

MIC MISSION NEWS

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To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923

*100 years
of an Undaunted Mission*



ALWAYS ON THE JOURNEY

PUBLICATION OF THE MISSIONARY SISTERS OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

JULY

For formation in discernment.

Let us pray that we might again learn how to discern, to know how to choose paths of life and reject everything that leads us away from Christ and the Gospel.

AUGUST

For peaceful coexistence.

Let us pray that societies in which coexistence is more difficult may not succumb to the temptation of confrontation for ethnic, political, religious or ideological reasons.

SEPTEMBER

For our relationship with all of creation. Let us pray that, inspired by Saint Francis, we might experience our interdependence with all creatures who are loved by God and worthy of love and respect.

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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Offices

M.I.C. Missionary Press
121 Maplewood Avenue
Outremont, Montreal, QC H2V 2M2

Phone: (450) 663-6460

eMail: leprecurseur@pressemic.org

Web Site:

www.pressemic.org

Publication Director

Marie-Nadia Noël, M.I.C.

Editor

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Editorial Team

Emmanuel Bélanger
Sylvie Bessette
Maurice Demers
Éric Desautels
Nicole Rochon
Léonie Therrien, M.I.C.

English Traduction

Renée Charlebois

Proofreading

Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C.

Circulation

Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C.

Accounting

Nicole Beaulieu, M.I.C.

Layout and Design

Caron Communications
graphiques

Cover

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The March of a People and the Christian Pilgrimage



By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

The Malagasy are used to walking long distances in their country. Their determination and endurance are testimony to human resilience in the face of geographical and social challenges. With their traditions and culture, they continue to cross the vast expanses of Madagascar, linking towns and villages, mountains and valleys. These journeys represent not only physical exercise, but also a form of pilgrimage, a search for something greater and more meaningful.

That sounds like our journey. For we Christians, since our baptism, have been pilgrims of hope on our way to our heavenly city. The Christian life is often compared to a journey, a constant march of faith. Every believer is called to live in hope, following the path marked out by the teachings of Jesus. He is the way... Every encounter on this path is an opportunity for spiritual growth, for greater intimacy with God.

A PATH OF BOLDNESS AND CONVICTION

In a journey of faith, determined and daring women have left their mark on history, rooting the knowledge of Christ in the New World. Today, we see people being displaced to unknown horizons, not in the name of their religion, but because of persecution or natural disasters. They are forced to leave their homelands.



An aspect of everyday life in Madagascar. Photo: M.I.C.

These forced journeys, as Anne-Marie points out, are made by modern pilgrims in search of safety and dignity. Refugees become symbols of perseverance and courage, reminding us of the importance of solidarity and acceptance. Following the example of our beloved Pope Francis, who gave us the testimony of paying attention to all people, an inspiration for our century, as Emmanuel points out. Throughout the centuries, saints have breathed into us their spiritual strength to keep us moving forward valiantly on our daily journey of faith and hope.

Thus, the journey of the Malagasy people and the Christian pilgrimage find their echo in today's population movements. These journeys, whether voluntary or forced, embody the search for peace, justice and light in a world often darkened by hardship. Whether on the roads of Madagascar or on spiritual paths, each step is a testimony of faith, a hope for a better future.

In this magnificent summer season, let's take a moment to immerse ourselves in these testimonies of faith and daring. Let's take advantage of nature's beauty to give glory to God and to build friendships.

Happy reading!

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

AT THE SOURCE OF M.I.C. HISTORY

MADAGASCAR

Excerpts from the M.I.C. DVD *Madagascar*
By Estelle Messier, M.I.C. and Marguerite Razanabelo, M.I.C.

The island of Madagascar is located in the Indian Ocean, to the east of the African continent. Separated from it by the Mozambique Channel, it is nicknamed the "Big Island" or the "Red Island". Portuguese navigators Diogo Dias and Fernando Suarez were the first Europeans to discover it in 1500.

Madagascar has two seasons: the dry season and the rainy season. As for the soil, it contains an abundance of all kinds of minerals. The ravinala, the Travelers tree, is the country's emblem. The base of its hollow, cup-shaped stems holds rainwater to quench the thirst of thirsty travellers.

With a population of over 30 million, the island is home to 18 ethnic groups, each with its own customs and identity. However, they all speak the same language. The people are attached to their culture and traditions. They express their wisdom through numerous proverbs. The people of the Highlands practice Famadihana, a ritual of exhuming the dead. For them, ancestors are bridges to God, from whom we can ask for protection and blessing.

In 1896, Madagascar officially became a French colony. More than sixty years later, the country gained independence in 1960. Philibert Tsiranana, the first president of the Malagasy Republic, was elected in 1965. After a decade of stability, the island was shaken by serious political unrest. Malagasy and French became the two official languages, and the ariary became the unit of currency.



Sisters going to meet people – 1954, Morondava. Photo: M.I.C. Archives

Handicrafts were developed and varied. The Malagasy excel in woodcarving. Embroidery also plays an important role. Vegetable fibers are used to make a variety of articles. The ingenious Malagasy work with zebu horns and make miniature cars from recycled materials.



Marie-Antoinette Bonin and boarders students – 1958, Morondava. Photo: M.I.C. Archives

MORONDAVA

Morondava, which means the long beach, is the economic and administrative capital of the Menabe region of Madagascar. It has a population of over 50,000. This cosmopolitan town is a mecca for tourism. Life is animated by fishing, cultivation and the gathering of wild products. The sea never ceases to batter the coastline. Morondava offers a forest landscape typical of the region, dominated by baobabs and the Tsingy, a massif that is unique in the world.

