

MIC MISSION NEWS

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To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923

*100 years
of an Undaunted Mission*



*PILGRIMS...
On the Road*

JANUARY

FOR THE RIGHT TO AN EDUCATION

Let us pray for migrants, refugees and those affected by war, that their right to an education, which is necessary to build a better world, might always be respected.

FEBRUARY

**FOR VOCATIONS TO THE
PRIESTHOOD AND RELIGIOUS LIFE**

Let us pray that the ecclesial community might welcome the desires and doubts of those young people who feel a call to serve Christ's mission in the priesthood and religious life.

MARCH

FOR FAMILIES IN CRISIS

Let us pray that broken families might discover the cure for their wounds through forgiveness, and rediscover each other's gifts, despite their differences.

**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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A choice... a decision



The disciples of Emmaus. Source: <https://www.sacrements.fr/emmaus.php>

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.



At any given moment, life presents us with choices — a beautiful walk in nature, a celebration, a cruise. Everything seems wonderful and exciting. But we may also feel the call for an inner journey... an invitation to get moving.

PILGRIMS... ON THE MOVE!

Embark on an inward journey to better understand yourself, take stock of your life, strive for greater well-being. It is an invitation to become a pilgrim of your own existence. Once the decision to embark on this journey is made, we are on our way. The important thing is to do it sincerely. Along the way, the pilgrim will discover the need to evolve, to move forward, to take light or heavy steps according to circumstances. He will not be going alone however, the Lord will help him to stay the course, to reflect and to transform profoundly...

THE CHALLENGE OF GOING ALL THE WAY

In Mark's Gospel (10:17-31), the rich young man wanted with all his heart to be perfect. He went to Jesus and asked: *Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?* Jesus looked at him and loved him. He said to him: *Go and sell what you own, and give to the poor [...] Then come, follow me.* What a demand! He did not expect that. He had great possessions. Even if, for each and every one of us, the obstacle is not always of a material

nature, it is invariably an exhortation to go further in our spiritual journey. In making this pilgrimage, are we ready to meet its requirements?

The disciples on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24: 13-35) were saddened by the events in Jerusalem. Along the way, they met a stranger who made his way with them. Lo and behold, the miracle occurred: when the bread was broken, their eyes were opened and they recognized Jesus. They returned to the apostles, beaming from this unexpected encounter.

In these two examples, walking can lead us to the unexpected. When we take the first step, the Lord may ask us to take a second, then a third.

The articles in this issue present different aspects of this itinerary. It is a great pilgrimage that calls for the surpassing of oneself, in dramatic situations such as those experienced by the Haitian people at the moment, or in happier circumstances, like the missionary returning to her own country after 22 years elsewhere, or in the studio where the artists express their thoughts and feelings with brush strokes on the canvas.

May these words give you the opportunity to travel within yourselves, and may this year 2025 be for you an invitation to become pilgrims of hope.

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

AT THE SOURCE OF M.I.C. HISTORY

HAITI

Excerpts from the M.I.C. DVD, *Haiti*, by Madeleine Grenier, M.I.C.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Haiti is located in the Caribbean Sea. The country occupies the western part of the island, while the Dominican Republic occupies the eastern part. This island state, facing Cuba and Jamaica, is part of the Greater Antilles. Its tropical climate favors lush vegetation, but is often disrupted by cyclones, hurricanes and earthquakes. A land of contrasts, where wealth and poverty exist side by side. A land of many faces.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Originally called Quisqueya, the island inhabited by indigenous peoples (the Arawaks) was discovered on December 5, 1492 by Christopher Columbus, who named it Hispanola. In 1697, the western part of the island was occupied by France and the eastern part by Spain. The French organized the black slave trade from Africa. The population, 90% of whom were black slaves, rose up under the leadership of Toussaint Louverture, himself a freed slave. Assailed by the troops of J.-Jacques Dessalines, the French were expelled. On January 1, 1804 in Gonaïves, the victors proclaimed the independence of Haiti, the first black republic. Over a hundred years later, taking advantage of the foreign debt and political crisis, the United States occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934. Following a chaotic period, the Duvalier dictatorship took power for three decades. In 1990, Jean-Bertrand Aristide brought democracy to Haiti for the first time. Since then, coups d'état, social tensions, political crises and demonstrations have followed one another in the search for a stable and lasting democracy.



Arrival of the pioneers in Haiti – Left to right, front: Srs Irène Blais, Anna Paquette, Juliette Deschênes; 2nd row: Srs Alice Magnan, Rachel Blanchette, Cécile Frappier. Photo: M.I.C. Archives

FIRST M.I.C. MISSION IN HAITI

From 1909 until the Second World War, the Sisters were mainly sent to Asia. As communications became almost impossible, missionary expansion moved elsewhere. The Oblates of Mary Immaculate asked our Superior General for missionaries for Haiti. On September 21, 1943, five pioneers arrived for La Charité S.V.P., in the town of **Les Cayes**. This work brought together the underprivileged: around a hundred sick and elderly people and some sixty children.



At La Charité S.V.P., caring for the elderly. Photo: M.I.C. Archives

The warm welcome of these poor people won the hearts of the women who arrived. With great love, each of them contributed to the development of the work, which over the years acquired a dispensary, a school, a household center, shelters for the elderly and a place of prayer. After 49 years of self-sacrifice, and with no MIC staff to take over, the work was handed over to the Missionaries of Charity in 1992.

A PILGRIMAGE TO YESTERDAY'S MISSIONS IN HAITI

In 1944, **Les Côteaux** mission opened, where the MICs responded to the needs for organization, animation, training and other services they requested. After 49 years, they passed the torch to the *Filles de Marie-Reine-Immaculée*, a native community that continues this work of the Church to which 54 MICs have contributed the best of themselves.

On September 10, 1945, **Roche-à-Bateau**, a small village near Les Côteaux, welcomed the MICs from Canada. School, dispensary, academic and extra-curricular activities prepared tomorrow's leaders. In 1987, the same native community took over the growing mission.

