

MIC MISSION NEWS

To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923



The STRENGTH
of COMMUNION

MISSIONARY PRAYER INTENTIONS 2026

JANUARY

For prayer with the Word of God.

Let us pray that praying with the Word of God be nourishment for our lives and a source of hope in our communities, helping us to build a more fraternal and missionary Church.

FEBRUARY

For children with incurable diseases.

Let us pray that children suffering from incurable diseases, and their families, receive the necessary medical care and support, never losing strength and hope.

MARCH

For disarmament and peace. Let us pray that nations move toward effective disarmament, particularly nuclear disarmament, and that world leaders choose the path of dialogue and diplomacy instead of violence.

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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The STRENGTH of LOVE



Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

Recently, at the baptism of a newborn in my family, several questions arose within me. Why baptize a newborn? What does this sacrament offer to the child and to the parents? For us Christians, baptism is much more than a simple tradition: it marks entry into the great family of God and opens the possibility of developing a deep love for our brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

The grace of baptism is a gift from God. Through this sacrament, the child receives filial adoption by the Father, becomes a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit, and is incorporated into the people of God, the Church. This union gives rise to a particular solidarity and fraternal communion, sources of comfort — to love and to be loved. Thus, with the eyes of faith, no one is ever alone when facing trials or moments of joy.

THE COMFORT OF BEING LOVED

Recently, Pope Leo XIV published his first apostolic exhortation, *I Have Loved You*, in which he emphasizes love for the poor as an essential criterion of Christian faith. This exhortation reminds us of the commitment of our baptism to fight against the injustices of our world as a living witness of our faith.

This reflection took on a particular meaning for me during a striking experience: while walking for the first time on Notre-Dame Street in Montreal, I was deeply moved by the reality of people experiencing homelessness, settled in makeshift shelters as the cold had already begun to descend. This distressing sight brought forth a pressing question within me: What can I do in the face of such misery?

Often, as the Holy Father says so well, we feel powerless to relieve suffering. Yet this reality invites us to draw close to the poor. Every gesture of sympathy, every sharing, every expression of love — no matter how humble — can be a source of encouragement and immense comfort for those going through hardship.

YOUTH AND UNIVERSAL COMMUNION

In 1984, Pope John Paul II expressed his profound desire to meet young people from around the world, thus instituting World Youth Day, an event that continues to this day. Since then, many articles in this magazine have shared the experiences lived by young people.

During these gatherings, catecheses are offered to invite them to reflect on commitment. These moments of exchange foster communion among all participants from the four corners of the world. A spiritual bond is formed among them. Upon returning home, they feel transformed by this unique experience. Their solidarity is expressed concretely among their compatriots, thus demonstrating the strength of communion and the universal reach of baptism lived in faith and sharing.

Dear readers, may the year 2026 bring you the joy and grace of deepening your Christian faith through these testimonies.

Happy reading!



Pilgrimage to Rome. Photo: Elnora Fontanilla, m.i.c.



Elnora Fontanilla, m.i.c.

In a world often marked by routine and predictability, God reveals Himself to be full of surprises. During the Jubilee Year of Hope, I had the extraordinary opportunity to immerse myself in the rich heritage of our Catholic faith. In Rome, from July 28 to August 3, 2025, I joined millions of participants from diverse backgrounds for the Jubilee of Youth. This pilgrimage went beyond simply visiting a holy city: it became an inner journey that deepened my faith and illuminated the essence of my spiritual calling.

Throughout this stay, I found myself grappling with a question that seemed simple yet profound: What are You doing, Lord? This introspection allowed me to delve more deeply into the beauty of our faith, enriched by the countless saints and martyrs who dedicated their lives to God. Their inspiring stories served as beacons

Journey of Faith

for people like me who are navigating their spiritual path and recognizing God's presence in all aspects of life.

ENCOUNTERS WITH THE DIVINE

Amid the splendor surrounding me, I experienced a moment of deeply intimate solitude with God. This encounter highlighted the essential relationship between Him and me, revealing the fundamental beauty of the faith that unites us all. It reminded me that faith is not only a personal matter but above all a communal experience that nurtures bonds among believers.

During my pilgrimage, I reflected on the importance of presence, not only being physically there for others, but truly engaging with those around me. This journey invited me to embrace my true identity while cultivating meaningful relationships. In doing so, I encountered the divine through my companions, revealing the sacredness inherent in our shared experiences. A particularly enriching aspect of this trip was the renewal of my vocation. Sharing my story with my fellow pilgrims helped me revisit the grace of God in my life, strengthening the idea expressed by Mother Délia that even someone as humble as I am is supported by our Lord.