In 1928, the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette Fathers, from the USA, settled here, but it wasn't until 1955 that the Church in this territory was erected as a diocese. The Sisters of Providence or Corenc, of French origin, could no longer carry on their work of educating young people, and left around 1950. While in Montreal, Mgr Paul Girouard presented a request to our General Council.

In 1952, five M.I.C.s left Montreal for Morondava, on the feast day of Our Lady of La Salette. They were warmly welcomed. Little by little, they took over the management of existing projects: two schools, a boarding school-orphanage for girls and a workhouse. They had little time to learn Malagasy. Fortunately, French is taught in every school in the country.

In 1959, young Joséphine Rasoanjanahary aspired to religious life and entered our Institute. She left for Pont-Viau to continue her formation. On February 11, 1962, she took the habit and received the name Sr Isabelle-des-Anges. Three years later, she took her perpetual vows in Morondava Cathedral. She became the first Malagasy Sister in our community. In September 1979, the postulancy was transferred to Madagascar and welcomed its first candidate, Perpétue Razafindrahaingo.

The M.I.C. team continued to provide pastoral catechesis in parishes, in the bush and in prisons. At the same time, they led Christian youth and adult groups. The Sisters also cultivated rice, which is harvested three times a year.

In 2002, we celebrated the golden jubilee of the arrival of the M.I.C. in Madagascar.

ON SEPTEMBER 7, 1958, THE
FIRST SEVEN M.I.C.s ARRIVED.
ON THAT DAY, 20 CARS IN A
PROCESSION, ADORNED WITH
FLOWERS AND PALMS, MADE
THEIR WAY TO THE ENTRANCE
TO WELCOME THEM.

AMBOHIBARY

Ambohibary, which means rice village, has a population of 90,000, over half of whom are Catholics. The Christians requested the arrival of nuns for the schools and dispensary. On September 7, 1958, the first seven M.I.C.s arrived. On that day, 20 cars in a procession, adorned with flowers and palms, made their way to the entrance to welcome them. The crowd was delirious with joy. The welcome was grandiose and of rare beauty.

A modest dispensary opened on January 5, 1959, and in 1960, Bishop Claude Rolland blessed the Sisters' residence. The Sisters ran a school for boys and girls. In 1973, a center for the promotion of women was inaugurated.

The Ambohibary mission continues with dynamism and hope for the future. Today, our schools are coping with various social and pedagogical changes. Educators receive regular training to update their teaching methods.

In response to people's wishes, a Catholic high school project was launched. M.I.C.s will be responsible for its management and administration. What's more, as this tropical region offers great potential for agricultural development, the Sisters are buying rice fields and running them, while hiring reliable local people to help them.

MAHAZOARIVO, ANT SIRABE

Antsirabe means where salt abounds. It is nicknamed the *city of waters* due to its seven mineral and thermal springs. Madagascar's third-largest city, it has a population of 1,270,000 and the coolest climate on the island.

It was Mgr Claude Rolland who asked the M.I.C.s to come here to run the primary and secondary schools. Over the years, some thirty educators collaborate with Sister Estelle Messier, the headmistress. As for Sister Françoise De Varennes, she became responsible for a women's promotion center.

After 26 years of active presence, the M.I.C.s leave Mahazoarivo, hoping that the Good News will continue to spread in this friendly environment, open to the Word.

TSARAMASAY

The Tsaramasay elementary school was officially opened on September 1, 1964, followed by the secondary school in 1966. The following year, Cardinal Jérôme Rakotomalala blessed the Sisters' new residence.

A fine family spirit reigned in the Christian community, and interest in education was clearly evident.

The Fo Masin'i Jesoa school has over 900 students and 35 teachers. It is in a spirit of trust and gratitude that the educators assume their commitment.



M.I.C. Malagasy Sisters. Photo: M.I.C.

ANTSIRABE NOVITIATE

After 13 years of presence in Madagascar, the Institute was ready to realize the project of a novitiate. The first postulants took the habit on August 5, 1967, beginning an almost unbroken line of vocations to this day.

OPENING OF SEVERAL HOUSES

Ivandry — In Ivandry, the house supports the life of student Sisters who take part in youth activities. They also have a group of MIC Associates.

Ambodivoanjo — The provincial house in Ambodivoanjo is the focal point for files concerning the Sisters, the works, the archives, the various corporations and relations with governmental and ecclesiastical authorities. The M.I.C.s take part in the life and activities of the parish.

Mahatamana — In Mahatamana, a new mission began in 2010. It consists of a home for our elderly and sick Sisters, a nursery, primary and secondary school, and

a large plot of land for agricultural use. It is a multi-functional complex.

Lovaso — In 1992, the Institut Catholique de Pédagogie (ICP) opened its doors to 26 female students in Lovaso, thanks to the initiative of its promoter, Sr Jeanne Desclos. This training center marks a decisive turning point in the field of education.

Antananarivo — In 1978, in Antananarivo, Sr. Estelle Fontaine helped set up the Centre d'éducation permanente des adultes (CEPA), an M.I.C. project offering university-level training. She was its animator for 32 years. CEPA offers training modules and sessions that foster human, social and spiritual growth. A team of ten trainers is available to travel to all regions of the island. The mission of this organization is to contribute to the well-being of Malagasy society.

