

MIC MISSION NEWS

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SINCE 1923

To sow seeds of joy and hope

100 YEARS
THE MIC SISTERS
IN THE DIOCESE
OF QUEBEC

BRINGING FORTH
LIFE IN MISSION

In Focus

THAT
LIFE MAY
EMERGE

Missionary Prayer Intentions 2019

JULY

We pray for those who administer justice, that they may work with integrity and that the injustice which prevails in the world may not have the last word.

AUGUST

We pray for families, that through their life of prayer and love they may become ever more clearly "schools of true human growth".

SEPTEMBER

We pray for politicians, scientists and economists, that they may work together to protect the world's seas and oceans.

Masses for readers' intentions offered in the following countries:

January: **Canada**

February: **Cuba**

March: **Philippines**

April: **Haiti**

May: **Canada**

June: **Bolivia**

July: **Malawi & Zambia**

August: **Hong Kong & Taiwan**

September: **Madagascar**

October: **Peru**

November: **Japan**

December: **Canada**

MIC MISSION NEWS/ LE PRÉCURSEUR

On the way to its centennial!

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To Succeed in Life

Every person on earth dreams of a better life and longs for more. From the very beginning, a child must conquer its fear to take its first steps, a student must study to succeed, a scientist must do extensive research to discover the unknown. Each person hopes to surpass oneself, to go a step further and leave a mark. In fact, in the heart of each human being exists one goal: to have a successful life.

Missionaries all have at heart that goal. In the name of one's faith, the person dedicates his or her life to a humanitarian cause such as education, health care, development, pastoral guidance. The missionary hopes that through one's implication, *life will emerge*, that it will take a dimension beyond his expectations somewhat like Jesus who brought life to those who were lost or in need. Éric captures the reality of such a dedication in dispensaries where lives are saved. In his own way, Maurice gives examples of how missionaries have had to adapt to changing times so that human dignity and Christian life may come forth. All are convinced that faith adds an eternal dimension, a spiritual ray other than mere human success.

From very simple actions life bursts forth. Sister Micheline describes the joy of young people at Panama's World Youth Day -- a Church in action leading us to next October's super grand mission month. Sister Estelle, who worked years in Madagascar, relates the importance of recognizing leaders, encouraging them to pursue their studies to become professors in the field that suits them best, and in turn help students shape their own future. Sister Évangéline, highlights the 100 years presence of the MIC Sisters in the diocese of Quebec City—a colorful, universal, apostolic adventure.

Dear readers, this edition comes to you during the lovely summer season. For many, it is vacation time; this is a beautiful occasion to encourage young and not so young people to "reach out" where help is needed. These good actions will be forever recorded in their hearts.

Marie-Paula San Juan, m.i.c.

Ethnic and religious tensions ran high in Jesus' days and as an adult he was conscious of the problems. The Samaritan-Judean hostilities had become a burden for many; Judaism was a complex mixture of social, political, and religious ideologies. Every day, Jesus would observe the heavy burdens laid upon his people; he noticed their lack of social audacity and common projects to overcome the crushing political power. It almost seemed as if liberation was impossible and freedom out of reach.

Become What You Are Meant to Be



By André Gabdois

FREEDOM WITHIN YOUR HEART

Jesus' mission was to redeem people, to love people into goodness, to save people from distress and errors of their ways. One day, he heard his cousin, John the Baptist cry out to the people: *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand* (Mt 3:2). *You brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruit in keeping with repentance* (Mt 3:7.8). In other words John the Baptist was telling the people to change their lives and to act accordingly. He commanded tax collectors to stop collecting deceitful wages; he was telling them to open their hearts to the Light and become who they


truly were meant to be. He called people to repent so as to be free from within. The authorities of the time considered those statements dangerous and disturbing.

After his baptism, Jesus decided to go all over the countryside and beyond to awaken in his people the dormant freedom that was within them. At the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, upon hearing from his Mother that there was no more wine, he came to the bride and groom's rescue by changing the water into the very best wine (Jn 2:6.12). Jesus chose to respond positively. Freedom within us is a process, it is a state of being which needs to be developed; though we cannot control the events which come our way, we have the interior freedom to choose how we respond. Within us are the seeds of generosity, consciousness, audaciousness, freedom... waiting for us to tap into them for life to emerge in our own lives, in our milieu, and all around us. This inner freedom leads us to take the road less travelled and like Jesus to reach out to those who are searching, who are troubled or in pain. The Pharisees and high priests in Jesus' time did not appreciate his actions and tried to prevent him from healing the sick on the Sabbath, from being friendly with the sinners, from praising the little ones and the Samaritan, from granting pardon to the adulterous woman, from calling Yahweh his Father... nevertheless, Jesus was free and faithful to his Father's Will.

A PROJECT OF CO-RESPONSIBILITY

In his freedom to BE and to act as such, Jesus had a desire to communicate that FIRE to people he encountered, he wanted LIFE to emerge according to his Father's Will. He did not seek to be praised nor did he want to be applauded. He invited and continues to invite those whom his Father has entrusted into his care to become FIRE that they may, in turn, be Light and Life in our fragile world. Searching for some kind of co-responsibility and solidarity, he took on certain positions that were not always welcomed by the authorities of his time; however, the Spirit of God was at work and continues to be in those who follow him. We might

experience rejection, or confrontation in choosing to continue Jesus' mission and to become what we are meant to be, but that is the price to pay when we authentically become co-responsible.