A CALL TO HOPE

One of the highlights of this event was the night of adoration with the Holy Father. Seeing an immense crowd of young people and adults from various backgrounds gathered in prayer perfectly revealed the unity of the Church. This assembly transcended geographical and cultural barriers, illustrating the vitality of young Catholics united in their faith.



Young people in Rome. Photo: M.I.C.

Throughout this pilgrimage, I experienced many moments that deeply moved me: crossing the holy doors of several churches and basilicas brought about an intense spiritual experience. Catching a brief glimpse of Pope Leo XIV also inspired in me a profound sense of admiration. The festive atmosphere that filled the vigil and the farewell Mass radiated an energy that expressed in a concrete way the hope we share in Christ; indeed, in Him, we are one.

Aware that the journey could present challenges, I often encouraged my companions to see obstacles as opportunities for growth. Jesus Himself walked the path of suffering and resurrection, reminding us that trials can lead to spiritual development. The long hours of walking toward our destination thus became moments of deep reflection and closeness. These experiences allowed me to forge profound relationships with others and with myself. Through shared prayers, songs, and the joy of being together, we encouraged one another, becoming sources of hope for each other, something for which I am extremely grateful.

In short, the celebration of the Jubilee was more than a simple event: it was a transformative journey of faith, unity, and personal growth. I returned home enriched,

inspired, and ready to continue my pilgrimage in my daily life. As I reflect on this experience, I urge my generation, especially young people, to never lose hope. In a world filled with uncertainties and challenges, let us remain firm in our faith. May we draw strength from our shared beliefs and from the rich heritage of those who walked this path before us. As Jeremiah (29:11) reminds us:

FOR I KNOW THE PLANS
I HAVE FOR YOU, DECLARES
THE LORD, PLANS FOR
PEACE AND NOT FOR EVIL,
TO GIVE YOU A FUTURE
AND A HOPE.

Together, let us embrace our mission to be beacons of light and hope, fostering bonds that uplift and inspire us as we navigate the challenges of life. In unity and faith, we can overcome every obstacle and build a better future. 

Testimony of a LIFE OF FAITH

Last July, Sister Bernardeta celebrated her 80th birthday. The parishioners warmly congratulated her, a sign of the immense affection she inspires. She sows joy generously, in the service of God, the Church, and our community.

Interview with Sr. Bernardeta de la Caridad Collazo Carmona, M.I.C.

During the celebration of her 50 years of consecrated life in the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception in 2023, she granted us this beautiful interview. Here is the transcription, taken from the Cuban parish bulletin *Toma y Lee* (July-September 2025).

First, can you tell us a bit about your origins and your family?

I was born in Havana, Cuba, on July 23, 1945, at the Calixto García Hospital. I was baptized at Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish on July 30. My father, the youngest of a family of eleven children from Artemisa, was an accountant, and my mother, the youngest of five, was a sewing and dressmaking teacher. She created her own method and worked as a dressmaker at the large department store *El Encanto*. Both were believers, with a simple yet solid faith. My brother, five years older, graduated in biology and was a committed layperson, part of the Catholic Student Youth movement. Our parents enrolled us in Catholic schools.



Sr. Bernardeta during a conference. Photo: G. Alcaro

When did you become certain of your vocation?

“Certainty” is a rather strong word. Certainty is built through daily experience. The first step was understanding that, no matter how many suitors I had or how much I dreamed of having children, something deep within me was telling me that this was not the path of my life. I felt a profound desire to give myself entirely to God and to the mission of His Church, a thirst to share the faith that lived in me with every person I encountered. But it was not simple nor easy, because I also cherished, as I have just said, the idea of getting married and becoming a mother. So I had to discern which path would be mine forever. God called me again and again, until I realized that it was the right direction and that, in following it, I would find happiness. I prayed to the Holy Spirit to enlighten my choice. People would whisper in my ear: *I can really see you as a Sister!* I have always been amazed by the clarity with which God speaks when He wants to draw us to Himself.

At what age, where, and how did your religious life begin?

As my mother often said: *Education begins in the cradle*. We were raised in the love of God and faithful practice of the Church. As a little girl, my father and godfather would take me to nearby neighbourhoods so that I could teach the children the Church songs or what I learned in catechism and especially to be friends with them. That is where my vocation began. It was a big family of companions and brothers and sisters.

When did you decide to respond to the call?

In 1969, at the age of 24, I understood that I could not ask God for any more signs. When He chooses, one must respond with trust, for the Lord gives the grace to accept His call. I observed the existing religious congregations. I wanted to join a mission that would send me wherever the Word of God needed to be proclaimed, in Cuba, in Africa, or even in Alaska! I needed to share this passion burning within me with those who did not yet know the one true God.