I would like to leave you with these words from our Malagasy Sisters: *We are grateful to our Sisters who have been fulfilling their mission in Madagascar since 1952. They have left us the testimony of their M.I.C. life, which makes the Kingdom visible.* ∞



Egg Tempera by Anne-Marie Forest.

Walking Toward the Light

By Anne-Marie Forest

This illustration was commissioned by Mgr Louis Corriveau, Bishop of Joliette, Quebec, in December 2020. He wanted to reach out to isolated and vulnerable people by sending a card to parishioners, encouraging them to be messengers and actors of solidarity. The card included a prayer that he composed:

*There is a people walking toward the light.
May you join this march, spreading the light
of your love, faith and hope to all those who
are struggling through these dark times.*

These words are more relevant than ever in these times of upheaval. But behind the noise of the world and the media, there is the crowd of people from all walks of life who continue to persevere, to help each other, to march resolutely toward a better future. *Living together*, they are lights in the lives of their brothers and sisters in humanity. This progress with hope is lived out in faith in Christ Jesus and his Holy Spirit, who precedes us on this road made up of listening, encounters and kind looks at one another.

The characters depicted were inspired by my pastoral involvement with various groups in the Lower St. Lawrence and with communities on the North Shore, on the *periphery*, in the words put forward by our Pope Francis.


I was delighted to see that this illustration carried the same dynamic as the synod that took place in 2021.

Our Assembly has taken place while wars both old and new have raged in the world, with dramatic consequences that are impacting upon countless victims. The cry of those who are poor resounded among us, of those forced to migrate and of those suffering violence and the devastating consequences of climate change. We heard their cry not only

through the media, but also through the voices of many present, who are involved in these tragic events whether through their families or their people.[...] We understood [...] that walking together as baptized persons, in the diversity of charisms, vocations, and ministries, is important not only for our communities, but also for the world. Evangelical solidarity is like a lamp, which must not be placed under a bushel, but on a lampstand so that it may shed light on the whole house (cf. Mt 5:15)¹.

So let us remain vigilant, guardians of the Word and its Truth, actors and collaborators in the realization of God's reign, sown with a multitude of gestures of kindness and beauty that go unnoticed by the mainstream media, but grow daily in the hearts of those who welcome them with gratitude.

I conclude with the words of philosopher and theologian Hervé Carrier:

For Christians, culture and justice are inseparable, for culture promotes the rights that underpin the dignity of individuals and groups. [...] It is at the level of moral awareness and human solidarity that the true promotion of individuals and societies ultimately takes place. And freedom of conscience and religious freedom must always be respected. It is in the very name of this freedom that modern society is rediscovering the universal validity of Gospel values, which enshrine the dignity of every human being. Foremost among these values are the commandment of brotherly love, the defense of the poorest and the sense of solidarity, as a universal heritage to be handed down to every generation and every human group². 

¹ *A Synodal Church In Mission*, summary report of the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Rome, October 28, 2023.

² Translation of Hervé Carrier, "Évangile et inculturation", 1999. This article can be consulted on the *Classiques des sciences sociales* website [classiques.uqac.ca].

Our Pioneers: Women of Hope

By Suzanne Labelle, M.I.C.



Image: Shutterstock

Mary. She was the first. She carried within her the hope of an entire people. She awaited the coming of the Messiah. God visited her, offering her to collaborate closely in his plan of salvation. *Behold the handmaid of the Lord*, she replied, quite simply and humbly. And hope became flesh in her and dwelt among us. On the day of his death on the cross, this Jesus, in whom hope for the centuries to come was concentrated, gave Mary as mother to the human family. *Here is your mother*, he said to his apostle John, and John took her into his home.

Centuries passed. Hope remained. The hope of the promised return of this Son of Mary, dead and risen, but disappeared from the eyes of his fellow men on this earth. Then the day came when mankind discovered a New World, part of which became known as *Nouvelle France*. From the very beginnings of the colony, and right up to the present day, pioneering women were among the faithful of hope. Here are a few of them.



Portrait by Anne-Marie Forest

Marie de l'Incarnation, born in Tours in 1599. She came to *Nouvelle France* in 1639. She arrived with a few companions who were inspired by the desire to make known the God of Jesus Christ to those who did not yet know him. This pioneer brought them hope and faith in the one God who loves all human beings and wants them to be happy. She devoted herself to the education of young girls, natives and children of settlers. Neither the rigors of the climate, nor the burning of her monastery, nor the dangers of all kinds in these unknown lands discouraged her. Her desire to share her faith, hope and love of God was so great that she enjoyed *wandering in spirit across the vast expanses* of her new country, *accompanying the workers of the Gospel*. But she would have gladly agreed to leave and go to India or China to talk about God. *I'm ready*, she assured us, as if echoing the response of Mary of Nazareth. And Mary of the Incarnation asked God: *Give me a voice powerful enough to be heard from the ends of the earth*. A woman of hope for the future of the country that had become her own, she explained: *I wished I could shout so loudly that everyone could hear me, and tell him to love this great God, this God of love*.