The seed of freedom within the hearts of people who wish to collaborate in becoming who they truly are will emerge and be life giving. As children of God, they will have what is needed to change water into wine, multiply the loaves of bread, heal the sick and be ambassadors of God. 

Within us are
the seeds of
generosity,
consciousness,
audaciousness,
freedom...



In the history of 20th-century Canadian mission work, nuns played an important role in the founding and functioning of hospitals, clinics and maternity homes. They have not only educated many women in Asia, Africa and South America, but also helped improve the quality of healthcare in general. Today's public often forgets the missionary nuns' roles as midwives, neonatal nurses as well as their contribution in training the local people in those fields. They shared their knowledge and helped combat child mortality, thus life expectancy increased. Many of their initiatives have endured over time: free clinics, prenatal clinics, mobile clinics, midwife training, children's organizations, collecting donations for children, etc. Here, I offer a brief overview of this subject.¹



BRINGING FORTH LIFE IN MISSION:

A brief history of Canadian nuns



By **Éric Désautels**

VOCATIONAL SPECIALIZATION AND PROFESSIONALIZATION

In the 1940s, the training of nuns working in healthcare increased. This trend went hand in hand with institutions and work that focused their efforts on children and pregnant women. Consider the Catholic Medical Mission of Philadelphia, who recruited many Canadian nuns and made media tours in the Province of Quebec in the 1950s. This congregation dedicated itself entirely in training missionary nuns as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, dieticians, etc. They created hospitals and clinics while training secular people to become midwives, caretakers and pharmacists.²

What was the typical path those nuns followed? First, they were trained in nursing before specializing in a field. After their

studies, many of them worked for a time in Canadian hospitals or the Marguerite d'Youville Institute of the Grey Nuns. Others quickly set off to mission countries after their studies or, like the White Sisters of Africa, some had their training abroad. The experience gained, whether here or abroad, allowed for a professionalization of the vocation. This trend had a significant impact in fields such as obstetrics. Although midwives were present in Canadian missions before the 1940s, the specialization of nurses and midwives resulted in the development of laity and institutions contributing to local growth. In many mission countries, initiatives had to be taken in terms of organizing and improving healthcare. For example, the Fathers of the Foreign Missions, in Pakistan, were associated with the Sisters of Holy Cross in the 1950s to combat infant mortality: *To stop this suffering, all preventative measures*

PHOTOS:

¹ Sr. Lucienne Gauthier, m.i.c. encourages working mothers.
– *Le Précurseur*, 1987

² Sr. Yvette Caron, m.i.c. head nurse at the clinic
– *MIC Mission News*, May-June, 1987, P. 10

³ Mzimba Mobile Clinic Team – *The Precursor*, January-February 1972, P. 13

were taken: marriage preparation classes, prenatal clinic, infant clinic, maternal clinic, a training school for midwives.³ The arrival of these new practices was sometimes met with reluctance as it clashed with the strong traditional beliefs of the locals. The missionaries needed to work diligently in raising awareness and introducing western approaches to obstetrics. In this context, the issue of adaptation was vital.

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate-Conception had, of course, contributed to the creation of similar organizations. For example, *Works of Maternity* were created in 1951 in Roche-à-Bateau, Haiti. The nuns played a significant role in sharing their knowledge to fight against certain prejudices. In 1953, Sister Marie-Alphonse-de-Liguori stated: *This kind of work tends to promote the sacraments of marriage and baptism; it diverts from superstitious practices, reduces the rate of infant mortality..., it prevents illness in both the mother and the newborn; last but not least, it brings a little happiness to incredibly impoverished homes.*⁴

The Sisters' role in Mzimba, Malawi-Africa, is also worthy of discussion. There, the nuns showed their creativity in the organization of a first mobile clinic: Malawian mothers no longer needed to walk miles to come to the nuns—the nuns could now come to them!



Just think of the AIDS epidemic in Africa – this devastating crisis increased the infant mortality rate while decreasing life expectancy which had been increasing since the 1940s. Such a reality brought about a new challenge and required the nuns to adjust their teaching approach.

CALLED TO GIVE LIFE

The theme of this issue is a reminder of the unique selflessness of many Canadian missionary sisters. In order for life to emerge and living conditions be improved, many nuns worked hard and found lasting solutions. Their actions and innovations contributed to the creation of a better life and enhanced physical conditions for women and children around the world. 🌸



The missionary sisters who devoted their lives to pregnant women and young children had to adapt to the context in which they were living.

¹ A concrete example with photographs and videos is available on the *Patrimoine immatériel religieux du Québec* website, from Sister Jacqueline Grégoire, s.s.a.: <http://www.ipir.ulaval.ca/fiche.php?id=1001>

² For example, see: Sister Yvonne Marier, s.c.m.m., "Sur les traces du bon Samaritain," *Le Devoir*, June 20, 1950, P. 5.

³ Lionel Groulx, *Le Canada français missionnaire... une autre aventure!*, Montréal, Fides, 1964, P. 225.