When did you enter the M.I.C.?

I entered the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception on August 5, 1969, in Colón, in the province of Matanzas, in the former diocesan seminary, the only place where the Sisters still lived after their expulsion from the schools. Their main activities were teaching, catechesis, presence in dispensaries, and visiting the sick.

Who founded the M.I.C., and what is their mission?

Our foundress is Délia Tétreault, a Quebecer. The aim of the congregation, its charism and mission, are rooted in the spirituality of thanksgiving and the proclamation of the Good News, in the image of the Virgin Mary in the Visitation and the Magnificat. Mother Délia said that too few people thanked God for His immense love. She wanted her spiritual daughters to become voices of gratitude and evangelization, singing His wonders. In this way, she united Marian spirituality to the task of proclaiming the Gospel to the ends of the earth.

Where have you served as a M.I.C.?

I spent most of my missionary life in Cuba, in the dioceses of Pinar del Río, Havana, Matanzas, Cienfuegos, Camagüey, Ciego de Ávila, and Holguín. I also served in Canada for nearly five years.



Sr. Bernardetta with young people in the parish.

Photo: Cuban parish newsletter *Toma y Lee* (July-September 2025)

You are celebrating your 50 years of religious life today. What do you take from this journey?

These 50 years of consecrated life have widened my heart. My life has become universal: the joy and suffering of others have become my own. My Cuban roots have been strengthened in the faith and hope of my people. My love for the Church, for my Institute, and for my sisters and brothers around the world has grown, a true treasure I would not exchange for anything.

Which experience has marked you the most?

What moves me most today is witnessing the conversion of those who encounter the personal love of God. It is like touching Him through each person.

The most beautiful thing that can happen to someone is knowing oneself as a beloved child of God. And do not be afraid if one day you discover that He is calling you to become a priest or a Sister: it is the greatest gift He can give you. Let us give thanks to God, for we are gathered to thank Him for so many blessings. ☩

The Joy of a Dream Fulfilled

The Eucharistic Youth Movement (EYM) is a Catholic educational movement for young people, founded in 1962 and stemming from the Eucharistic Crusade. It is very popular in Haiti.



Rose-Philomène Gédéon, M.I.C.

As a child, I longed with all my heart to join this group that fascinated me, and finally, an opportunity arose to become part of it. Today, at the invitation of Sister Wideline Lamy, head of formation, I can share this testimony.

In 2025, a large gathering took place at Collège Notre-Dame in Cap-Haïtien, bringing together the five northern departments. This meeting welcomed different sections of the EYM and opened with a Eucharistic celebration presided over by Father Éric Jasmin of the Congregation of Holy Cross. Before all these young people, I shared my commitment and journey within this movement. Here are the main points.



Group of young Méjistes. Photo: M.I.C.

Hello everyone!

When I was at the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception primary school in Trou-du-Nord, I wanted to join the Eucharistic Youth Movement, especially because my older sister, Rose Marie, was already a member.

One day, while the principal, Sister Marguerite Lamoureux, M.I.C., was teaching us floral art for Mother's Day, I tried to tell her about my desire to join the group, but she did not understand me. Eventually, I was able to join the Feu Nouveau branch at the end of the year.

I have been part of the EYM since the age of 11, where active hope is an essential virtue. As a team leader and animator, I learned to understand the importance of this movement and to pass on its values to the youth. Conduct and speech serve to guide them toward an authentic life of hope centered on the Eucharist.

IN YOUR MOMENTS
OF DIFFICULTY,
REMEMBER THAT STORMS
ARE ALWAYS FOLLOWED
BY FAIR WEATHER.

Living this active hope means remembering God's blessings and recognizing their importance, because only gratitude can sustain hope even in difficult moments.

In the face of the dramatic situation, we live through in Port-au-Prince, it is essential to act with hope founded on trust in God, cultivating optimism in life, especially where sadness prevails. Let us seek to discover and develop this virtue around us, without becoming oppressors ourselves.

This Eucharistic congress was a moment of transformation, inviting us to carry this hope into our daily lives. As Pope Francis rightly said: Do not let yourselves be robbed of hope! And Mother Délia Tétreault, our foundress: We must remain joyful in difficult moments as well as in the most beautiful days... In your moments of difficulty, remember that storms are always followed by fair weather. ☺



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Ageless Joys

Holding someone's hand was always my idea of joy.

— CLARICE LISPECTOR

Marie-Claude Barrière

In these times when hyper-individualism too often prevails, it is heartening to see bright ideas emerging here and there to combat this scourge. One day, while reading *La Presse+*, Denise Tessier Trudeau and Isabelle Cazes, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law respectively, were drawn to an article on intergenerational cohabitation. Enthusiastic about the project of Typhaine de Penfentenyo, founder of the French association *Ensemble2Générations*, the two women wasted no time in contacting her to learn more. In fact, they were so inspired by her idea that they decided to take the plunge themselves, and in 2017, the organization *Combo2Générations* was created — a little Québécois sister was born.