Jeanne Mance, slightly younger than Marie de l'Incarnation, was born in Langres in 1606. As a nurse, she devoted herself to the victims of the Thirty Years' War and the plague. Meeting ecclesiastics who had spent time in *Nouvelle France*, reading the *Jesuit Relations* of 1639, hearing about Marie de l'Incarnation's departure for this far-off land, accompanied by nuns who were teachers and hospitaliers and Mme de La Peltrie, a laywoman like herself: such a combination of providential circumstances gave Jeanne Mance the desire to go there in her turn. Her project was well received by the members of the Société Notre-Dame de Montréal, who proposed to found a colony on the island of the same name and work there to evangelize the natives. It was with hope in her heart that, in 1641, she set off as nurse and manager of this future colony. Numerous difficulties awaited her: acclimatization problems, internecine wars, divergent views of the authorities, not to mention an accident that left her partially disabled for a time. Above all, she had the joy of communicating her own convictions, including her hope in the God to whom she had dedicated her life and all her energies. Having supported Governor Paul de Chomedey de Maisonneuve in all circumstances, having shared his enthusiasm and collaborated with him in the establishment of this territory, she is today considered the co-foundress of Montreal.



Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec



Portrait by Anne-Marie Forest

Marguerite Bourgeoys, born in Troyes in 1620, was a contemporary of the Tourangelle and Langroise. Just as enamored of her God, she felt drawn to the New World, where he was not yet known. She went to Ville-Marie in 1653, at the invitation of Sieur de Maisonneuve, who wanted a lay teacher to instruct the children of the colonists and natives. After many ups and downs, and after recruiting companions in France to assist her (she went back three times), she did so well in her work as a teacher that she is considered the foundress of French language teaching in Montreal. *The Sisters*, she said, *must take the trouble to become learned and skilled in all kinds of work. The members of the Congregation give up their health, their contentment and their rest for the instruction of girls.* In her view, the community's *traveling lifestyle* was justified by its resemblance to that of the Virgin Mary, *who was never cloistered ... and never exempted herself from any charitable journey.* She was therefore one of the first to found a community of uncloistered Sisters, and she made her own happiness by sowing hope to show her gratitude, as she herself put it, *to the One from whom she had received everything.*

Many centuries have passed since the distant origins of our country. Would there still be pioneering women in the 20th century? Of course there are. Think of **Délia Tétreault**, a local figure, a woman of hope like her predecessors. Born in Marieville, Quebec, in 1865, she and a few companions founded the first missionary religious community in the Americas in Montreal in 1902. Thanks to her initiative, hundreds of women spread the Good News throughout the world, the hope promised to all who believe in the God of Jesus Christ. Mother Délia urged the bishops to give young men a seminary in which to train for the missions.

She was also behind the creation of closed retreat houses for women and a missionary magazine, in French and English, *Le Précurseur*, *The Precursor*. Under her impetus, Holy Childhood and the Propagation of the Faith were revitalized in Quebec. Without leaving for far-off lands due to her frail health, the Foundress animated her Sisters by correspondence, enabling many of the faithful to sow around them the joy that accompanies the hope firmly rooted in their hearts.

In her writings, she repeatedly reminds us that sharing the treasures of faith is a duty for all believers to be grateful to the One who gave us everything, even His own Son. Let's quote a few lines that might arouse hope or, if need be, rekindle it in those who are already living it:



Portrait by Anne-Marie Forest

LET US LOVE THE GOOD LORD,
WORK ONLY FOR HIM, AND PUT ALL
OUR TRUST IN HIM, WE SHALL NOT
BE DECEIVED IN OUR HOPE.



I congratulate you on putting all your trust in the good Lord and the Blessed Virgin. Say often in the course of your days: I have put all my trust in you, O my God, I will not be confused in my hope.
(Délia T.) ∞

Sowing Time

Adopt the
pace of nature;
its secret is
patience.

— RALPH WALDO EMERSON

By Marie-Claude Barrière

In his letter *Spes non confundit* addressed to the Church in this Jubilee Year, Pope Francis writes these words: *Saint Paul often speaks of patience in the context of our need for perseverance and confident trust in God's promises. Yet, before all else, he testifies to God's own patience [...]. Patience, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, sustains our hope and strengthens it as a virtue and a way of life*¹.

Yes, on the path of hope, patience is the little fire that gives us wings. Yet, in this hectic world where immediacy takes precedence, this virtue seems to me to have lost some of its lustre. Often wrongly confused with indecision or, worse still, sluggishness, it has fallen out of favour. It begs the question: how can we be patient in a world that is less and less patient? For further reflection, I'm accompanied by Tomáš Halík's excellent essay, *Donner du temps à l'éternité* (Giving time to eternity)².



Photo: © Markus Spiske, Unsplash

FAITH AND COURAGE

A theologian and great Czech intellectual, philosopher and Catholic priest ordained clandestinely under the Communist regime, Halík asserts from the outset that faith is precisely courageous: *Just as it is in patience with others that the strength and authenticity of neighborly love is shown and proven, so it is in a certain form of patience with everything in life that is difficult, hard and ambivalent that faith is present (in a hidden, implicit, anonymous form). And it is in this patience - and perhaps above all in it — that its strength and authenticity are manifested*³. According to him, if

this intimate quality is deployed in Christ's everyday charity — a look of compassion, a discreet prayer of encouragement, a silent forgiveness of the heart, even if the wound is still raw — it also rests on our perseverance when we cross long deserts or endless winter nights. Who hasn't experienced periods of darkness and doubt in search of the hidden God?

Ultimately, then, patience is a form of courage, not apathy, the firm decision to trust Him and acknowledge His presence in our lives despite the circumstances.

ON THE ROAD TO HOPE, OUR FAITH IS TESTED. THAT'S WHEN WE HAVE TO STAND FIRM WITHOUT DESERTING.