⁴ Sister Marie-Alphonse-de-Liguori – *Mothers Rejoice in Roche-à-Bateau* – M.I.C. Mission News, vol. XIX, No. 10, 1953, P. 462.

PHOTOS:

- ¹ Sr. Isabelle and Sr. Jacqueline greet two young women from Panama
- ² Students from Hong Kong are most happy to meet the MIC Sisters at the MCA
- ³ Sr. Micheline and Sr. Doris introduce Délia Tétreault to the participants
- ⁴ Extraordinary missionary month, October 2019 – poster and logo
- ⁵ Painting: *Délia's dream* by Julie Caouette

Photos Credit: MIC



Délia Tétreault —A MODEL TO PROPOSE



By Micheline Marcoux, M.I.C.

As I contemplate nature, I catch myself searching for signs of renewal. With the arrival of summer, there is barely any time for spring to chase away the last remnants of our harsh winter. Can those who have never seen our autumns and winters even imagine life emerging after so much bleakness and cold? And yet...!

It's easy to spot new growth in nature. How do these signs manifest themselves in the current mission that has been entrusted to me? At the heart of this particular Church service—*working towards the beatification and canonization of the Venerable Délia Tétreault, our foundress*—some meaningful activities over the last few months have allowed me

to notice signs of vitality in which we can recognize the Holy Spirit's creative action.

EVENTS THAT ARE LIFE GIVING

At this stage, the Venerable Délia Tétreault's cause of beatification has a priority. Entrusted to us by our postulator, Father Pascual Cebollada, S.J., we must make her known to the world and pray to her. Over the last year, we have prioritized our presence at major Church events; we presented Délia Tétreault to today's youth as being a meaningful role model whose life was totally committed to the Lord's Mission.



■ **The American Missionary Congress (MCA)**

Sister Jacqueline Brage, M.I.C., known for her enthusiasm and conviction in terms of our Foundress' cause, participated at the 5th American Missionary Congress in Bolivia, last July. With the help of our fellow Sisters from Peru and Bolivia, as well as Audrey Charland, representing the *M.I.C. Mission News* magazine, an information booth was set up to present Délia Tétreault and her Institute to this new audience who had come from many countries within the American continent.

Deeply moved by her short stay in Bolivia, Sister Jacqueline reiterated her amazement—the generous welcome she received from the parish community and the host family was for her a living proof of the faith of couples and families' commitment to Christ's Mission. During an activity which took place on the outskirts of the region, a remarkable meeting took place. In an area where there was no priest, Augustin an elderly person, living alone, welcomed Sister Jacqueline to his humble home. He attended the celebration which took place at the local church; upon his return he asked Sister Jacqueline to bless him... and in turn, she asked him to do the same for her. A most meaningful gesture!

This event was organized by the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS). The conferences sought to reignite the Gospel fire in the hearts of its participants, to help them discover their true faith and to share it joyfully as a response to their baptismal covenant. We are all called to proclaim the Good News and is this not the same call that young Délia felt more than 100 years ago?

■ **Vocation Promotion Booth at WYD**

In January 2019, at the World Youth Day in Panama, we saw Sister Jacqueline again, this time with Sister Isabel Ayala, M.I.C. Religious communities were encouraged to set up a booth with a vocational activity to introduce communities and founders to young pilgrims.

First and foremost, what struck Sister Isabel most was the relationships she forged with others to achieve this kind of endeavour. The success of this collective project was a sure thing, thanks to the initiatives of some M.I.C. Sisters in Quebec, Canada and their friends of the diocese of Montreal, including Ricardo and his family in Panama. Also to be mentioned is the generosity of the local parish and the host families in Panama as well as the cooperation of our sisters and friends from Hong Kong and Peru. These support networks were life giving. The enriching encounters between young people that surpassed language barriers, and the ecumenical openness of Jewish and Muslim communities who were also host families was deeply appreciated.



The young pilgrims who came from Hong Kong, the Philippines, Haiti, Cuba and Canada, expressed exuberant joy when they recognized the Canadian flag and the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate-Conception. Sisters just like the ones in their home country... they had a feeling of being part of one big family!



At the booth, or at the parish, the young people were not afraid to show their faith and ask questions about the MIC charism and spirituality, the calling and the mission. The interest in Délia Tétreault and her dream was tangible; her thoughts merged with those of the young people. Some had already experienced the mission; others felt a call to go further. Since their return, some of the young women continue to keep in touch with Sr. Jacqueline and Sr. Isabelle.

■ **Extraordinary Missionary Month – the PMS**

Who can predict the doors that might open after a meeting? In December 2017, I met with Father Yoland Ouellet, O.M.I., Director of the Pontifical Mission Societies (PMS) in Canada. Having in mind the upcoming American Missionary Congress, I wanted to introduce to him Délia Tétreault, our Foundress and emphasize her role in reviving the Propagation of the Faith and the Holy Childhood (now called Missionary Childhood) in Canada, a commitment pursued by Délia's Institute for over 100 years. Father Ouellet made two unexpected proposals, and asked for my help creating texts:

- In October 2017, Pope Francis decreed an extraordinary missionary month for October 2019; the goals: to arouse interest and momentum for the universal mission, to renew our hearts and our practices in joyfully proclaiming the Gospel. To prepare, the Pope asked the local Churches to present their missionary witnesses, canonized or not, throughout the missionary month of October 2018. Among the four witnesses chosen in 2018, Venerable Délia Tétreault was one of them.
- For October 2019, each country was invited to offer the names of missionary witnesses to the Pontifical Mission Society in Rome. Once again, PMS Canada submitted the name of our Foundress and her work, serving the missionary dimension of the universal Church.

