faith with them, respond to their questions and are present to the population who seek their help, their guidance. The directors of the committee meet once a month to plan the visiting hours as well as offer the necessary help to buy food and other necessities. This Spiritual Care Committee is ecumenical and includes twelve

churches from different denominations. An interfaith chapel was built in 2005 and it provides multifaith services.

While focusing on expanding the Center and the professional services, the administration carefully sees to the vital needs of the personnel and the patients. Artesian wells have been drilled adding solar pumps; adequate houses have been built for the personnel.

From forty-three beds in 1984, we now count seventy-six. In 1996 a large outpatient clinic was built: it includes a clinical examination room, laboratory, pharmacy, treatment room, waiting room, and extended patients' rooms. At the same time, a nutrition center was set-up for the orphans and undernourished children; emergency housing units were built providing shelter for pregnant women waiting for delivery. Many of these mothers come from remote areas and do not have adequate transportation at the moment of childbirth. When the early stages of pregnancy require some follow-up, mothers are happy to be in one of the housing units.

In 2006, Kanyanga's mission added to its many services the HIV screening tests and STD treatments. To this effect, a new annex was built including a waiting room, a laboratory, a pharmacy, offices, and a computer room.

ALL IN ALL

At Kanyanga's Mission Health Care Center, age is not a factor. To the adolescents, we provide reliable and accurate information about HIV prevention/AIDS related problems, treatments and counseling. Young ones from two to twelve years of age enjoy the playground that is at their disposal: swings, slides, doll houses, and games; they come on Sundays and more often during vacation time. All these activities are financed by global aid organizations or by people who generously reach out to the less fortunate. For us, the MIC Sisters, we feel blessed in receiving this financial support, particularly when it comes from our readers who believe in the preciousness of life.

In retrospect, my missionary experience has led me to acknowledge that throughout the years, many deep seated life sources were liberated and revitalized a people with hope – thanks to the international aid and to the generous hearts at home. Knowing that I am supported in more ways than one, I am happy to return and to provide the necessary help required at the Kanyanga Health Care Center. ☺



TODAY, the Lord Is Calling You

The Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception is essentially a missionary community. Its members commit themselves to go wherever they are sent. When the Lord knocks at the door of one's heart, with joy, she responds "yes".

NOMINATIONS 2017



Sr. Ana ALVARADO, M.I.C. (Santa Luzmila, Lima, Peru), returns to Japan

What motivated me to return to Japan?

The Lord asks me to follow Him. The Church of Latin America is a missionary Church and I am SENT by her to Japan who needs religious missionaries. I want to walk in the footsteps of all those who went before me, remembering those who were martyred in Japan. The MIC community is one that "goes forth"; the joy of going forth is the result of a grateful heart gifted by God. With Mary, we are called to make her Son, Jesus, known to the whole world. My MIC Japanese Sisters are waiting for me and I am eager to see them all; I also look forward to working with the Japanese people.

Sr. Ruth NYALAZI, M.I.C. (Lusaka, Zambia), appointed to Baguio, Philippines

I always dreamt of being a spiritual guide and I aspire to living joyfully and peacefully. Early in life, I learnt the value of family, of community life and the joy that comes with unity in diversity. It's a great challenge but also a blessing for me to go work at the MIC inter-novitiate in the Philippines. Three years of service at the Spiritual and Human Development Center in Africa has helped me to be more conscious of my strengths and weaknesses and to endorse my responsibilities with courage. God's grace helped me to step out of my comfort zone and to share my convictions about the value of life. With joy I accept this new challenge; it is a privilege to accompany the young novices on their journey towards a mature missionary faith.



Sr. Atsuko SAGARA, M.I.C. (Tokyo, Japan),
appointed to the Philippines

When I was told that my presence as a missionary was desired in the Philippines, I could not believe it. My first reaction was to refuse the invitation. Then I took time to pray, to look at my capacities, my physical condition, my limits and my age. I thought of Mother Mary who said “yes” to God’s invitation. I prayed: Lord, make of me an instrument of your Will. My fears gradually disappeared; hope and gratitude took over and filled my heart. It is possible that along the way I will encounter some difficulties, but I will be able to overcome them if I love the people with whom I live and work. I believe in our loving God and I put all my trust in Him. I thank all the MIC Sisters who will welcome me in the Philippines and those in Japan who will allow me to leave my country.