The Dominican goes even further. In my opinion, he poses a second, even more fundamental question: *If God is so patient with us, can we deny him the fragile and limited patience of faith, hope and charity, even in those moments when we don't receive as much certainty and consolation as we'd like?* To the God who gives us his infinite grace, always and everywhere, to the one who never abandons us, who fills us with his inexhaustible love, can we deny our patience, however sad and poor? Before this absolutely merciful God, can we retreat because the weather is inclement, the sun is beating down and the earth is drying up? On

the road to hope, our faith is tested. That's when we have to stand firm without deserting. For it would be presumptuous to believe that this virtue will flourish through our own strength alone. As Saint Paul writes in his letter to the Galatians (5:22), it's always the Holy Spirit who lavishes it with goodness, never tiring of it. Like rain, this blessing often comes when we least expect it. It opens a breach in our stony hearts. It's up to us not to succumb to discouragement, to stand still in the darkness and offer the little we have to the one who gives so much. As the refiners of old purified gold with fire, patience strengthens our faith. Silence humbles us and brings us closer to the One about whom nothing can be said.

THE GREATEST HERITAGE

When I'm at the bottom of the well, my patience running dry, I often think of my grandfather, a farmer who had the wisdom of those who live off the land. He was intimately familiar with the rhythm of the seasons, with the waiting time that must be respected before enjoying the fruits of the harvest. He loved nature with all his being, and nature loved him back. Even at the end of his life, he sowed and sowed again, knowing full well that the soil would be generous. Philias understood that love takes time: a little eternity. 🌱

¹ Pope Francis, *Spes non confundit*, Bull of Indiction for the Ordinary Jubilee 2025, May 9, 2024.

² Tomáš Halík, *Donner du temps à l'éternité : la patience envers Dieu*, Paris, Cerf, 2014.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 252 (Translation)..



To Continue

This year, *The MIC Mission News* magazine explores the theme of hope chosen by Pope Francis for the Jubilee 2025. July 28 and 29 will mark the Jubilee of missionaries of the digital world and Catholic influencers. It therefore seems appropriate to reflect on this dimension of the charism of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, dedicated to spreading Christ's message of love and light throughout the world.



By Sylvie Bessette

Mission takes many forms: meeting people from many countries with different traditions, spreading the Good News of the Gospel, loving in the service and charity so well described by Saint Paul (1 Co, 13, 4-7). But the missionary journey also involved technological means that were not available to the venerable Délia Tétreault at the time. The printed magazine *The MIC Mission News* was the only way to spread the word about the work of the Sisters in her congregation.

Times have changed, and the Internet has revolutionized the way we communicate. Délia's daughters understand this. A site presenting the community and its works was born. Then came the decision to put issues of the magazine online.

MISSIONARY WEBSITES

In 2016, the MIC Missionary Historical Memory Virtual Center was created to preserve traces of the Sisters' work over the years. Its website (pressemic.org) offers digitized paper issues, in French and English from its inception as well as more



The Media have always played an important role in training. Photo: Thérèse Lortie, M.I.C.

recent ones. As reported on the Canadian Religious Conference website, Sister Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, director of MIC Missionary Press, explained that *these days, it's no longer a question of whether or not you can be on the Web. Our society challenges us to embrace this mutation and adjust to a global audience. This is a perfect fit for a missionary organization.*

As proposed by Pope Francis, the Jubilee of missionaries of the digital world and Catholic Influencers highlights these new ways of making the Gospel and its manifestations known through the many lay and consecrated vocations. As the website says, *This Jubilee is for all those who evangelize in the digital environment,*

sharing the message of the Gospel on social networks, blogs, channels and apps. It's an opportunity to exchange experiences and strengthen our common mission.

The presence of Catholic influencers on the Web is becoming increasingly important. In France, for example, the audience of these new-style missionaries can reach hundreds of thousands of people. In French-speaking Canada, the phenomenon is less common. However, some dioceses (such as those of Québec and Baie-Comeau, among others) have a television channel offering reports, reflections and news.

The websites of many Catholic groups, however, remain purely informative, satisfied to present the nature and activities of the group. Perhaps it would be useful to deepen the message by presenting the fundamentals of the Catholic faith to young people who are generally uninformed. Does mission and evangelization require digital technology? It's up to us to find out.

This growing trend inspires me with a great deal of hope, this pivotal Christian virtue highlighted by the Holy Father and which is the theme of Jubilee 2025.

Young people are rarely to be found in churches any more, but a promising avenue is opening up for people eager to make Christ and his message of unending love known. The Web has extraordinary power, with no geographical limitations. The mission can therefore unfold freely.

A NEW BRANCH OF EVANGELIZATION

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception left for far-off lands forever in the time of Foundress Délia Tétreault, thus consenting to the sacrifice of their lives. The Web will never replace presence and inculturation in mission countries. But digital communications broaden the scope of their apostolate by informing and nurturing the culture of the call. Pope Francis, in proposing this jubilee for the missionaries of the digital world and Catholic influencers, has done a useful job in bringing this new branch of evangelization to everyone's attention. It's up to Catholic communicators to develop innovative ways of reaching out to people in search of Christ and his Church, of all ages and from all walks of life. 🌿

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Saint Benoît-Joseph Labre: Patron Saint of the Periphery

The Lord continues to manifest himself in the peripheries, both geographical ones and existential ones. In particular, Jesus goes in search of sinners; He goes into their homes, speaks with them, calls them to conversion.