After the release of the Guide¹ for this special month, we had a great surprise: the Venerable Délia Tétreault appeared among the twenty-five names listed as role models and mediators for the mission in the world today!



SEEDS OF LIFE

During those specific mission events, simple acts were performed; however, seeds were sown. To all those who take to heart the call of their baptism, proposing the life of Mother Délia as a witness to the universal mission of the Church, is most inspiring in this day and age. Scripture tells us: *Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?* (Isaiah 43:19) ☪

¹ See: <http://www.october2019.va/en.html>, EN, Part 2, P. 255

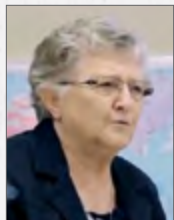
Make a Commitment: TO WHOM *and* WHY?



Claudine Delière, the director of cultural mediation and community commitment at Bluff Theatre², invited me on behalf of Éric Jean, stage director, and Luc Tartar, author of plays and novels, to participate in a meeting with students from the Mont-de-La-Salle school. These two artists sought to enhance their thinking for the next Bluff Theatre creation that will focus on commitment. The presence, the attentive listening, and compassion that took place during this meeting was a moving moment for both the young people and the adults accompanying them.

INITIAL QUESTIONS BEFORE THE MEETING

The above mentioned people wanted to give an MIC missionary, who had lived abroad for a long time, the opportunity to have an exchange with these young people about what they think commitment means. Is it a commitment to oneself, or to others? Is it at the service of an idea or beliefs? Can you commit to something alone? In the short or long term? Why be committed? Students were able to learn what motivates nuns to embrace certain causes and about their life-long values; they heard about their work in the community both locally and internationally.



By Estelle Fontaine, M.I.C.

Listening to these young people from Montreal and France, Mr. Jean and Mr. Tartar asked them some questions: *You, young lady, young man, you who look at this world with a head full of ideas, who fear missing out on life, who wants to go out and create, build, love, get involved... does that scare you? Why? What will be (what is) your life's commitment? What cause will you like (have you liked) to commit to? Who is someone you admire for their commitment?*

Doing so felt like a headfirst plunge into a world of joy, trepidation, re-evaluation and, above all, gratitude.

As a rational being, I need someone who inspires me, who guides me. In Christian training, at school and with family, I have known God and understood that He loves me, that He gives me faith in Him and calls me to tell others that they are loved (in other words, I pass on to others what I have received). In my eyes, God creates continuously. He is

¹ A creative company, the Bluff Theatre supports the development and promotion of contemporary dramaturgy, from here and elsewhere, among adolescents.

PHOTOS:

¹ Participants at the round table

²⁻³ Moments of interiority

Photos Credit:
Bluff Theatre



PLUNGING INTO THE WORLD OF GRATITUDE

Given my age, 84 years old, I was hesitant to speak in front of these young people, between the ages of 15 and 18. However, the *Go... Reach Out... Get involved... Be fruitful...* from our Pope Francis confirmed my decision to accept the invitation. My experience at this workshop made me dig deeper to find the reasons behind my first commitment and all those that followed after.

always innovating beginning with who we are, with our talents, with that which already exists. He has a holistic view in time, in the universe.

CHOOSING A CAUSE

I too got involved for a cause. My involvement was always a response to the question: *What good is it to exist, to live, if I don't contribute in some way to the well-being of people or improve the lives of individuals*

and groups among whom I live? I believe this is what made me wake up to the realities which were all around me.

**He [God] is always innovating
beginning with who we are,
with our talents, with that which
already exists.**

During my conversation with the young people, I mentioned the elements which triggered my various commitments between 1966 and 2010. I largely emphasized the importance of listening to people, inviting them to commit their life and their enthusiasm to the realization of goals, to not hesitate to innovate. I believe that being a missionary means nourishing people's lives and watching them grow.

This is what brought me to: • Give up a stable job (college director) • Invest more in areas where there are needs (reinforcing adults' capabilities) • Search for talented people and encourage their involvement (founding of an adult continuing education centre) • Give my time and energy; share my knowledge (training future session facilitators in terms of: interpersonal communication, conflict management, leadership, human resources, identity and human development) • Form groups (Christian path and entertainment for the elderly) • Contribute to couples' development (a couple's choice to undergo training abroad in this sense) • Re-educate parents on the proper way to react to their children's difficulties and problems (support for Malagasy writers and translators, printing, distribution and reprinting of textbooks) • Respond compassionately to social issues (working with the Canadian government to bring water to a village in a remote area) • Pave the way for concrete involvement (establishment of a meaningful relationship over 30 years with a charitable couple from Quebec and four orphans that they took care of) • Get involved at the international level, if needed (collaboration in response to the need of the psychology department at the Catholic University of Madagascar).