On September 15, 1949, a group of MICs arrived at **Camp-Perrin** to educate girls, supervise the presbyteral schools and teach at the *Petit Séminaire*. After

25 years of presence and the contribution of 41 MICs, they were succeeded by the Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary.

On October 28, 1949, **Mirebalais**, a small town on the Central Plateau, welcomed the MICs who were to teach there. Twenty-one years later, the Sisters bequeathed this legacy to the *Petites Soeurs de Sainte-Thérèse*, a native community.

On September 27, 1950, several MICs from Montreal arrived in **Limbé**. A school was expanded and presbyteral schools multiplied. In the medical field, the *Clinique St-Jean* became a dispensary-hospital serving nearly 250,000 inhabitants. On September 12, 1988, the hospital was handed over to the Daughters of Wisdom.

On August 28, 1952, five MICs traveled to **Cap-Haïtien** to train teachers. After 27 years of service, 831 students have graduated, 46 MICs have succeeded one another, 15 girls have become nuns, including 8 MICs. The Daughters of Mary continue the work. Later, the residence will become the M.I.C. novitiate.

On September 15, 1956, the *Asile communal* of Cap-Haïtien, home to 64 women and 62 men — elderly, blind, sick or helpless — was entrusted to the MICs. Sister Rachel Blanchette spent 32 years in this haven of peace. On June 11, 1998, the work was handed over to the *Petits Frères Missionnaires des Pauvres de la Jamaïque*.

La Boule, **Deschapelles** and **Croix-des-Bouquets** are other places where the MICs have devoted themselves. Even today, they remain active in education, health services and pastoral care.

Of a total of 18 houses opened between 1943 and 2014, 8 carry on their activities with other religious communities and lay associations. The mission continues to be actualized in 10 houses, 8 schools and 2 dispensaries and in expanding apostolic ministries, such as missionary animation with its magazine, *Ti-Moun Mysionè*, the Pontifical Mission Activities, youth ministry and vocational ministry.



Today, young M.I.C. novices get involved. Photo: Josette Augustin, M.I.C.

AND NOW

Les Cayes — The residence in Les Cayes, inhabited since 1946, remains the southern welcome center. The Sisters work in education, health, parish and diocesan services, support MIC students and offer hospitality to many visitors.

Port-Salut — A small town near the Caribbean Sea where the mission continues with courage and boldness despite the challenges of natural disasters and political unrest.

Charpentier — A succession of MIC Sisters have served the growing clientele at the dispensary, in addition to the elementary school run by the Sisters and their lay assistants.

Chantal — The Oblates of Mary Immaculate offered the MICs a large plot of land on which to build a school, a dispensary, the Sisters' residence and a women's promotion center. The mission lives out the faith and boldness of its predecessors, responding to the needs of the time.

Trou-du-Nord — in the North East department, this place received the MICs in 1955. In addition to education, health care services include a dispensary, a mobile clinic, maternal-infant centers and preventive medicine.

Hinche — A small town on the Central Plateau where school and extracurricular activities nurture the Christian faith, and some students hear the Lord's call to follow Him. The Sisters collaborate with the Faculty of Nursing at the *Université de Notre-Dame d'Haïti*.

Port-au-Prince — In 1980, the orphanage in Delmas became the *École Immaculée-Conception* for 625 students. The 2010 earthquake turned the mission into a shelter for disaster victims. The damage was subsequently repaired, and the school is now able to offer secondary education.

Port-au-Prince, on the road to the airport — Built in 1961, the building became in 1971 the Provincial House, where transportation services, sessions, religious ceremonies and meetings of all kinds are organized.

In 2002, the project for an educational complex was accepted by the General Council with its vision for the future: educational and pedagogical mission and orientation from primary to secondary school under the name *Institut Mère Délia*.

The 2010 earthquake almost turned everything upside down. Following serious assessments, and thanks to the *Centre d'Étude et de Coopération Internationale* and the organization *Développement et Paix*, the initial dream regained strength and vigor, and on August 18, 2010, the foundation stone was laid for the construction of twenty classrooms. *Institut Mère-Délia* is a veritable melting pot where young girls receive an education that emphasizes social, ecological and Christian values.

The MIC family continues to grow, with a total of 54 Haitian MICs and the commitment of over 130 Associates participating in its work. The vitality of the foundress' charism invites us to take the riches of the Church even further, and some fifteen MIC companions have left Haiti for missions around the world. What a journey! 🌸

THE PILGRIM OF HOPE: *Account of a Journey to Compostela*

The pilgrim of hope is the one who, with a heart filled with confidence and the desire to undertake a spiritual quest, sets out on a journey strewn with adventures, hardships, but above all encounters and profound discoveries. For me, the *Camino de Santiago* embodies this idea: a walk that gradually becomes an inner journey. Through my questions, doubts and sufferings, I have found on this road a light, an answer and a kind of consolation in faith.



By Rachel Duplessis

A PATH OF TRANSFORMATION

El Camino (the path) is a challenging itinerary that teaches us humility. I walked this path for 30 days. I began my journey at the foot of the Pyrenees on April 2, 2024, with my rucksack and boots, and crossed Spain through its mountains, plains, paths, dirt roads, gravel roads and asphalt roads to Santiago de Compostela. Hiking has always been fun for me. This time, however, I quickly felt the aftershocks of the unusual and more intense exercise I was inflicting on my body: walking more than 30 kilometers a day. I experienced pain first in my shoulders, then in my back, and finally in my feet. These feet, which supported me all the way, suffered from swelling, scratches and blisters. Fortunately, with much luck, I was treated to Europe's mild April

sunshine for most of my pilgrimage, with the exception of the last three days. These final days of feeling powerless reminded me that everything is ephemeral, whether it is the suffering, the rain or the cold... I also realized that physical pain continually brought me back to the present, while I used to imagine far into the future, trying to predict the thousands of miles ahead on the road of life!