TWO ARE BETTER THAN ONE

So, what exactly does this non-profit organization do? The principle is simple: a person aged 60 or older offers a room to a student aged 18 to 30, whether in college or university. At *Combo2Générations*, three arrangements are offered: in the first, *free lodging*, the student commits to being home for meals every evening during the week and on weekends, except for one evening per week and two weekends per month; in the second, *affordable lodging*, the student pays a very reasonable rent in exchange for regular presence. In addition, he participates in light household tasks and

companionship activities (shopping, going to the cinema, etc.); finally, in the third, *solidarity lodging*, the student contributes to the costs but has no obligations, although he must always look after his host's well-being.

For, no matter the arrangement chosen, the mission remains the same: to allow two generations to live together, enriching one another mutually in respect and harmony, while alleviating each other's loneliness.

In this difficult period when Quebec as a whole is experiencing a housing crisis, this initiative is most welcome and should be celebrated. It seems to achieve three goals at once: countering the scarcity and high cost of apartments, breaking the isolation of both seniors and young people, and recreating the lost inter-generational roots eroded by the fragmentation of social fabric.

A WINNING PAIR

But you may ask: how can two strangers live harmoniously under the same roof? How is an ideal "pairing" created? According to the co-founders, it is the result of careful planning where nothing is left to chance.

First, an initial meeting is set up at the seniors' homes to determine their expectations and needs. What can they offer? What do they hope to receive in return? What services, if any, will be provided? Then comes the careful review of candidate profiles to form the best possible pair. What particular affinities do the

future partners share? Do they both like music, chess, or theater, for example? Finally (and to summarize), if and only if the chemistry works, a lodging agreement is signed, specifying the rules and conditions. After that, the grand adventure begins...

THE BET PAID OFF!

Of course, even with the best intentions, nothing is guaranteed. Chance often plays a role, as everyone knows. However, judging by the many testimonials on the organization's website, the bet has succeeded.

Just listen to what Sonia, 20, says about her new home: *I miss my family, so spending time with Madeleine is really good for me. I really see her as a friend, not as a grandmother. I worry about her well-being, and if I can help her, with her computer, shopping, anything, it's a pleasure.*

Not bad, right? Or Lorette, a centenarian, who seems truly delighted with her roommate conversations: *When we discuss history, religion, or current events, the two of us, we don't feel the generational differences. I'm 100, and you're 27...so what?*

So what? These are truly words of profound wisdom. Lorette knows that age will never have the final say, and that time has no power over the shared values of mutual aid, fraternity, and sharing. Bonds are formed, friendships develop, and life unfolds.

Let us hope these pairings multiply in the future. We will then build a stronger, fairer world where joys are without age, joys that open simply by extending a hand and heart. ~



STATIONS OF THE CROSS, PATH OF LIFE

A COLLECTIVE OF ARTISTS, MEMBERS OF RACEF

Jacques Houle, Exhibition Curator

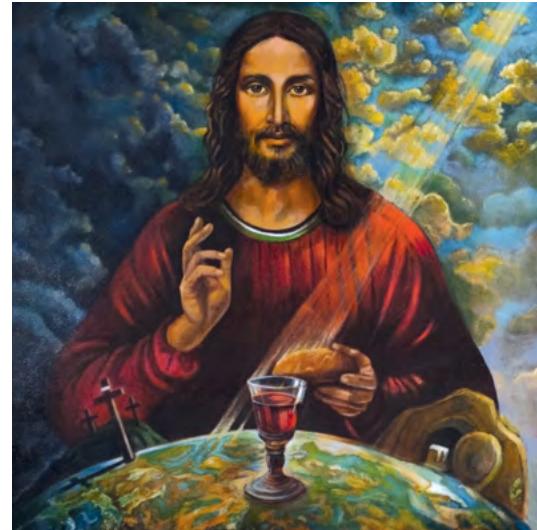
Those familiar with our churches are well-acquainted with the Stations of the Cross that adorn their walls: fourteen well-aligned stations. Whether plaster statues, wooden sculptures, painted canvases, or simple lithographic reproductions, they depict fourteen episodes of the journey that led Jesus from His condemnation to His burial. These representations, however, serve a particular purpose. A very old practice, already well established by the 16th century, invites the faithful to move from one station to another. In the absence of the possibility of traveling to the Holy Land, this exercise allows one to follow Christ in His Passion. In its own way, it becomes a pilgrimage, as if to Jerusalem.