HAVE FAITH

Everyone should receive God's love, which is mysteriously at work in each person, above and beyond their faults and failings... The expression of truth can take different forms. The renewal of these forms of expression becomes necessary for the sake of transmitting to the people of today the Gospel message in its unchanging meaning, says Pope Francis.



The workshop participants expressed a keen interest in listening to me talk about my involvement and experiences, especially in Madagascar. Then, their interest came to life with the questions and stories shared during the improvisational exercises done with Éric, the director. In many young people, there is often a fear of not knowing, of missing their chance, of lacking the enthusiasm to get started, of not investing in love or not being loved. We also see a burning drive in those who are aiming for success, who are thirsty for it, who want to fulfill their desire to choose their life's commitment. They are amazed at their success, while others seem to show self-contempt for the talents or energy they may lack.

I hope I was able to show these young people that, throughout life, we don't get ahead alone, especially when the *cause behind the commitment* is worth the trouble. In fact, once we walk alongside and listen to the motivated and passionate people we meet along the way, we can overcome any challenge.

Go! Do not be afraid to invest in something! It is day after day, that we grow and build our commitments. 🌸

100 years

The MIC Sisters in the Diocese of Quebec



On November 10, 1919, three young nuns of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception moved into a temporary living space on Sainte-Julie Street, in the Basse-Ville area of Quebec. In August, their Foundress, Mother Marie-du-Saint-Esprit, Délia Tétreault, received permission from Cardinal Louis-Nazaire Bégin to open a home in his diocese; it was time for the young missionary institution, founded in 1902, to take action. There, the goals were many: to work within the Chinese community, to implement a postulate, to offer closed retreats for women, to open an office for the works of the Holy Childhood and the Propagation of the Faith. An apostolic adventure for everyone!

By **Évangéline Plamondon, M.I.C.**

PRESENCE AMONG IMMIGRANTS

From the very beginning, the Sisters went from street to street, meeting Chinese residents and their family at their business or at the laundry shop. To make their task easier, Délia called back from China a nun who could speak Cantonese. Apostolic work was extensive in the Asian community, and the nuns needed help. In 1921, philosophy students from the Laval Seminary and Laval Normal School (Quebec Teacher Training College) joined the nuns, the lay people and volunteer teachers. Catechetical lessons and an interpretation service in hospitals and immigration bureaus were added to the French and English classes. Baptisms were celebrated, to the delight of the missionaries. The apostolic works grew and developed, but not without its share of rocky waters: handling impoverished new arrivals, inevitable misunderstandings, financial



concerns and government requirements. The apostolic center moved several times and bore different names.

On December 8, 1928, Délia Tétreault saw one of her dreams realized: Cardinal Raymond-Marie Rouleau blessed the new



PHOTOS:

¹ Sr. Getrude Laforest at the Chinese Center

² Notre-Dame du Cénacle – retreat house; Promotion of the Holy Childhood & MIC Mission News (*The Precursor*)

³ Quebec associates (AsMIC)

Photos Credit:
MIC Archives

Notre-Dame-du-Cénacle house, commonly known as *The Cenacle* on Saint-Cyrille Street. While it would remain a closed retreat house for young women, it would also host the Chinese Mission.

From 1928 to 1968, language courses were offered exclusively to the Chinese. In 1970, with the arrival of many immigrants from all over the world, the Chinese Mission became a place of learning and integration for people of all different cultures and religions. In 1976, following the sale of the Cenacle, which became a diocesan centre, the Chinese Mission moved to Parc Avenue and became the M.I.C. Centre. In 1992, ten religious communities joined the MIC staff. In 2000, it was the centre's turn to close its doors.

From 1970 to 2000, more than 4,000 immigrants from 81 countries benefited from these classes. In 1981, the community, guided by the same goals—to welcome and to support—purchased a home on Murray Avenue. Over the years, the nuns have worked with the Chinese, Lebanese and Syrians, it has been more modest work, but very timely.

CLOSED WOMEN'S RETREATS

Délia Tétreault always wanted to help women. She favoured closed retreats for women and young girls throughout different cities in the province. In Quebec City, the work of women's closed retreats began on April 11, 1921, in a small house on Simard Street, where it remained until 1948.

There were many requests. From 1928, retreats were held at the Cenacle until 1976. Statistics show that more than 130,000 people attended. The retreats were offered to a diverse clientele: priests, nuns, young mothers, high school students, professionals, university students, and were led by sought-after preachers. The Cenacle also offered study days and training sessions and welcomed pilgrims. The large sunny house was open to everyone!



The Sisters' flourishing work took them to the County of Beauce. In 1932, in Sainte-Marie, the community inherited *Château Beauce*. For eleven years, it hosted young women interested in the religious life and offered closed retreats for women from 1944 to 1966. Eventually, the postulate settled in Montreal rather than Quebec City.

LAY PEOPLE, PARTNERS OF THE MISSION

Délia Tétreault was well aware of the generous contribution lay people made to the missions. The nuns organized women's groups that, while praying for the missions, set up workrooms, veritable hives of sewing, and sent hundreds of boxes of items of many kinds to the missions over the years. The women of Quebec and Sainte-Marie-de-Beauce generously contributed to these missionary expeditions, supported by their famous card games. To reduce financial concerns, they added painting classes, piano lessons, crafting and sale of religious items.