Sr. Victoria CÁRDENAS, M.I.C. (Lima, Peru),
appointed to Haiti

As a missionary nurse, I have a wide experience with village people, the poor, and the sick. At the Institute of Rural Education in Cochabamba, Bolivia, my experience has been most gratifying; I collaborated in the formation of many auxiliary nurses who became competent in their career. My missionary path then led me to Cajabamba, Peru, where besides my nursing profession, I was able to offer my services as a catechist to the numerous rural communities of the Cajamarca Department. In 2016, a short experience in the hot Peruvian Selva prepared me for my next mandate to Haiti. May the Spirit of Jesus be with me and bless me as I begin this new assignment and wish to give 100% of all the talents I have developed.

Sr. Marie Nicolle JOSEPH, M.I.C. (Plaine-du-Nord, Haiti), appointed to South America

God calls us to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom to all peoples who come across our path. For me, the moment has arrived to go and tell, to go meet a new people in a new country. I received a missionary formation and I have been called to continue the Lord’s mission. With a happy heart I look forward to this new mandate, to live and work with my Latin American Sisters. However, I do have fears and worries because I know I will have many challenges: adapting to a new culture and climate, learning the language, getting acquainted with new ways of doing things. In spite of all that, I remain faithful to my “yes” and the desire to work in the Lord’s vineyard.



The joy of being Christ’s ambassador

The true missionary, who never ceases to be Christ’s disciple, knows that Jesus walks with her, speaks with her, breathes with her, works with her. She feels He is truly alive and present in the missionary activity of the Church. We too can be missionaries with those who are sent on His behalf; through our prayers and financial help we are one with them.

To live is to LOVE with all your heart

Fifty years of missionary life is a remarkable journey of dedication, love and service. Sr. Monica Lam of Hong Kong is here in Canada for her well-deserved sabbatical renewal and at the same time to celebrate her Golden Jubilee with other companions. The motto of Sr. Monica during her Final Vow ceremony in Hong Kong 1967 was: To live is to love with all your heart! Let us hear from Sr. Monica how she lives in order to love.



By Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

PHOTOS:

¹ (left to right)

Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

and Monica Lam, M.I.C.

² Secondary School celebration

³ Tak Oi Secondary School

Photos Credit: MIC

THE BEGINNING OF HER CALLING

Sr. Cecilia: Sister Monica, when I first met you, I was still a high school student of Good Hope School. I was inspired by your warm, genuine and joyful spirit which you still have today. Can you share with us how you pursued Catholic faith and later became an MIC?

Sr. Monica: After leaving Shanghai, China, as a child, I arrived in Hong Kong and I studied with the Franciscan Sisters even though I was not yet a Catholic. Their unreserved dedication and life of faith led to my decision to be baptized at the age of fourteen. Then, I started to pursue my knowledge of God through Bible studies and personal reflections. At the end I developed a clear concept in my mind: All things I have come from God! This awareness increased my sense of deep gratitude towards God and my thirst to know Him more! I also desired to follow Christ and offer

my life. When I met the *Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception* at the age of twenty-four, I realized that I was truly called to become a missionary like them! Since the charism of the Institute is Thanksgiving, it could not respond better to my inner calling! There is a Chinese saying: *When you drink water, think of the source.* I had found my source and in 1964, I entered officially the M.I.C. Institute to pursue my religious vocation. I was drawn to be more Christ-like, compassionate, loving, and bear witness of God's LOVE to others.

HER DEDICATION IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION

Sr. Cecilia: On the day of your Final Profession, you chose a special motto: *To live is to love with all your heart!* Can you share with us how you have lived your motto all these years?

Sr. Monica: I have been a teacher all my life, in both primary and secondary schools. However, my last thirty years in the field of education was as Principal of Tak Oi Secondary School. Tak Oi means CHARITY. During all those years I tried to transmit not only knowledge to my students, but also positive values of life. Love is one of them. Love of God and love of others. The song that I had chosen for my Final Profession did become my motto in life because, for me, to live is to love, to serve, and to give whole-heartedly. Looking back, I am deeply grateful that over the past thirty years, I witnessed that in the garden of Tak Oi, God had sown seeds of LOVE in the students and I helped to water them with great care. God sent the sun to make the seeds grow, nurturing them from budding to blossoming, and finally to yielding fruit. Along the way, other co-workers also helped to foster a friendly environment for a fruitful harvest. I find that my task was one of enhancing the growth of this “greenhouse” with warmth, support and encouragement so that different kinds of flowers could grow freely. Our school has indeed become a home that welcomes all students, allowing them to experience the loving presence of God among them. It is a great consolation for me to meet many past students of Tak Oi who went abroad and who continue to live the spirit of charity in their respective milieu!

HER VISION AND CONVICTIONS ABOUT RELIGIOUS LIFE TODAY

Sr. Cecilia: It is wonderful to hear the enormous influence you had upon the youth over the past thirty years and more. As you are about to celebrate your Golden Jubilee, would you like to share your vision and convictions towards religious vocation today so that it may inspire the youth to discern God’s calling for them?