The pilgrimage to Compostela can be seen as an analogy of hope. On the road, every stone, every dusty path carries an echo of rebirth, a promise of hope. While each pilgrim has a unique story, they are all in search of meaning, hope and renewal.

It was as if God were speaking in the midst of this majestic silence.

HOPE ROOTED IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

The Bible and Christian teachings are an inexhaustible source of comfort. Saint Paul, in his letter to the Romans (15:13), reminds us of this: *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may grow rich in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.* This verse has a particular resonance for pilgrims walking towards Compostela, animated by the faith that guides them in their efforts and by the Holy Spirit who gives them the strength to go forward.

Another striking passage appears in Matthew's Gospel (11:28): *Come to me, all you who are weary and overburdened, and I will give you rest.* This other verse has a particular resonance with those who seek to free themselves from their chains in order to find inner peace. Walking becomes a metaphor for spiritual relief. With each step, the pilgrim places his worries in God's hands.

COMPOSTELA: A SANCTUARY OF HOPE

For many, arriving in Compostela, in front of the majestic cathedral that preserves the relics of Saint James the Greater, represents the culmination of a long journey, but also the beginning of a new life. Along the way, pilgrims are nourished by fraternal encounters, gestures of solidarity and, above all, by a renewed experience of the divine presence.

I remember my first sight of the cathedral at sunrise. Right from the start, I was overwhelmed by an emotion I can hardly describe. It was gratitude, joy and immense hope all at once. I had come a long way, not only physically, but also spiritually. I knew that something in me had changed forever.



Camino de Compostela, Spain (2024). Photo: Rachel Duplessis



St. James of Compostela
Photo: Rachel Duplessis

HOPE, AN INNER COMPASS

The Compostela pilgrimage is an image of the Christian life, in which every step is an invitation to trust God and surrender to His plan. This is no easy task. It requires profound humility and a powerful faith in the Supreme Being. For believers, hope is much more than a feeling: it is a theological virtue based on the promise of eternal life in Christ. As St. Paul teaches us (Romans 5:5), *hope will not disappoint us*, for it is based on the certainty of God's love for each of his children.

So, to be a pilgrim of hope is to accept to walk in faith, with the conviction that, even in the midst of difficulties, there is always a light to guide us and a peace that awaits us on the horizon. The road to Compostela then becomes a metaphor for this spiritual journey, a reminder that hope is the breath that carries us ever onwards, towards God. 🌿



Getting Started

Photo: Adobe Stock



By Sylvie Bessette

In this Holy Year 2025, Pope Francis has proposed that all believers gather around the theme *Pilgrims of Hope*. That's why the issue you're reading right now focuses on the notion of setting out on a journey.

What does it mean to set out? It means deciding, voluntarily or otherwise, to move through space, to move from point A to point B. A good example of this is provided by migrants, driven from their homelands by various conflicts or seeking a better life elsewhere.

But we can also set off on a journey to explore new lands, or to plunge into the heart of ourselves. Pilgrimages often offer both spiritual and temporal dimensions. This context of travel, of journeying, leads pilgrims to discover themselves in a different light, outside the familiar landmarks of everyday life. Destitution leads to solidarity, various electronic communications are reduced to a strict minimum, effort and discomfort become unavoidable fellow travelers.

FEET, PEOPLE, GOAL

A Dominican priest of my acquaintance recounted how he once went on a pilgrimage. This experience enabled him to observe a phenomenon he had not expected. At the start of the long walk, the men and women look intently at the road, where they put their feet, so as not to stumble or bump into an obstacle. All they see ahead are feet. Gradually, the body becomes accustomed to this new activity, and the gaze rises with confidence. You no longer just see the feet of the people walking in front of you, but the people themselves. Contact is established between the walker and his fellow travelers. You see not only the people, but also the landscape, and think of the goal to be reached. Thoughts lighten, prayers are lifted and contact is made with the spiritual. In his February 11, 2022 letter to Archbishop Rino Fisichella for the Jubilee of 2025, did the Pope not write: *Prayer as the royal road to holiness, ... enables us to be contemplative even in the midst of activity..*



Johanne, M.I.C. scholastic, makes her little pilgrimage every morning, from Tabarre to Delmas.

Photo: M.-N. Noël, M.I.C.

We can think of Jesus who, during his years of teaching, did a lot of walking, going out to meet various groups. Judea, Samaria, Galilee, Jerusalem — all these roads enabled him to spread the Good News. He walked, taking only his staff and sandals to “pilgrim” among his peers.

HOPE, A FLAME TO KEEP LIT

In the same letter, Pope Francis also expresses the hope that the upcoming Jubilee will be *a prelude to the renewal and rebirth that we so urgently desire*. Hence the theme chosen for the Holy Year: *Pilgrims of Hope*. Hope, a flame given to Christians and which they must keep burning, so that each of us can rediscover the strength and certainty to look to the future with an open mind, a trusting heart and a clear-sighted intelligence.

Here is the Jubilee 2025 prayer, as proposed on the official website (www.iubilaum2025.va)

Father in heaven,
may the *faith* you have given us
in your son, Jesus Christ, our brother,
and the flame of *charity* enkindled
in our hearts by the Holy Spirit,
reawaken in us the blessed *hope*
for the coming of your Kingdom.

May your grace transform us
into tireless cultivators of the seeds of the Gospel.
May those seeds transform from within both
humanity and the whole cosmos
in the sure expectation
of a new heaven and a new earth,
when, with the powers of Evil vanquished,
your glory will shine eternally.

May the grace of the Jubilee
reawaken in us, *Pilgrims of Hope*,
a yearning for the treasures of heaven.

May that same grace spread
the joy and peace of our Redeemer
throughout the earth.

To you our God, eternally blessed,
be glory and praise for ever.

Amen.