Yet the Stations of the Cross is also a path of life that goes far beyond the fourteen classic scenes. It has an after, that of the Resurrection, that of life. It also has a before. This inspired the artists who presented this exhibition in 2025. They sought to open up the traditional Stations of the Cross. Still in the spirit of a pilgrimage, they invite visitors to follow Jesus in what precedes the Passion, in what it was, and what follows — the very heart of the Gospels.

THE RACEF

Chemin de croix – Chemin de vie (Stations of the Cross, Path of Life) is a presentation of the *Réseau d'art chrétien et d'éducation de la foi* (RACEF), the Network of Christian Art and Faith Education, a network of artists and supporters who believe in the power of visual arts as a vehicle for evangelization. They recognize that faith is, for them, a driving force for creation. They took the risk of leaving the solitude of their studios to form this community.

RACEF is, above all, a meeting place for sharing questions, personal journeys, artistic projects, and commitments. It is also a space for creation. Since 2017, it has realized several major projects, including collective thematic exhibitions: *Souffle et matière* (Breath and Matter) in Pierrefonds, *Chemins de l'art – Chemins de foi* (Paths of



Mass on the World, oil on canvas,
Anne-Marie Forest, 2025.

Art, Paths of Faith) in Alma, *À la rencontre de l'espérance* (Encountering Hope) in Joliette, *Terre sacrée chez soi* (Sacred Land at Home) in Cap-de-la-Madeleine, and, on tour, *Mamo* (Baie-Comeau, Joliette, Longueuil, Montreal, and Pierrefonds).

EACH IN HIS OWN WAY

While the network relies on a stable core of members, these vary depending on the project. *Chemin de croix – Chemin de vie* brings together twenty artists from diverse backgrounds, both in terms of training and production. While most are from Quebec, the group also includes artists from various countries: Vietnam, France, Lebanon, Laos, Chile, and Cambodia. One participant is Atikamekw, from the village of Manawan in the Lanaudière region.

For this exhibition, however, the challenge was the same for all: to move from the Word to the image, that is, to select a passage from the Gospels surrounding the death and resurrection of Christ, let oneself be transfigured by it, and then allow a representation to emerge expressed through one's own artistic language. For the act of believing first occurs in the "I." It then becomes a "we" when shared. It is in this sharing that the RACEF members invited all visitors to participate. 



Evangelizers WITHOUT BORDERS

Maria and her husband, Deacon Paul Ma, Sister Cecilia Hong, Paul and Bonny Yeung, and Paul and Cecilia Tam. Photo: FLL

Cécilia Hong, M.I.C.

THE FIRST APOSTLE TO CROSS BORDERS: PAUL

The call of the risen Lord to the persecutor Saul is a sign of our God's merciful love for all Gentiles. It was the Apostle Paul who crossed all the boundaries that separated Gentiles from Jews. He was truly an evangelizer without borders. His calling is a blessing for us all!

Today, the work of evangelization is no longer the sole responsibility of priests and religious missionaries, but also of countless laypeople who generously offer themselves to bring the Good News to people around the world. They are true apostles, following in Paul's footsteps, driven by fervent zeal and passionate hearts.

THE FOUNTAIN OF LOVE AND LIFE (FLL): ANOTHER PAUL

The multimedia Chinese Catholic evangelization initiative known as *Fountain of Love and Life* was founded in Toronto in 2005 by an outstanding layman, Mr. Paul Yeung. His vision of evangelization led him to launch this project to educate the Chinese population, first in the "Queen City" and later across Canada. Unknowingly, he was truly following in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul, crossing all borders and breaking all barriers. Enthusiastic, Paul Yeung and his wife Bonny, with a team of devoted and daring men and women of faith, set out to bring the Good News to Chinese communities around the world. They invited priests and clergymen, deacons, and lay catechists to enrich their programs, deepen everyone's faith, and help them grow closer to God and to others.



Father Paul Kam Po-wai, Vicar General, Father Anthony Ho, Father Francis Ching, Paul and Bonny Yeung, Agnes Tao, staff of the Fountain of Love and Life Foundation, and several key volunteers from Toronto, Vancouver, and Hong Kong. Photo: Cecilia Hong, M.I.C.

Today, *Fountain of Love and Life* celebrates its twentieth anniversary. Its remarkable achievements have crossed all possible borders, reaching from Canada to the United States, Hong Kong, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom

THROUGH TIRELESS EFFORT AND BOLD INITIATIVE, THIS ORGANIZATION BRINGS THE SOURCE OF LIFE TO ALL WHO THIRST FOR THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

Through tireless effort and bold initiative, this organization brings the source of life to all who thirst for the love of Christ. Under the guidance of their spiritual directors—Father Francis Ching of Toronto, Father Anthony Ho of the Archdiocese of Vancouver, and Father Paul Kam Po-wai, Vicar General of Hong Kong—*Fountain of Love and Life* inspires profound enthusiasm among staff, volunteers, and collaborators in their evangelization work worldwide.