— Pope Francis, General Audience, Wednesday, November 17, 2021



By Emmanuel Bélanger

The death of the Holy Father is always a sad and significant event. Indeed, losing a father leaves no one indifferent, whatever the relationship. Filiation is a foundation of existence laid by God in the depths of everyone's being. Only by resting solidly on this foundation designed by the Father can the loving heart of each person be configured to the Son. This is the very life of God given by the Holy Spirit, to which Pope Francis calls every Christian, inviting him or her to follow Christ to the margins of society, to the existential limits where the heart cannot go if it is not guided.

On the other hand, it is beautiful and sweet to think that Christ, who came to fulfill the will of the One who sent him, his Father, left the Church, in the person of Saint Peter, another father, preceded by an adjective that comes directly from the essence of God: *holy*.

In this long apostolic lineage, many pontiffs were not saints, but each of them was always recognized as "His Holiness". This brings us back to a fundamental point about Jesus' mission and the universal vocation of every Christian. What matters most here on earth is God's gift, a glimmer of His Eternal Holiness that shines through the contingencies and manias (*habits and customs*) of a specific age. This vocation is said to be universal, because it is the duty of every Catholic to put it into practice. It's about knowing, loving and

serving God in this life, so that we can do the same in eternal life. This manifests itself in love lived out, in the participation in the Father's work of creation that each of us is called to live out by doing His will.

A PARADOXICAL SAINT

Gilbert Keith Chesterton, that great Catholic writer, wrote in his little book on Saint Thomas Aquinas: *It is the paradox of history that each generation is converted by the saint who contradicts it most*. This can no doubt also be said of the pontiff, for Pope Francis will certainly have sought to spur on a certain bourgeois Catholicism that prefers to be warm inside the confines of its own little enclosed world, or even its own little Church, rather than setting out on the road to Hope.

So, in this jubilee year proclaimed by the late Pope, I thought I would write about a wandering saint who was literally always on the move: Benoît-Joseph Labre.

He was the eldest of fifteen siblings living in Amettes, Pas-de-Calais, in the 18th century. A farmer's son, he had been immersed in the Christian religion since childhood, and was soon imbued with a spirituality of self-giving and adventure.

His life path is rather atypical for us moderns. When he was still young, he was thought to be destined for the priesthood, but his devotion to Christ was so strong that he felt drawn instead to monastic life. Although he tried his hand at various religious orders, it was neither his place nor his calling.

IT IS AMONG THE SOULS OF THE UNDERWORLD, THE TATTERED POOR SHUNNED BY SOCIETY, THAT HE MADE HIS HOME.

Benoît-Joseph Labre found hope in the midst of the calamities of his time. The outbreak of a pandemic became an opportunity to let charity and care for the dying and the poorest grow within him. In fact, his goodness seemed to grow from day to day: he threw away all his possessions for the benefit of the most destitute, and sought Christ in dereliction, which had a profound meaning for him, because it was lived out of love. Finally, after much hardship and a long illness, he realized that his true vocation was religious and wandering. Unable to stay in one place for very long, he decided to make his way, alone with God, to the center of the world: Rome. From then on, he became a perpetual pilgrim.

In the Eternal City, he found those existential peripheries which, paradoxically amid the hubbub and the great gatherings, harbored a universe of solitude and abandonment. So it is among the souls of the underworld, the tattered poor shunned by society, that he made his home. This is what he discovered in the district of Subure, where he went daily to pray for hours at the church of Sainte-Marie-aux-Monts, before losing himself in the crowd, a true vagabond, a divine lunatic among these shabby souls so dear to his Lord.

He visited many European countries, often stopping off at the shrine of Loreto in the Marche, but always returning to Rome. He died there still young, having worn his body to the bone by prolonged fasts and



The Saint's Recumbent. Photo: Emmanuel Bélanger

nights spent under the stars in the middle of winter, in short by a life of penance for the love of God and mankind.

A SINGLE SADNESS

In the left transept of the Baroque church he so often visited is the final resting place of this very special saint. A magnificent recumbent, a funerary statue of him lying on his back, shows him at rest, his face serene, his left hand over his heart, firmly holding the cross, while at the end of his unfolded right arm, his hand seems to be still counting prayers on his rosary.

I'll conclude here by quoting a French Catholic author from the late 19th century, Léon Bloy, an irreverent figure and great critic of the bourgeoisie, to whom Pope Francis often appealed, and who sums up in one terse sentence the only truth that holds, because it includes all the others: *The only real sadness is not to become a saint.* 🌀



Sylvana, Child. Photo: Sylvana

Vocation, Like Life, is a Gift from God

an aspirant. She was very happy and said: *Wait, I'll talk to the person in charge and you can meet her.* I don't know what prompted me to tell her at that moment that I wanted to become an aspirant. I didn't even know what the word meant, but I'd heard it spoken before. So I expressed my desire to consecrate myself to the Lord, and she suggested I attend an information session for young girls who wanted to become nuns.

**By Sylvana Arovy Horassy,
Scholastic M.I.C.**

It's not always easy to talk about yourself. But I'm happy to tell you the story of my vocation.

Who am I?