Sr. Monica: I am convinced that love alone can influence people and create an impact on them. It is love alone that can sustain and strengthen us in our journey in life. And religious life is a life of love and service to God and His people. When I look at the young people of today, I find them zealous and energetic. When they embark themselves on a



project, they engage wholeheartedly. They are not afraid of difficulties and they persevere. I know that if they are directed to face the challenges of life, they can find deeper meaning in their options and they dare to invest themselves in projects of love. The youth of today are generous people, more generous than we think. They are willing to dedicate themselves for a good cause. Only if we could listen to them and dialogue with them more, new sparks would fly everywhere to bring joy to the world! I would encourage young people to find time to be quiet and experience God’s presence from within. For it is in the silence of the heart that God speaks. Choosing a lifelong commitment to God is no trivial matter, yet if love stands out as the dominant concern of one’s life, then there is generosity in responding to God’s calling! I encourage the youth to: *LOVE with all your heart!* God bless! ☺

With You, O Lord



Simone L'Heureux, M.I.C.
(Sr. Saint-Aimé)
1916-2017
Montreal, Quebec

Simone was born on August 6, 1916 in Montreal. While studying with the Holy Cross Sisters, she had the opportunity of visiting the MIC Sisters at Pont-Viau, Laval. Witnessing the Sisters in prayer, she felt her call to the missionary life was being confirmed. When Simone's mother fell ill, she set aside her studies in order to help at home; however, in 1941 she entered the Novitiate and soon after her sister, Fleur-Ange, joined her. Perfect seamstress with an intense spiritual life, Sr. Simone found fulfillment in Haiti and Quebec. Always ready to serve with generosity, it's at the age of one hundred that she received her eternal reward. Thank you Sister Simone for your faithfulness!



Thérèse Blais, M.I.C.
(Sr. Sainte-Christine)
1924-2017
Sherbrooke, Quebec

It was not easy for Thérèse to enter into religious life. She had a great job at the bank, she had many social commitments and a loyal friend. However, at the age of twenty-four, she said a definitive "yes" to the Lord's invitation and she entered our Novitiate on August 8, 1948. She wrote: *I knew the Holy Spirit was inspiring me because I felt an inner strength and happiness.* In Africa, (Malawi and Zambia) as well as in Quebec, Sister Thérèse succeeded in whatever she was entrusted to do: printing, education, parish animation, maintenance, to name but a few of her interests. Joy for life was Sister's main characteristic; she is now enjoying everlasting bliss.



Jeannine Forcier, M.I.C.
(Sr. Jeanne-de-Valois)
1932-2017
Springfield, Mass. U.S.A.

Attentive, welcoming, warm-hearted, conciliating, dynamic, Sr. Jeannine had all the qualities to occupy a service of authority. For over forty years she served in that capacity, including six years as vicar general of the Institute. Sister was a Franco-American and knew very little about our community; nevertheless, she entered in 1951 with the hope of fulfilling her missionary call. Her dream came true in 1957 when she was assigned to Africa (Malawi and Zambia). As educator, she communicated her knowledge with competence and vitality. Throughout her lifetime, even during her illness, her missionary flame radiated. Dear Sister Jeannine, you left us a great legacy, may it bear fruit.



Jeannine Gagnon, M.I.C.
(Sr. Saint-René-Goupil)
1924-2017
Héraultville, Quebec

When Jeannine entered the Novitiate in 1945 she already had a passionate heart for Christ's mission. She once wrote: *I was chosen, called, and sent.* Blessed with many talents, Sister had a fruitful mission in Haiti. She was involved in the fields of education, catechesis, pastoral work; she created the national Pontifical Missionary Union and trained a young Haitian community in the line of administration. With competence she served as superior and provincial bursar. Sister Jeannine's sense of humor and precise mind fascinated all who lived with her. From Haiti, a message was sent: *Mesi Bondié ki té ban ou sè Jeannine.* And from her family, she will always be the beloved and cherished youngest.



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IF CHRISTMAS IS...

*If Christmas is PEACE
Peace must be conveyed.
Give peace to those around you
reach out to others.*

*If Christmas is LIGHT
Light must shine in our lives.
Brighten up the days
of your brothers and sisters.*

*If Christmas is LOVE
Love must be at the forefront.
Bring love to all those who need
to be understood and cared for.*

*If Christmas is JOY
Joy must radiate on our faces.
Smile to the world, be happy
wherever you are.*

*If Christmas is HOPE
Hope must grow in our hearts.
Spread hope without hesitation
to all who despair.*

*If Christmas is LIBERTY
Liberty must be respected.
Look upon all peoples
with love and understanding.*

Poem from Haiti