For many years, the Sisters trained lay missionaries and accompanied individuals on their spiritual journey. These people would then join other missionary communities and lay people; they travelled with hundreds of others who sought to share their faith in another country. Currently, an MIC who works at the *Agape Center* accompanies young people in this cross-border commitment.

MISSION PROMOTION

Like their Foundress, the MIC Sisters got involved in spreading the Pontifical Mission Society works, more specifically, those of the Holy Childhood and the Propagation of the Faith. In September 1920, the MIC archives note the arrival of two propagandists who came to promote the Holy Childhood. Thereafter, an office of the Holy Childhood Association was set up and its aim was to make known this Pontifical Association and distribute its magazine. The nuns gave lectures about their missions, recounted their missionary experiences and presented slideshows. Needless to say, they suggested making a donation for young Chinese or African children.

In cities and in the countryside, people awaited these nuns dressed in white with a blue sash; they became a part of the Quebec landscape and, above all, represented the missionary heart of the local people.

With the new publication of *MIC Mission News* in 1920, the Sisters continued along their route, offering subscriptions to families. The Cenacle became their home base in the diocese as well as for those nuns who went further down to the Basse-Côte-Nord. In good or bad weather, they generously promoted the *MIC Mission News*. They were amazed by the warm welcome they received from priests, religious communities and people who offered them lodging and transportation. In both cities and in the countryside, people awaited these nuns dressed in white with a blue sash; they became a part of the Quebec landscape and, above all, represented the missionary heart of the local people.

With the Second Vatican Council, a new understanding of “mission” was introduced and deepened. The Sisters comprehended the new approach, the new vision, and with a good heart

were happy to share the universal faith in a language better adapted to our times. Modern methods of communication were added to conferences and lectures: website, radio, television, videos and exhibitions, such as *Du Soleil dans les bagages*, which took place in Quebec City in 2002, for the one hundredth anniversary of the Community’s foundation. This exhibition was headed by the city’s Museum of Civilization.



Currently, there are fewer MIC Sisters in Quebec, but they continue to collaborate with the Pontifical Mission Society by participating in diocesan and parish missionary committees, by attending parish projects, accompanying young people and catechumens, listening to and working with immigrants and refugees. They work alongside a group of men and women called the AsMIC, who share in their Marian spirituality of Thanksgiving.

If you closely examine the history of the MIC presence in the Diocese of Quebec it’s good to note that 213 young women from the Diocese made their religious missionary profession. Such a commitment came from the faith of families and the Christian communities. *A Church in Exit!* Fidelity of a great diocese to its missionary vocation. We give thanks to God! 🌸



Photos: THE SCHOLASTICS

Photos Credit: Isabelle Ayala, m.i.c., M.-P. Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

MIC INTERNATIONAL SCHOLASTICATE

MIC Mission Procure AID FOR THE SCHOLASTICS' STUDIES

121 Maplewood Avenue
Outremont (Qc)
CANADA H2V 2M2



By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Every year, before taking their perpetual vows, the Sisters who are in their final stage of formation are given the opportunity to come to Quebec, Canada in order to become acquainted with the origins of their spiritual family—the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. During their stay, they deepen the Institute's spirituality of Thanksgiving bequeathed by our Foundress, Venerable Délia Tétreault.

Since the scholastics come from different countries, they experience living internationally and they learn from each other's backgrounds. They also are given the chance to meet all the Sisters who live at the Mother House, many of whom worked years in their countries. With a sense of intrigue, they learn to adapt to the Canadian seasons, especially winter and spring.

Upon their return to their homeland, these scholastics become witnesses of what they heard and saw. They are called to transmit the Good News of Jesus Christ and in a spirit of Thanksgiving live their religious and missionary life according to the Gospel, in service to others at home or wherever they will be sent.

*Let us support them by our prayers!
With them, let us uphold the flaming torch of faith!*

A Vibrant Magnificat



Seventy-five years ago, on December 8, 1943, Haiti was consecrated to our Lady of Perpetual Help. That same year, a group of Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception arrived on the Haitian soil. On December 8, 2018, this wonderful coincidence prompted numerous expressions of gratitude from the Haitian people as well as from the MIC Sisters.



By Rose-Philomène Gédéon, M.I.C.

A GREAT FEAST FOR THE NATION

First, a novena preparing the hearts for this solemn celebration brought people together. Then, a great procession, punctuated with prayers and songs of praise, took place in the streets of Port-au-Prince, the Capital, up to the Sylvio Catar stadium. At the center of the stadium stood a large Marian icon decorated with natural flowers and rose garlands. The Virgin Mary was waiting for her children. During the celebration, people remembered that seventy-five years ago, a smallpox epidemic which had devastated the Haitian families, suddenly stopped while praying to Our Lady of Perpetual Help. Up to this day, the Haitians remain thankful for this divine intervention.