My name is Sylvana Arovy Horassy. The eldest of five children of deeply Christian parents, I was born in Morondava, Madagascar, on January 18, 1991. As a child, I wanted to be a Sister, but I kept this desire a secret and I didn't tell anyone. I grew up in my hometown, where I met the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in my parish. I was passionate about pastoral care in church, which led me to take catechism classes and join the Legion of Mary movement. I was faithful to the meetings every Saturday afternoon, and this organization helped me to remain attentive to Jesus' call, which remained very present in my heart. At my First Communion, I answered God in prayer: *Here I am, Lord, to do your will.*

The Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception were responsible for catechesis in my parish. One day, after class, I said to one of them: *I want to join you as*

I learned that I first had to discuss it with my parents. It was a real challenge. I was afraid my father would refuse, as there were no nuns in my family or in my ethnic group, a completely unknown lifestyle choice. There are 18 ethnic groups in Madagascar. I belong to the Mahafaly ethnic group, where only 40% of the inhabitants are Christians. Most of them don't understand religious life. Even though I was apprehensive, I couldn't back down: I had to talk to my parents. What a wonderful surprise! My father accepted my desire to live in a community.

MY RELIGIOUS FORMATION

After attending the information session, I decided to pursue my religious formation. My desire to consecrate myself to God in this congregation was born of my admiration for the work of the Sisters in my parish and for their profound joy.

So, at the age of 16, in September 2007, I entered the convent as an aspirant while continuing my studies. In 2010, I obtained my bachelor's degree, completed a year's internship in one of our colleges, while helping the Sister bursar and working in the library. From 2011 to 2013, I did my postulancy. Then, in October

of that final year, I left for Bolivia for the international novitiate to continue my formation. I learned Spanish and did a three-month internship in Peru. I'm very happy with this experience, because I learned to live interculturally. I'm filled with gratitude to God, who is always with me, wherever I go and whatever I do. Without him, I can do nothing. He gave me his grace so I could become a nun.

On October 7, 2016, I took my first vows. It was with joy that I said my yes to the Lord. I'm so grateful to Him for calling me to this unique lifestyle. Of course, my journey is not without doubt and fear. But there are also moments of happiness, joy and fulfillment. I've discovered some very beautiful things about myself and realized that I still have a lot to learn.

WHEN I STOP TO THINK
THAT THE GOOD LORD LOVES
ME DIVINELY DESPITE MY
PROFOUND MISERY,
I FEEL LIKE THE HAPPIEST
CREATURE IN THE WORLD.

DÉLIA TÉTREAU

After my first profession, I was appointed in various places as bursar of the house and our works, as well as responsible for our MIC Associates. Throughout these years, I have tasted the joy of giving in my daily heart-to-heart with God and in my various commitments. My desire is always to go forward and give myself absolutely to Jesus Christ.

Through this life commitment, the spirituality of thanksgiving has enabled me to offer my unique color to the world. The aspects of community life, mission and joy are particularly close to my heart. It's what I want to live in my innermost being. Mother Délia Tétreault's charism is a path to holiness for me and a treasure for today's Church.

This year, I'm here in Quebec for a period of formation and renewal at the International Scholasticate,



Sylvana. Photo: Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

in preparation for my definitive commitment to our Institute. I'm very happy and grateful to our community for allowing me to have this experience. Our Immaculate Mother and our Venerable Délia Tétreault accompany me.

I therefore invite all those who feel drawn to consecrate themselves to the Lord to let themselves be guided by the Spirit. For, as Pope Francis says: *You can be sure that, if you do recognize and follow a call from God, there you will find complete fulfilment.*

I'll end with these words of Mother Délia, which touch me particularly: *When I stop to think that the good Lord loves me divinely despite my profound misery, I feel like the happiest creature in the world.* ∞

Délia Tétreault

By Veronica Kamwela,
Scholastic M.I.C.

*A big heart that embraces the whole world.
In a humble but beautiful land where trees produce
maple syrup and snow adorns the landscape,
a visionary child was born.
She felt God's call from an early age.*

*This made her aware of God's love for humanity.
She saw the world through eyes of tenderness
and concern and heard the cries of children
and their parents.*

*This prompted her to reach out
to the remotest corners of the world,
to meet those on the periphery.
It was not for glory that she dared to act,
but for the ardent love of Christ
and the maternal affection of Mary.*

*She dreamed of Sisters going abroad
to sow the seed of God's love.
Despite doubts and many trials,
her faith in Him remained unshaken and,
courageously, she embraced holy poverty.*

*Her love and service for the marginalized
was such a joy! This legacy lives on
in her daughters.*

*O, Mother Délia, pray for us.
That we may have a heart as big as yours.
A heart open to God's mission of love.
May we serve Him with joy
and gratitude every day.*



Employees Thank the Sisters. Photo: Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

A Reciprocal Thank You

My dear Sisters, it has been 27 years since you came into my life, time has gone by so quickly. I'll remember the times we spent together. We've laughed, we've cried. Now it's time to say goodbye... Thank you for all these years filled with love. I'm going to miss all of you. Thank you for being who you are. I wish you happiness in your new home. It's been a pleasure working for and with you. All the best. **Lynda Boucher**