MEETING THE EVANGELIZER TEAM: THE FIVE PAULS

Over the past fifteen years, I have had the extraordinary opportunity to meet various committed leaders working for *Fountain of Love and Life*. Surprisingly, five of them share the name Paul! Is this mere coincidence, or were these men called to walk in the footsteps of the saint and become “evangelizers without borders” themselves? All I can say is that our God is a God full of surprises!

The first Paul I met is Mr. Paul Lee, a dedicated catechist who served at the Canadian Martyrs Catholic Church in Vancouver. He was the husband of Mrs. Eva Lee, my former teaching assistant at Good Hope Primary School in Hong Kong, where I was principal. He was a caring and compassionate catechist, and it was through him that I discovered the existence of *Fountain of Love and Life*, as he volunteered for the organization.

A few years later, in Toronto, I met Mr. Paul Yeung, the founder of *Fountain of Love and Life*. I was deeply impressed by his courage and vision, which inspired him to create such a monumental apostolic project. I was equally inspired by his enthusiastic personality

and that of his wife Bonny, a wonderful collaborator. This experience made me deeply aware of the powerful contribution of laypeople in today's evangelization efforts. I saw a major change in the Church: laypeople now assume responsibilities that previously belonged solely to priests and religious.

In 2018, I met a third Paul, Mr. Paul Tam, and his wife Cecilia at the Chinese Catholic Camp of Eastern Canada. I witnessed their devotion to engaging with youth. A year later, during a retreat I led in Mississauga, I met a fourth Paul, Paul Ma, and his wife Maria. I was deeply moved by his story of conversion to the Catholic faith. Like Paul, he not only converted but also offered his life in service to the Church, becoming a deacon and following in the footsteps of his illustrious predecessor.

In 2019, in *MIC Mission News*, I wrote an article about his conversion entitled *The Amazing Grace of God*. In addition to his deep commitment as a catechist in his own parish, he also humbly served as an educator for FLL.

THE DEDICATION OF THE FIVE PAULS AND ESTEEMED SPIRITUAL DIRECTORS

On August 8-9, 2025, *Fountain of Love and Life* celebrated the 20th anniversary of its evangelization work. For me, it was a joy to witness the incredible fruits of this labour in the presence of 700 participants from across Canada, the United States, and Asia. During this event, I had the privilege of meeting the fifth Paul: the spiritual director of FLL in Hong Kong, Father Paul Kam Po-wai, Vicar General.

What I find extraordinary about these five men is that they all share a strong conviction and zeal for the mission; they work with passion and energy to reach all who thirst for the Lord, embodying simplicity, humility, and compassion. Their leadership mirrors Christ's own example, and their work is fruitful. They form a solid pillar from which the source of Love and Life flows freely and abundantly, transforming and touching the lives of countless people. ☩

Group of volunteers from Canada, the United States, Hong Kong, and Australia. Photo: FLL



COMMUNION: MORE THAN A WORD, A WAY OF LIFE

Amélie Martineau-Lavallée

THE EUCHARIST: SOURCE OF ALL COMMUNION

What comes to mind when we speak of communion? For many, the word immediately evokes the intimate moment during Mass when we receive the Body of Christ. The Eucharist, source and summit of Christian life, creates and strengthens our bond of unity. At each celebration, we are united as one Body: the Body of Christ.

This nourishment, so precious for my soul, invites me to deepen the human dimension of this sacrament. I like to remember that the Eucharist is never experienced alone. There is something profoundly meaningful in receiving Christ together: at that moment, we live a real communion among brothers and sisters. Even with only a small number of faithful, the Mass remains communal. And through the universal prayer, we carry the world in our intercession.

WORLD YOUTH DAYS (WYD): A FOUNDATIONAL EXPERIENCE

As a committed believer, my faith journey was marked by a foundational event: WYD in Paris in 1997. There, I experienced the immense trust of Pope John Paul II in the youth. It deeply moved me. But even more transformative was the experience at Longchamp during the closing of this gathering. Two million young people from all over the world, gathered to sing, praise, pray, and share...

There, I discovered the beauty of international fraternity, authentic human communion, which I had never experienced with such intensity. I encountered the universal Church, and from that moment, my perception of it changed radically. The love shared among believers is a visible sign of God: *By this everyone will know that you are my disciples: if you have love for one another* (John 13:35).