Each and every one of us can set out on a journey to rediscover a hope that is sometimes battered by the trials we face day by day. We have already mentioned the journey, the road. However, there's no need to travel physically to take the time to recharge your batteries. Getting back in touch with your spirituality, seeing those around you with fresh eyes, taking the time to pray and meditate, and thus giving yourself a break, is all part of rediscovering yourself. It doesn't matter whether you're on a pilgrimage with others or a solitary one. The important thing is to set out on the journey. 🌊

Dante, Pilgrim of Hope

Come, let us go up to the mountain
of the Lord, to the temple of the God
of Jacob. Let him teach us his ways,
so that we may walk in his paths. (Is 2,3)



By Emmanuel Bélanger

This is a Jubilee Year, dedicated to the forgiveness of sins and the promotion of hope. It is a year of grace, offering Christians everywhere the chance to experience a special encounter with Christ Jesus.

As Pope Francis says in his Pontifical Bull on Hope, published on the occasion of the Jubilee of 2025: *This interplay of hope and patience makes us see clearly that the Christian life is a journey calling for moments of greater intensity to encourage and sustain hope as the constant companion that guides our steps towards the goal of our encounter with the Lord Jesus.*

The Pope speaks of this path that represents the passage of each one of us through this world. Jubilee also means pilgrimage, that is, a momentous occasion to set off, usually on foot, in the footsteps of Christ towards a holy place: Jerusalem, Rome, St. James of Compostela or even Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré.

I invite readers to take with me, as our guide, the Italian poet Dante Alighieri, who was in Rome for the first Jubilee. He was so impressed by the event that he set the entire course of his masterpiece, The Divine Comedy, at the beginning of the Paschal Triduum of the Jubilee year.



The Galleria Dantesca, Dante lost in the forest (sketch 1), Filippo Bigioli circa 1859/1860. San Severino Marche, Italy, Filippo Bigioli Modern Art Gallery. Photo: Claudio Ciabochi, Getty Images

He thus describes the streets of Rome so full of people in this circumstance that, for the first time perhaps, there was on the Sant'Angelo bridge pre-established directions of circulation for pilgrims.

***Even as the Romans, for the mighty host,
The year of Jubilee, upon the bridge,
Have chosen a mode to pass the people over;***

***For all upon one side towards the Castle
Their faces have, and go unto St. Peter's;
On the other side they go towards the Mountain.***

(Inferno, song XVIII)

It is impossible for me to do more than invite readers to immerse themselves in this masterpiece of Christian and secular literature, in order to nourish their existential quest in this holy Jubilee year.

Pope Francis goes on to say that setting out on a journey is characteristic of those who go in search of the meaning of life. A pilgrimage on foot is very conducive to rediscovering the value of silence, of effort, of the essential.

That's exactly why Dante is such a good guide, and his *Divina Commedia* a map and compass that point to true North, to the Absolute and the Essential.

At the beginning of his poem, Dante tells us that his character, himself, is in a dense, dark forest. He is lost, and does not know how he got there. He has no landmarks, no orientation, in this wood near Jerusalem, the quintessential place of pilgrimage!

It's Good Friday in the first jubilee year of 1300, and he sees a hill leading to the Holy City, where Christ's Passion actually took place. But his path is blocked by three ferocious beasts: a panther, a lion and a she-wolf. These beasts represent three sins characteristic of three moments in his life: lust, pride and greed.

He cannot climb Mount Zion, symbolizing virtue, to enter Jerusalem, so he must retrace his steps. It is at this point that he has a chance encounter. He does not yet know who it is, but he cries out for help, like David in Psalm 50: *Miserere di me, have mercy on me!* He recognizes his wretched state and calls out for mercy to save him from his predicament.

The stranger, a shadow of the Latin poet Virgil sent by Beatrice, Dante's muse and childhood sweetheart, responds to guide him on his pilgrimage through the three realms of the Beyond: Hell, Purgatory and Paradise.

There are many spiritual lessons to be learned here, but the first and most fundamental is this: Without God, man loses himself and the meaning of his existence, as well as his mission in this world. When he experiences this existential crisis, he must cry out his misery and ask for mercy, already sent and foreseen by God in his Son Jesus Christ.

The last thing to emphasize here, according to Dante, is that hell is life without God, without love and therefore without hope. As Dante says, it is written on the great door: *Abandon all hope, ye who enter here.* It is terrifying, because on earth and in time, there is always hope, but since hell is eternal and outside of time, there is no more hope: it is the place where God is no more, forever.

Dante is the poet of God's desire. He shows us that hell is real, so that we do not want to go there. Certainly, Dante's hell is an artistic creation, just like his *Divine Comedy*, but through it he wants to inspire us with the fear of real hell and the desire for God, God who



Emmanuel admires Dante. Photo: E. Bélanger

loves us and takes our freedom seriously. This God who sets us on the path of Hope leading to Him, and who invites us to love, know and serve Him.

And as Saint Paul says in his second letter to the Corinthians: *Behold, now is the favorable time, behold, now is the day of salvation* (2 Cor 6:2).

Let us all follow in Dante's footsteps, pilgrim of Hope! 🌿



Missionary work in Haiti is generally seen as a means of helping people to develop. For some years now, political turbulence has paralyzed these activities. Seeing God in all things determines the attitude of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in their life of thanksgiving and hope for better days.

Living Thanksgiving in Haiti's Current Situation



The seemingly peaceful people live under high tension. Photo: M.I.C.

By Marie-Rosette Lafortune, M.I.C.

A LEGACY OF THANKSGIVING

It is impossible to ignore the constancy of the concept of thanksgiving in the Old and New Testaments. Depending on their culture, early communities experienced it in a variety of ways: gratitude, spiritual worship, thanksgiving, self-sacrifice, praise, joy, trust, prayer, Eucharist and so on.