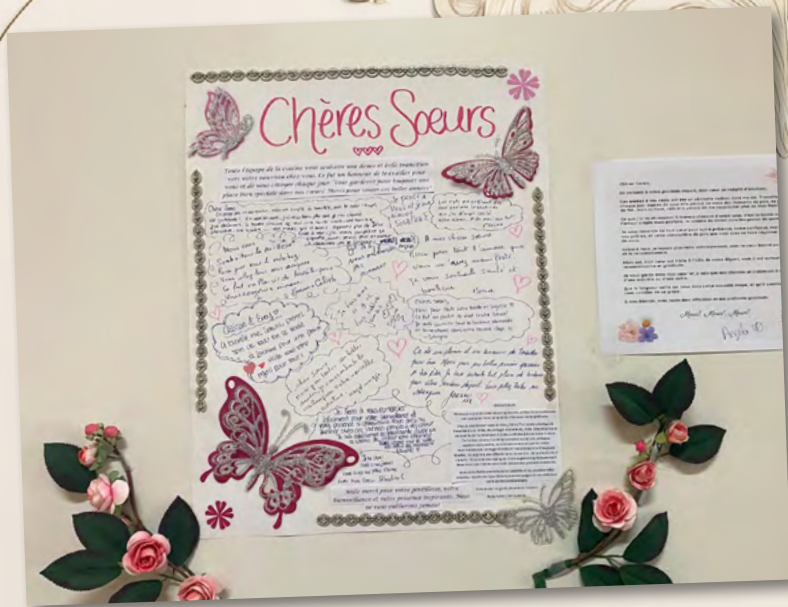
I have to leave you a written message today, otherwise you wouldn't know how much I love you. You might never have known the impact your presence has had on my almost 14 years of service to M.I.C. as a nursing assistant. Thank you for being able to find in each one of you the mother, the aunts, the best friends, the confidantes, the sages, the archangels... Thank you for your generosity and for your savoir-être. You are in my heart!

Aline Constantin

Dear Sisters, I give thanks to God and I thank you for this beautiful stage in our life together, for allowing me to belong to your community, this great family of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. These eight years have been spent day after day sharing all the beautiful and enriching experiences of your life. Living with you your faith and your daily life has enabled me to get to know you a little, very courageous, hard-working and admirable women.

May the future bring us happiness, light and the possibility of finding good people on our path. Thank you very much, see you soon, you're in my heart.

Esperanza Rodriguez



Dear Sisters, as I think of your impending departure, my heart fills with emotions.

These years at your side have been a real gift in my life. Working with you every day has given me moments of peace, sharing and faith—but above all, it has brought me closer to my Master Jesus.

What I have seen and felt through each of you is goodness incarnate, simple yet profound love, the light of Christ in everyday gestures.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your presence, your trust, your smiles, your prayers, and the atmosphere of peace you radiated around you.

Thanks to you, I'm leaving richer inside, with a heart filled with faith and gratitude.

So yes, my heart is sad at the thought of your departure, but above all it's full of gratitude. I keep you in my heart and I know that our paths will cross again, one way or another.

May the Lord watch over you in this new stage, and may He continue to shower you with His graces.

See you soon. With all my affection and deep gratitude.

Thank you so much! Thank you so much! Thank you so much!

Angela Vizcarra, head chef



Blessing of Employees by the M.I.C. Sisters. Photos: Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.



Sisters and Employees at the Chapel of the Pont-Viau Motherhouse.

Photo: Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

Thank you to the life that has given me so much. Gracias a la vida que me ha dado tanto. With these lines from Chilean singer and author Violeta Parra, I want to thank you and express my gratitude for the wonderful opportunity to have met you, to share, to work and to learn from your precious life stories. Each of you has brought and left a shining trace in my heart. Con mucho amor.

Gabriela Amedoudo

For already 24 years and 5 months I've been working for you and with you. How time flies, too quickly in fact. Thank you for these wonderful years with us. I'll always have wonderful memories. I wish you all the best for the future. May Mother Délia and the Lord accompany you throughout your new life in your new home.

Alyne Gaudet, night nurse



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With You, O Lord



JACQUELINE BRAGE GARCIA, M.I.C.

1950-2025

Santa Cruz del Sur, Camagüey, Cuba

Apostolic commitment and gratitude punctuated the life of our sister Jacqueline Brage Garcia, a native of Cuba who joined our community on May 24, 1973 and arrived for the mission in Quebec in 1988. In her pastoral work, she offered quality catechesis, vocational animation with young people, and a creative presence alongside immigrants, especially those of Spanish origin. Although illness at times forced her to take a break, her missionary drive took over as soon as her convalescence was over. Gratitude is at the heart of her life. Let us give thanks to the God of Life. Every day should be a day of giving thanks to God. Jacqueline entered this life of eternal thanksgiving on March 18, 2025.



MARCELLE PAQUET, M.I.C.

Sister Sainte-Christiane

1928-2025

Saint-Prosper, Quebec

After teaching for ten years, Marcelle entered the novitiate on August 10, 1954, in response to the call she had felt at the age of twelve, when the M.I.C.s visited her school. Her dream missionary life was to be realized in Taiwan for almost fifty years. Dazzled by the island's beauty, she understood the need to communicate with its inhabitants and began learning Mandarin. Her helpfulness is legendary. Accounting and authoritative service suited her well, and she competently managed important affairs with various government bodies. In 2011, she returned home and remained available to serve. On March 28, 2025, the call to eternal mission rang out. And Marcelle answered: *HERE I AM*.

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Two identical promotional signs for Villa Opale are displayed on a wooden stand. Each sign features the 'VILLA Opale' logo at the top, followed by the text 'OUVERTURE PRINTEMPS 2025 ! COMPLEXE POUR RETRAITÉS'. Below this, it says 'APARTEMENTS DISPONIBLES' and shows a photo of an elderly couple. The sign also lists 'STUDIOS 3 1/2 - 4 1/2' and includes a QR code, the text 'CONTACTEZ-NOUS 514 552-1616', and 'CONDOMINIUMS 514 552-1616'. A small red sign with the text 'PROCESSEUR DE PAIN' is placed in front of the signs.