Before thousands of pilgrims, the Eucharist was celebrated by the bishops of the country. The latter emphasized their

concerns regarding the current situation of the country and they denounced the abuse of power: *There is no more leprosy, no more plague in Haiti, but our dear country is prey to all kinds of calamities, plus, there is unemployment, insecurity, corruption, all these prevent us from living with dignity. On this jubilee, we come to you, our heavenly Mother. Your name, Lady of Perpetual Help inspires us to have confidence, hope, love and mercy. Today, our pox is substituted in the form of lies. The Gospel message is the message of truth.* Those energetic statements denouncing the injustices, confirm the people's worries before the on-going abuse of power.

President Jovenel Moïse, who arrived at the end of the celebration, added a few words: *We cannot build a country upon lies, on false information, on rumors, on hatred, on violence, on hypocrisy. He presented himself as an advocate of dialogue...*

PHOTOS:

¹ Sylvio Catar stadium – a religious celebration

² MIC Sisters from Haiti look at the Canadian made video

Photos Credit:
R.-P. Gédéon, m.i.c.



THE MIC SISTERS CELEBRATE

While the above was happening in the country, the MIC Sisters were also commemorating the arrival of the first four Canadian Sisters in 1943. For the occasion, a Thanksgiving Mass was celebrated in presence of many MIC Sisters who had come from other countries for a religious formation session. It was a grandiose liturgy: the drum, flute, guitar, and piano accompanied the *Flamme-d'Amour* choir. Student delegates and teachers from our schools as well as many MIC associates, priests, and bishops all came to celebrate our 75th anniversary. The feast, a real bouquet of Thanksgiving and internationality, reminded us of our Foundress, Délia Tétreault who wished that all children of the earth would sing praises to God.

Following the festive meal, a special video prepared by the Canadian Sisters was presented to all who were present. It featured the MIC Sisters who had worked in Haiti; each one described the work she had been involved in, her commitment to the Haitian people, and the precious memories she keeps in her heart. Hearing the stories of the pioneers and of all the Sisters who followed in the fields of education, health care, or pastoral work was most touching and gave a special spark to the feast. Sister Rosette Lafortune wrote: *In an atmosphere of communion we are reliving the historical moments*

of that first arrival and subsequent ones, all tinged by the significant evangelical missionary works at the service of the Haitian people. The seeds sown during all those years have been fruitful; there are now fifty-seven Haitian MIC Sisters who are dedicated in their homeland or other countries where the Lord has sent them to witness their faith. They are missionary disciples at heart, as Pope Francis has asked us to be.

We are hoping that the governing body of our country becomes conscious of the miserable living conditions and insecure environment of its people. Solutions must be proposed and taken to improve the lives of the Haitians. Unfortunately, despair has taken a hold of many families, especially the young university graduates; therefore, they leave the country and seek a better life elsewhere.

Like a child who needs the help of its mother to take its first steps, the Haitian nation needs help from above to stand strong; its trust in Our Lady of Perpetual Help is its strength. More than a vibrant Magnificat, the Haitian people cried out to their heavenly Mother to come to their rescue. From the *Sylvio Catar stadium* and from the heart of each MIC Sister came forth the nation's preferred hymn: *Maman Mari vin pòte secou pou tout pèp ayitien.* (Mother Mary, come to the help of your Haitian Nation.)

Solidarity Between Missionaries and Latin American Populations



By Maurice Demers

These past two years, I had the pleasure of communicating with more than a dozen missionaries; my aim was to prepare a documentary about their life experiences. Those men and women, Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, priests of the Foreign Missions Society, the Daughters of Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus told me how they shared with the local people the ups and downs of their daily living. Many missionaries played an important role in Latin America, defending the rights of individuals particularly between the years 1970-1980, a most difficult period of time in many countries.

The presence of the French Canadian missionaries in Latin America dates back to 1853—year when the Sisters of Providence arrived in Chile. Over the following ten years, the religious presence progressively increased; it exploded between the years 1950-1960 when Pope Pius XII and John XXIII prompted the clergy from developed countries to reach out and help the Latin American Church. To emphasize the request, the encyclical *Fidei Donum* (*The Gift of Faith*) was published in 1957; the Bishops from developed countries were being asked to send priests in mission territories. Ten years later, there were 1,902 Canadian missionaries working in Latin America.

However, the objectives of mission greatly evolved between the years 1950-1970. The Church lived through the Second Vatican Council, moreover, many African and Asian countries were decolonized. In Latin America, on one hand, popular groups were mobilized demanding greater social justice, while on the other hand, repression by the elite marked that era; Cuba's revolution was also taking place and had consequences on all missionary work. By 1967, the 1,902 missionaries were experiencing the effects of such turbulence.

In his book, *Letter from Brazil*, Yves Carrier describes how Msgr. Gérard Cambron, missioned in Brazil, developed a program in the years 1950; without forgetting the worship of God and the promotion of family, he established another dimension to mission work. It included social and medical assistance, teaching industrial arts and trade.¹

In that era, international development funding was available thus influencing and supporting the Catholic missions' objectives. From the South, came a new viewpoint which had an impact on Catholicism; liberation theology was introduced and greatly marked Quebec's missionaries.