Many communities still experience intense moments of thanksgiving, even in the midst of great difficulties that lead them to turn to prayer to overcome obstacles. *Do not worry about anything, but present your needs to God in prayer and petition, with thanksgiving* (Phil 4:6). The Venerable Délia Tétreault, our foundress, bequeathed this spirituality to us as a compass for

our lives. Thanksgiving invites us to welcome events, following the example of the Virgin Mary. How can we live thanksgiving in Haiti today? Suffering resounds so loudly, God is the only pillar on which we can lean. It is impossible to ignore God in Haiti today.

LIVING THANKSGIVING IN THE PRESENCE OF BANDITS

The Sisters work in five of the country's departments. These areas are linked by land, sea and air. But at present, no national road is open, and everything is dangerously controlled by armed bandits. The air route is partially closed. Ticket prices are rising steadily, and flights are still uncertain.

Incredible, but true! National roads and the sea are becoming the private property of bandits. Recently, three Sisters were stranded on the southern road at Mariani, about 40 minutes from their home. One says: *I spent two days and one night in Mariani. The uncertainty of getting out of there gnawed at my thoughts, imagining what might happen.* I prayed with faith and believed with all my might that nothing bad would happen.

With the road blocked, the bandits left us out in the sun, then under the stars. We hoped they'd come back to unblock the road... The day passed and night fell. Around 8 p.m., it started to rain. The passengers ventured out of the cars. They were hungry and thirsty, and could not find anything to buy, as there are no street vendors in such situations.

LOVE AND HUMOUR IN SPITE OF EVERYTHING

I was frustrated, but never lost faith in God's protection for the passengers. Now that is Haitian! The harmonious sound of the showers allowed us to talk aloud, to make up jokes about the situation we were experiencing, bursting into laughter, humour, poking fun at the people who vomited, we'd say they'd eaten too much. In fact, we hadn't eaten a thing. Who would have thought that a four-hour trip could turn into three days! I had a bottle of water and three cookies. *Manje kuit pa gen mèt*, (prepared food belongs to everyone). We share what we have, even a shoulder for a sleeping child. Everything is transformed in fraternity.

As the day passes, so does the night, another morning. Our gangsters finally arrive around 10 a.m.; they remove the obstacles without asking for ransom. A miracle! It took us almost an hour to get going. Rows of vehicles cluttered the space, as this road leads to four departments and the capital. If the brutal stopping of vehicles by gangs was an ordeal, how could we fail to recognize God's action in the showers every night that caused the bandits to be absent; the bursts of laughter, the gratitude, the sharing, the mutual aid, the fraternity. Incredible reasons for thanksgiving!

The two other Sisters returning to Port-au-Prince, exhausted by the length of the forced stop, paid for a motorboat and ventured back to the capital by sea, which had been monopolized by gangs. They barely



M.I.C. students at St Dominique school in Port-Salut. Photo: M.-N. Noël, M.I.C.

made it, while a second boat was intercepted by the bandits. Back home, everyone was overjoyed! We can only believe that Mary and Mother Délia accompanied these reckless heroines in their boat. Joy for this miracle, a burst of thanksgiving!

OUR ONLY SECURITY: IN GOD

Increased turbulence and indirect threats from armed gangs in the area force the Sisters to leave the house in Delmas, a too high-risk area. They move to our house in Tabarre, a quieter area, so that they can complete the school year program.

The Lord's welcome on their arrival: ripe mangoes line the courtyard. In order not to let this abundance go to waste, the Sisters sell the mangoes at a ridiculously low price. This money helps them meet the needs of the house. Picking and sharing these fruits gives hope and happiness, evaporating the fear of going out, sharing and being joyful. Meditating on God's goodness in giving us these delicious fruits, we call our picking a Thanksgiving harvest.

Knowing how to recognize God's presence in overwhelming moments and living them in faith; accepting to seek joy in suffering — these are the things that keep us going. Walking, stumbling, getting up again, clinging to God and giving thanks to him today, tomorrow and always — this is the secret of our resilience, in this time of hope for a more serene future. 🌀

The image shows a close-up of a window with white lace curtains. The curtains are partially open, revealing a dark interior. In the foreground, there is a green rose bush with several white and yellow roses. The title 'The Whisper of a Gentle Breeze' is overlaid on the image in a white serif font, with each word on a separate line and a yellow rectangular background.

The Whisper of a Gentle Breeze

Photo: Alistair MacRobert, Unsplash

By Marie-Claude Barrière

Blaise Pascal (1623-1662) made an implacable observation: *All of man's misfortune comes from one thing, which is not knowing how to sit quietly in a room.* According to the philosopher, human beings distract themselves with entertainment, to escape the anguish of their finitude. In this Jubilee Year, when Pope Francis urges us to set out as *pilgrims of hope*, the idea of *sitting quietly* seems strange, even contradictory. But is it really? What if the pilgrimage undertaken were rather a vertical displacement, the perfect opportunity to silence ourselves and bring us closer to God? And what if this were our resolution at the start of 2025?

HOW DO WE UNPLUG

But, you might ask, how can we get away from this hectic life when we're constantly bombarded by e-mails or text messages and in fear, justified or not, of missing out on something? How can we get

away from this whirlwind without feeling frustrated or even resentful? How do we *unplug*? By making an informed decision. By the powerful will to slow down. Through healthy discipline. That's why the *Pray as You Go* website (pray-as-you-go.org) could really serve as a compass, one of many.

Every day, we are invited to take a break with a guided meditation on a text read during mass. These meditations, inspired by the spiritual exercises of Saint Ignatius of Loyola, invite us to muffle the noise of the world and begin our inner descent. Three points of reflection allow us to delve deeper into the Word of God. Slowly, the answer to the question *Where are we going?* becomes clearer. We are going to the center of ourselves, to the most intimate and secret place, where everything begins. Coming to this appointment empty-handed is not rude, but rather a form of humility. All we have to do then is push open the holy door to the sanctuary of our hearts, where Christ dwells. This is our ultimate destination, this is the purpose of our pilgrimage.