THE TRINITY: MODEL OF COMMUNION

Fraternal communion finds its ultimate foundation in the mystery of the Trinity. Too often, we forget that to say "God is Trinity" is to affirm a reality of relationship, reciprocal giving, and love flowing between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Once, during a homily, I heard that the Father is all love given, the Son all love received, and the Holy Spirit all love shared. Since then, I have continued to meditate on these words.

It is often this form of communion that comes to mind, and it moves me to action. How can I live, as a person, in the image of this work of love that unites the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit? It may seem complex, but in reality, it is quite simple: God is communion, and this communion is Love. From this understanding, a single question guides my life as a baptized person: how can I become a living sign of God's love for the world?

UNITY IN DIVERSITY: A CHALLENGE FOR OUR TIME

We live in a time marked by many divisions: left or right, liberalism or conservatism, local consumption or globalization, secularism or religious freedom, vanilla or chocolate (!)... Polarization seems to prevail in every domain.

In this context, I wonder whether the strength of Church members should not lie more in their ability to cultivate unity. I often say that the Church's strength rests in its model, which invites living unity in diversity, a concept present from the very beginnings of the institution. As early as the 2nd century, two Church Fathers exchanged letters to encourage the first Christian communities to persevere in faith. Saint Ignatius of Antioch wrote to Saint Polycarp of Smyrna: *Be concerned with unity, above which nothing is better.*

Being united in faith, even with our differences, is a great strength! This does not mean, however, thinking all alike. Debates in the Church (as in society) are healthy and necessary. But what a richness when, despite divergent opinions, we remain bound by faith in the loving and benevolent Triune God!

"Common-union" transcends cultural, generational, or ideological differences. It is what makes us one body. A telling biblical image: *[God] has so arranged the body, that there should be no division in it, but that the members should have the same concern for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it* (1 Cor 12:25-27).

I also think of the motto of the Archbishop Emeritus of Quebec, Marc Ouellet: *Ut unum sint (That they may be one)* (John 17:21). This verse, from Jesus' prayer, is also the title of a key encyclical by John Paul II, fundamental for ecumenical dialogue. In this prayer, Jesus asks the Father for the unity of his disciples. This call for communion among brothers and sisters still resonates powerfully today. It remains just as necessary.

COMMUNION: A SUPPORT IN TRIALS

Human and fraternal communion is, in my eyes, just as precious as Eucharistic communion. After all, *It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him* (Gen 2:18). Our hearts are made for relationships: in friendship, as a couple, in family. We all seek to love and be loved. Here again is that movement of love that inhabits the Trinity and acts within each of us. Human beings are created for communion. I would even say that we thirst for it! Fraternal communion is not a luxury, but a deep Christian vocation. Yet let us be realistic: it is sometimes difficult. It relies on the call to charity taught by Christ. Forgiveness and reconciliation then become necessary passages.

A COMMUNION THAT RADIATES

Finally, I recall that in moments of suffering, solitude, or trial, communion becomes an invisible yet very real strength. Perhaps you have already felt this discreet but powerful support from the prayers of others? True fraternity, experienced in a parish, a prayer group, or a movement, is a blessing! And then there is the communion of saints, but that is a story for another article... The greatest strength of fraternal communion is that it radiates and attracts. A communion that radiates: that is our mission! ☩

MY EXPERIENCE AS A PILGRIM OF HOPE



The Good Hope Youth Choir, Hong Kong. Photo: Pauline Yuen, M.I.C.

The late Pope Francis proclaimed 2025 the Jubilee Year under the theme *Pilgrims of Hope*. We are all encouraged to cultivate this virtue, no matter the difficulties we face.

Pauline Yuen, M.I.C.

Last September, I was asked to accompany our school choir to Latvia to participate in the Baltic Sea International Choir Competition. It was an unexpected trip, as the school year had just begun. For this reason, the older girls, although well-trained, decided not to go in order to focus on their studies. The musical coordinator was then considering canceling the trip. However, as we were the only team

invited from Hong Kong, it did not seem appropriate to withdraw. After careful consideration, we decided to take only our youngest choristers. Some of them had been singing for less than two years and still lacked experience. We thought it would be a wonderful opportunity to broaden their horizons and build skills for the future.

LIVING IN HARMONY

Unlike other singing competitions, there were no categories: a mixed choir could compete against a choir of equal voices. Our group resembled more a children's choir than a professional adult ensemble. Consequently, we dared not hope for any award except the chance to have a fruitful and safe trip. It was an excellent way to teach the girls that the most important thing is not to win, but to give their best. After all, singing is first and foremost praising God. We constantly encouraged them to surpass themselves, to enjoy singing, and to share their youth and joy with others.