That theology helped the missionaries reflect upon the causes of poverty and they encouraged the people who suffered from poor living conditions to become active agents of their own destiny. Sister Madeleine Doyon, a missionary of the Daughters of Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, told me how the objectives of her mission evolved:

PHOTO:

Sr. Murielle Dubé at the nurses' graduation ceremony – Instituto de Educación Rural (IER)
Photo Credit: MIC

People think that when we go to the missions, especially to Africa, they think we are going to give or do something, but in Brazil I saw that was not the case. In that country we were to live with the people, to participate in their everyday problems, orient them in their choices and I would go as far as saying to stimulate (...) Before and during the military dictatorship rule, the Church had renewed itself and I arrived at the time when Base Ecclesial Communities were beginning.²



Sharing daily life problems with Latin American populations modified the missionaries' outlook in the region. I have interviewed many missionaries including Father Guy Boulanger, O.M.I. and Father Claude Lacaille, P.M.E. who directly supported the popular movement and sensitized the population to make known their rights against all oppression. They worked in favor of the people's liberation. Constance Vaudrin, a former Sister of Hope (Holy Family of Bordeaux) spoke the following:

In 1998, when I returned to the place where I had previously worked, I told the people, who already knew me, that I was simply coming to visit them. Their response was: that is not possible, we are nothing. I remember the phrase used by the locals of that time: we are not people, we are not human beings, não somos gentes. That meant everything. They considered themselves worthless because they were poor. That awakened me to the importance of promoting human dignity and up to this day it still haunts me.³

This summarizes one of the contributions brought about by the missionaries and their solidarity with the Latin American populations: developing the peoples' self-esteem and being committed to safeguarding human dignity. ☞

¹ Yves Carrier, *Letter from Brazil. The evolution of the missionary perspective. Review of Gérard Cambron's experience.* Louvain-la-Neuve, Academia Bruylant ("Sillages" Coll.), 2008, P. 376

² Maurice Demers' interview with Madeleine Doyon, Sherbrooke, Quebec – June 15, 2017. The interview took place within a project financed by-Insight Grants. *The research title: Human rights movement in Latin America during the cold war told by Canadian Catholic missionaries.*

³ Maurice Demers' interview with Constance Vaudrin, Montreal, Quebec – March 31, 2016 – within a project financed by Insight Grants.



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With You, O Lord!



Marceline Gilbert, M.I.C.
(Sr. Sainte-Marcelline)
1919-2018
Wilcox, Saskatchewan

To live a missionary life was one of Sister Marceline's greatest wishes. On August 8, 1954, she entered our novitiate; she took up the challenge of being in a French milieu even though she did not master the language. Her experience of work at the Federal Government indirectly prepared her for her mandate in Taiwan in 1974 and in Hong Kong in 1985. Sister Marceline loved teaching English to small groups of students and she enjoyed helping at the Provincial Secretariat. During her retirement years, her creativity became an attraction. Without warning, Sr. Marceline quietly passed away on December 27, 2018. We will always remember her joyful serenity. Eternal bliss is yours, dear Sister.



Marguerite Simard, M.I.C.
(Sr. Joseph-Edmond)
1916-2019
Salem, Massachussets, U.S.A.

Sister Marguerite was a centenarian who lived serenely her final years. In 1936, she entered our novitiate and having completed her religious formation, she left for Cuba. Years later, she was assigned to Bolivia and Peru. Sister Marguerite had a graduate diploma in music and a degree in business which served her well while in mission. She was involved in teaching, pastoral work, provincial administration; in all circumstances, she easily adapted. Upon her return to Canada, Sister Marguerite gradually experienced vision loss. At 102 years of age, her desire to enter into the Father's House was often expressed; her waiting time came to an end on January 15, 2019. MAGNIFICAT!



Cipriana Ccahuana, M.I.C.
1956-2019
Cuzco, Peru

Well rooted in the Inca culture, Cipriana was born and raised in Cuzco, a city situated in the Peruvian Andes. At the age of seven, she discovered the God of the Christians and at twenty-one she experienced God's Presence within her soul. From that spiritual experience came the Call to religious life. She began working for a newly founded native religious order committed to serve the marginalized. In 1990, she entered the MIC Community. In Cajabamba, Peru, she continued to help the poor in more ways than one. During her short illness, Cipriano was accompanied by her loving God; she was welcomed on His Holy Mountain on March 4, 2019. Beloved Sister, may you now rest in Peace.



Marie-Paule Roy, M.I.C.
(Sr. Sainte-Laurence)
1920-2019
Saint Gervais, Quebec

To be a sower of happiness was Sister Marie-Paule's motto. As a young adult, she joined the Association of Young Catholic Farmers (J.A.C) where her leadership qualities were appreciated. On August 8, 1949 she entered our community. Resourceful, Sister Marie-Paule was entrusted many community services one of which was the direction of our printing press. During her long life of ninety-nine years, she often repeated her joyful YES. In 2010, a more difficult YES was uttered when she entered our health care facility; nevertheless she continued to be a sower of happiness until March 25, 2019 when, on the Feast of the Annunciation, the Lord invited her to pass over to the other side. Be happy forever, dear Sister.

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A PRAYER FOR OUR EARTH¹

All-powerful God, You who
are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures,
You embrace with your tenderness
all that exists.

Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Fill us with peace, that we may live
as brothers and sisters, harming no one.

Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle
for justice, love and peace.

Amen!

¹ Pope Francis – excerpt from the
Encyclical *Laudato Si* - No. 24