THE SOUND OF A GENTLE WHISPER

Obviously, and quite rightly and understandably, this adventure sometimes feels like crossing the desert. The demands of everyday reality catch up with us, and our thoughts become scattered, lost between encounters and obligations. We pray without much conviction. But that is when we need to stand firm and humbly ask the Holy Spirit to grant us the grace to listen to him, to hear *the sound of a gentle whisper* (1 Kings 19:12), that small voice that never imposes itself, but always accompanies us. This companion will lift us up, support us and help us to continue on our way. Because, as we know, we will not make it without this infallible guide. In these moments of intimacy, I always ask myself, what is God's will for me? What do I resist submitting to? What must I accept to let die within me in order to be reborn as a better person?

But, of course, this is just the beginning. After this time of interiority, once we have risen to the surface, we need to transform these inspirations into light, these sparks into the fire of charity, without which our pilgrimage remains incomplete. We are called to set sail with the firm intention of engaging with the poor or the sick, the imprisoned or the marginalized. The opportunities to reach out are innumerable, and the

missions many. We must never forget that this exploration is aimed at one and only one thing: bringing us closer to our Father, to his face of love and mercy, so that we can contemplate him in our brothers and sisters the world over. This communion with him is always a communion with his children.

BACK ON THE ROAD EVERY DAY

For, as Saint Augustine so aptly put it in John Paul II's encyclical entitled *Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000: We search God to find him with more sweetness, we find him to search him with greater ardor*.¹ If we want this flame to remain and become a beacon to guide us through the little storms we may encounter this year, we must set out on the road again, every day, with the same courage and determination. That is why our journey is never truly over.

In these months ahead, let us walk together in hope, our eyes fixed on Christ, certain of his love. He is the true Way. 🌿

¹ John Paul II, *Pilgrimage in the Great Jubilee of the Year 2000*, encyclical of April 25, 1998.

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A Journey to Celebrate the Beauty of the Universe

By Laurent Bouchard

My fascination with infinity and unknown spaces nourishes my artistic work, as do the relativity of time, the chance and the finality of our actions as human beings. These complex themes find expression in my painting, a blend of materials and mediums that channel my profound questioning. I explore geometry, abstraction and a certain form of figuration to create a visual language that translates my existential concerns.

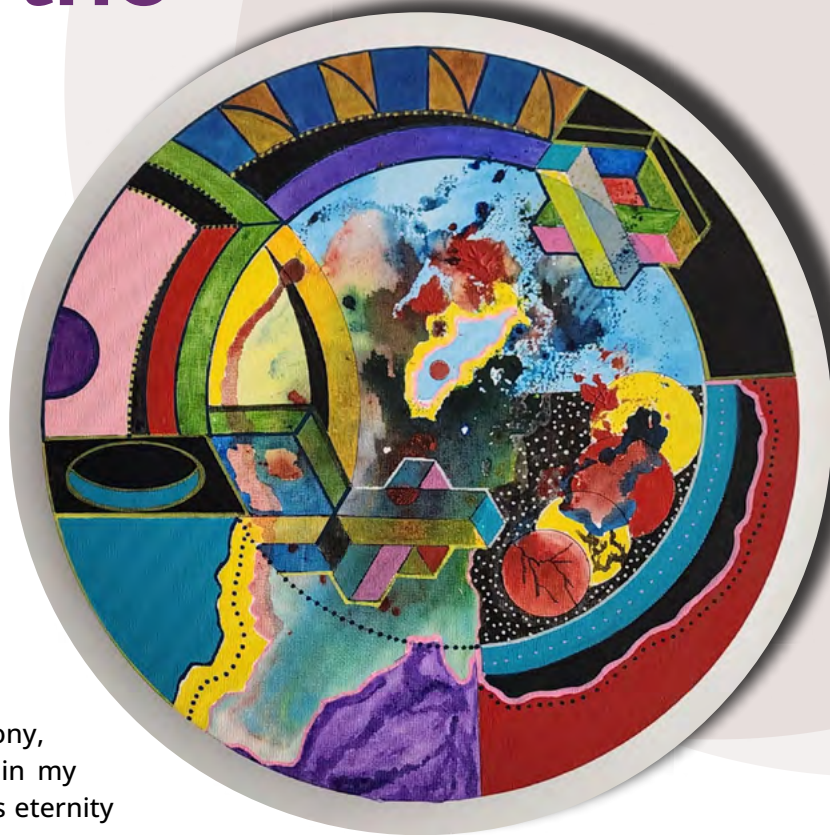
The circle, symbol of perpetual motion, harmony, infinity and plenitude, occupies a central place in my compositions. Its continuous, perfect form evokes eternity and unity, concepts that are dear to me.

The triangle, with its implicit spirituality, also represents unity, but balance and direction as well. It can inspire security and harmony, but when inverted, it becomes a sign of instability and danger, reflecting the duality and uncertainty of life.

The square, on the other hand, signifies the imperfection of the material world, the rigidity and tangibility of our earthly reality.

These geometric shapes merge onto the surface of my canvases, their interaction governed by the application of colour left to the random gesture of the hand, of which the brush is the extension.

Figurative elements sometimes emerge in subtle ways, such as eyes, clouds, fragments of nature, architecture and planets, introducing a recognizable dimension into the abstraction.



Reorchestration of the World,
painting by Laurent Bouchard.

Light and colour animate these forms, revealing an inner world that I share through all my works. Each painting becomes a fragment of my life, a part of my essence transmitted to the viewer.

My artistic approach, fuelled by scientific curiosity, remains deeply rooted in human experience and the quest for meaning. Creation, like the mysteries of the universe, often eludes total comprehension, but it is precisely this ambiguity that arouses



Fragmented Space, painting by Laurent Bouchard.

wonder and reflection. As an artist, I embrace this uncertainty, leaving my works open to interpretation and contemplation, a mirror of life itself in which each individual finds his or her own reflection and meanings.

Thus, my art becomes a bridge between the concrete and the abstract, the rational and the emotional, the individual and the universal. The shapes and colours I use are the tools of a complex visual language, loaded with symbols and metaphors, inviting each viewer to a personal exploration. This journey through my paintings is an invitation to embrace mystery and celebrate the beauty of the unknown. 🌈



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Return to Africa After 22 Years in Hong Kong



Sr Emelda welcomes Sr Jacintha. Photo: M.I.C.

By Jacintha Henry, M.I.C.

Many people here and abroad have been asking me the same question: *After leaving Hong Kong and then returning to live in Africa, do you have any culture shock?* I can reply YES and NO! No in a sense that no matter where one came from, home is always the best even if it is under a tree! There are some inconveniences that I experience but life is still the same and even much better compared to 22 years ago. I enjoy every moment with gratitude! The Sisters and the people

around are so nice, ready to teach me the local Zambian language patiently. I am so grateful to have them around.

A TIME TO READJUST

However, upon returning from Hong Kong I can say that I am experiencing a reverse culture shock, or a re-entry. I am in a stage of learning new things and re-adjustment. Seeing many young Sisters that I have never met before brings joy to me but also a challenge. Asking for their names and where they came from embarrasses me but it has become my routine especially when I see a new face. The younger ones are very happy to see me back as they have heard about me. However, the fact that I cannot speak the local Zambian language here in Kanyanga where I have been assigned, I sometimes feel restlessness, rootlessness, boredom, despair, unease, disorientation, loneliness, and a reverse homesickness.

This is exactly similar to the culture shock I went through when I first arrived in Hong Kong but in reverse. It might take some time to get used to life here in Kanyanga but it is livable. I need to pray and just live one day at a time! God always has a purpose and a plan for each individual and everything happens for a reason. I trust that God will help me fulfill the destiny he has in store for me!

GETTING IN TOUCH WITH MY ENVIRONMENT

Returning to old routines in our religious communities seems a bit dull after the novelty and stimulation of teaching young students. I now spend my time visiting

patients, especially new mothers, and I congratulate them for having welcomed a new member to their families. Sometimes I visit people who can speak English, which makes it easier to communicate. I enjoy my 24 hours and holidays that I never had before. I say to myself *Wow! What an enjoyable life I have! I cannot thank God enough!*

REINTEGRATING DIFFICULTIES

I gladly share my missionary experiences if I am prompted. Sometimes questions are asked but it is difficult to coherently describe my commitments in Hong Kong. Even if I explain, the Sisters do not appear to understand what I think and our methods of teaching in Hong Kong. They have no frame of reference when I tell them about my experiences with various cultures, which makes the tale seem more abstract and less captivating than it was to me. Therefore, I try to tell them about familiar things, such as food, school, transportation, outings, shopping, etc.

I AM EVER GRATEFUL FOR THE PRECIOUS EXPERIENCES I HAVE HAD THAT WILL STAY WITH ME FOREVER IN MY HEART.

Moreover, I find it frustrating that I cannot put my acquired practical experiences to use because they seem pointless or irrelevant to the life of the people here and even in my community. I try to observe more and respect what is done, and not impose my way of thinking and doing things to avoid major conflicts. That is why I have distanced myself from working in schools here, which are already established by our Sisters. No one can understand this re-entry experience unless one has lived for a long period of time out of his own homeland. I try to adapt to the reality as necessary, change what is useful, be resourceful, have patience, and, most importantly, use the cross-cultural adjustment abilities I developed to help with my re-entry to avoid ongoing challenges. Overall, I am the luckiest one.



A good friend comes to greet Sr Jacintha. Photo: M.I.C.

A SPIRIT OF GRATITUDE

I am ever grateful for the precious experiences I have had that will stay with me forever in my heart. Thank you Lord! I cannot thank the Lord enough for all His blessings on me.

Sister Emeldah Katongo, the first MIC who, with our late sister Jeannine Forcier, welcomed me upon arriving from Tanzania to join the MIC, welcomed me again back to the province after my 22 years in Hong Kong. Thank you Sister Emeldah.

Some students whom I taught at Marymount secondary school in Malawi, came to see me to welcome me back while in Lilongwe at the provincial house. When I was told that I had visitors, I wondered who they could be. They introduced themselves to me as my past students. Dianna even came with a bouquet of flowers for me. I did not recognize them at all but they still remembered me after over 25 years. What a reunion! Now more past students are planning to travel all the way from Malawi to Zambia to visit me. It is amazing how we can influence our students without knowing. Thank you Mercy and Dianna. Your warm welcoming spirit is greatly appreciated. 🌸

Mary in the Image of a Nomadic People: Our Lady of the Innu



By Anne-Marie Forest

This painting idea was suggested to me by Ali Nnaemeka, Oblate of Mary-Immaculate (OMI), after discovering the representation of Our Lady of the-Atikamekw that I had installed in the Saint Jean de Brébeuf church in Manawan.

I was touched by this request and immediately set to work. First, I found an old photo (dating from around 1895) of a smiling lady of aboriginal origin, which inspired me to create Mary's face. Then, a medieval sculpture of Jesus holding and offering a dove, symbolizing the Holy Spirit, gave me the idea of depicting the Infant Jesus with a bird in his hands. Traditionally, the bird is the one that communicates with the Creator by ascending high into the sky. I dressed the child in a traditional hunter's costume made of embroidered tent cloth.

EVOCATIVE SYMBOL

In Mary's hand, I placed a *fleur-de-lis*, symbol of purity, in the colors of the iris found in Quebec and more particularly on the North Shore, as well as a few orange *chicoutais*, or cloudberry, (a reference to the fruits of the Spirit) tasted during a trip to the Mingan region. The fruits of the Spirit, taught in Christian doctrine, are very similar to the seven sacred teachings handed down for generations by native elders: wisdom, love, courage, honesty, respect, humility and truth.

Next to the child lie his moccasins, adorned with a beaded cross, already heralding his death, but not far away is also the image of a butterfly, an iconographic symbol of resurrection. The moccasins here evoke the ceremony of first steps. They are present both in First Nations spirituality and culture at the age when a child learns to walk, but also at the time of the funeral when the body is placed in the grave. Because, as I have been told, they are there for his last walk towards the Creator, so that He may recognize him!

CULTURAL REMINDERS

In the sky, a flock of geese, who form a close-knit group, and on the ground, a bear and a caribou, animals often cited as part of the identity of several aboriginal communities, because they helped them to survive.

Far behind, I have painted a tent over which a little smoke floats, signifying that it is inhabited, a reference to the presence of the Innu on the traditional territory, Nitassinan, long before the arrival of European settlers. I like the image of the tent, which may also evoke Moses and his nomadic life in the Old Testament, or the Tent of Meeting, a privileged place to talk to God.

As for the canoe, it's the Innu's means of travel and communication on this water route that links them together and gives them access to so many resources, like the salmon I have barely sketched. Jesus also ate fish! The symbolism of the salmon is to swim upstream, towards the birthplace of its offspring, but also towards its own death, which often occurs shortly after spawning. In Christian iconography, the fish is one of the major symbols used by early believers as a sign of recognition. It represents the Saviour in the early days of the Church, and water, the symbol of baptism.

The birchbark basket is a sign of respect for nature, a gift from the Creator. The tree offers its bark so that humans can make what they need.

INDIGENOUS CONTRIBUTION

To create this painting, I called on several women from the North Coast region, who shared their knowledge and suggestions with me. I made a few corrections in response to their always pertinent and interesting comments. A work created in reciprocity!

Thank you to these collaborators, and to the Holy Spirit for inspiring and guiding me during this time of prayer by the paintbrush! 🍃

With You, O Lord



GABRIELLE SAUCIER, M.I.C.
Sister Sainte-Alberte
1920-2024
Montreal, Quebec

My missionary experience is a life in which MISSION is carried out in fidelity to the call I have received, Sister Gabrielle told us. Her first response to this call was teaching and various social commitments, including working with underprivileged young people. The novitiate welcomed her on August 8, 1945. Wherever she went on mission, in Africa for over 40 years or in the United States, Gabrielle, a woman of prayer, was the leaven of the Presence of Jesus, assuming many responsibilities in education, catechesis, in various parishes and with pastoral agents. On her final return to Quebec, she organized missionary kiosks for schoolchildren, a much appreciated initiative. Blessed with a long life of 104 years, Gabrielle's missionary zenith came with her final call on April 26, 2024.



FLORE SAVIGNAC, M.I.C.
Sister Sainte-Flore
1932-2024
Berthierville, Quebec

If you had followed Flore through her 92 years of life, you would have been struck by the diversity of the challenges she met with daring, courage, wisdom and humour. For this *farmer's daughter*, farmhouses and gardening held no secrets. Appropriate studies underpin her success as an educator in Haiti. Her leadership was expressed in her authoritative service: provincial superior, secretary of the Association of Major Superiors of the Montreal Diocese, coordinator of the Pont-Viau house. Everyday life, whatever could be, was brilliantly taken care of. When, in the spring of 2024, illness presented itself, she recognized *the footsteps of the Beloved* who would take her to the Father's House on July 17. Goodbye, Flore. May you rest in his Love!



LILIANE PELLETIER, M.I.C.
Sister Marie-Elzéar
1934-2024
Saint-Damase-de-L'Islet, Quebec

The *second little mother* of a large sibling family, Liliane soon proved to be an endearing woman, thanks to her loving, attentive and selfless devotion. It was this same Liliane who was received into the novitiate on February 2, 1956. In 1968, studies to become a nursing assistant prepared her for her mission in Haiti, where for 25 years she devoted herself to the poorest of the poor. In her own words: *My work with the Haitian people fulfilled my desire to give and forget myself in order to soothe*. She continued to give generously of herself on her return in 1988. She was admitted to the health services in 2022, and on July 19, 2024, the Father lovingly welcomed her into his large Family.



DELIA B. REGIDOR, M.I.C.
1950-2024
Paligue, Padada, Philippines

Born in Padada, in the province of Davao del Sur, in the Philippines, Delia inherited simplicity in everything, faith in the action of Providence and appropriate studies from her deeply Christian parents. For them, this was the best gift to give their children. She entered the novitiate on July 4, 1980.

Following professional training in catechetics with M.I.C. and PMÉ, she became an excellent teacher. A natural and humble leader, she rose to the challenges of community responsibilities, including those inherent in directing the province of Saint-Joseph, before assuming, as a servant-leader, the governance of the entire Institute.

Like our Immaculate Mother and Délia Tétreault, her life was a perpetual song of thanksgiving, on good days and during

the illness she suffered while serving in the generalate. On her return to her homeland in 2022, she resumed, among other activities, the spiritual animation of AsMIC.

As a faithful bride of Christ, Delia lived out one of her prayers: *Let me live for love of you, let me die for love of you. May the last beat of my heart be an act of perfect love*. She lived this last heartbeat on March 11, 2024.

The first non-Canadian Superior General (2015-2022), Sr Delia Regidor has lovingly and competently given the best of herself so that each of her Sisters may live to the full the spirituality and charism of the Institute: In thanksgiving, missionaries in Mary's way. THANK YOU, Delia!



The scholastics at the MIC Mission News's office. Photo: Nicole Beaulieu, M.I.C.

A Visit to the Office of The MIC Mission News Magazine

Before their perpetual vows, young M.I.C. Sisters of different nationalities come to Quebec to recharge their batteries in the land of the foundation. We were delighted to welcome them. Délia Tétreault has always had confidence in the media, and it is with pleasure that we pass on this confidence in the written press to the young M.I.C. Sisters from Madagascar, China, Vietnam and Malawi. The MIC Mission News (formerly called The Precursor) is still relevant today, even after more than 100 years of missionary messages.