IF WE PERFORM OUR TASK
WITH CONFIDENCE AND
HOPE, HE WILL ALWAYS
BLESS US FAR BEYOND OUR
EXPECTATIONS.

Eight choirs participated in the competition: besides ours, there were groups from Slovenia, Poland, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, and two ensembles from Ireland. It was a great joy to meet these brothers and sisters from such diverse backgrounds.

The opening concert took place at the Jurmala Dubulti Evangelical Lutheran Church, the largest stone Art New Style church in Latvia. The following day, the girls performed the required program, including a set piece

and other contest requirements. They then presented a free program, where they could perform pieces of their choice.

In the evening, the results were announced: five teams were selected for the grand finale. Before the concert hall, we read the list of qualified choirs. Cheers of joy and tears of emotion erupted when the girls saw that they had made the cut. Their hope had been reborn.

A TREMENDOUS SURPRISE

The final round took place the next day. While awaiting the results, all the choristers sang the set piece together in a joyful atmosphere. It was touching to see how music unites people, beyond borders, ages, and genders. I could sense that our protégées were savouring the fraternity and communion with the other participants, without worrying about the rankings. To our immense surprise, our choir won third place, along with three special awards: the Prize for the Most Expressive Stage Performance, the Audience Award, and the Dzintari Concert Hall Prize (the competition venue).

Our hearts were filled with joy and gratitude, as we had not expected this at all. Parents in Hong Kong shared in our happiness and thankfulness.

For me, this trip was truly a pilgrimage of hope: walking together in trust and gratitude, rediscovering the presence of this virtue in daily life through acts of kindness and courage. These unexpected rewards are, in my eyes, a sign from the Lord: if we perform our task with confidence and hope, He will always bless us far beyond our expectations. ☩

MISSIONARIES in Thanksgiving



Sr. Josiane, Director. Photo: M.I.C.



From left to right: Sisters Marie-Claire Odette, Nadia, Noéline, Angèle, Edwidge. Photo: M.I.C.

The M.I.C. of Ivandry, Madagascar

In communion with the Sisters of the Malagasy M.I.C. province and the people of Madagascar, four missionaries live at the Ivandry house in Antananarivo. Two of them are responsible for administration, another focuses on community service, and a young woman is pursuing her studies. At all times, fraternal union bears witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ among us and toward the people we encounter. The staff present always welcomes anyone who comes for business, courtesy, or friendship.

The service of Sisters Marie-Colette Razanabahoaka, provincial, and Berthine Razanamiarisoa, bursar, often requires travelling to visit companions in local houses to ensure proper management and to encourage their commitment to the community.

Sisters Rosalie Raivomanana, Marie Louise, and Linah Razafindrahaingo support the AsMIC and JAsMIC with care. They regularly attend meetings to strengthen them in their apostolic life, encourage them to share the spirituality of thanksgiving with others, and deepen their sense of belonging to God, the Church, and the Institute.

The resident community plans for succession and provides training. Sister Linah is in her first year of the program at the Higher Institute of Pedagogy in Antamponankatso, taking her studies seriously in order to dive more fully into her mission. Based on her lived and shared experiences, she feels comfortable and finds the courses interesting. She is ready to give her best to advance the kingdom of God, especially in education and teaching. She is convinced that education is essential for improving human dignity and is a dynamic and hopeful person.



Students at our school. Photo: M.I.C.

IN THE PARISH

Ivandry belongs to the parish of Saints Peter and Paul, in Soavimasoandro. Every first Sunday of the month, Sisters Rosalie and Berthine represent the community at the pastoral council meeting. They assist in sacramental preparation. With enthusiasm and dedication, they also participate in organizing celebrations and festivities in collaboration with three other female congregations active in the parish: the Pious Workers of the Immaculate Conception, the Daughters of Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the Sisters of Saint Paul of Chartres. Together, they witness communion by carrying out these spiritual and vocational activities.

PASTORAL VISIT

The M.I.C. and Associates also take part in the pastoral visit to the parish, conducted on behalf of the archbishop by Father Mamiarisoa Modeste Randrianifahanana, vicar general, recently appointed auxiliary bishop. In his presentation, the prelate always encourages parishioners to be true apostles and to engage in Church life. He prioritizes Sunday prayer gatherings, emphasizing that Sunday is a time to meet God and reconnect with the Christian community. He urges them to remain faithful to their faith.

IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD

In the Ivandry neighbourhood, the M.I.C. take every opportunity to meet and connect with often less privileged people. They share the Word of God and encourage perseverance

in prayer. They attend to the sick, offering friendly visits and the opportunity to receive communion. They provide assistance and help others maintain hope in God's infinite mercy.

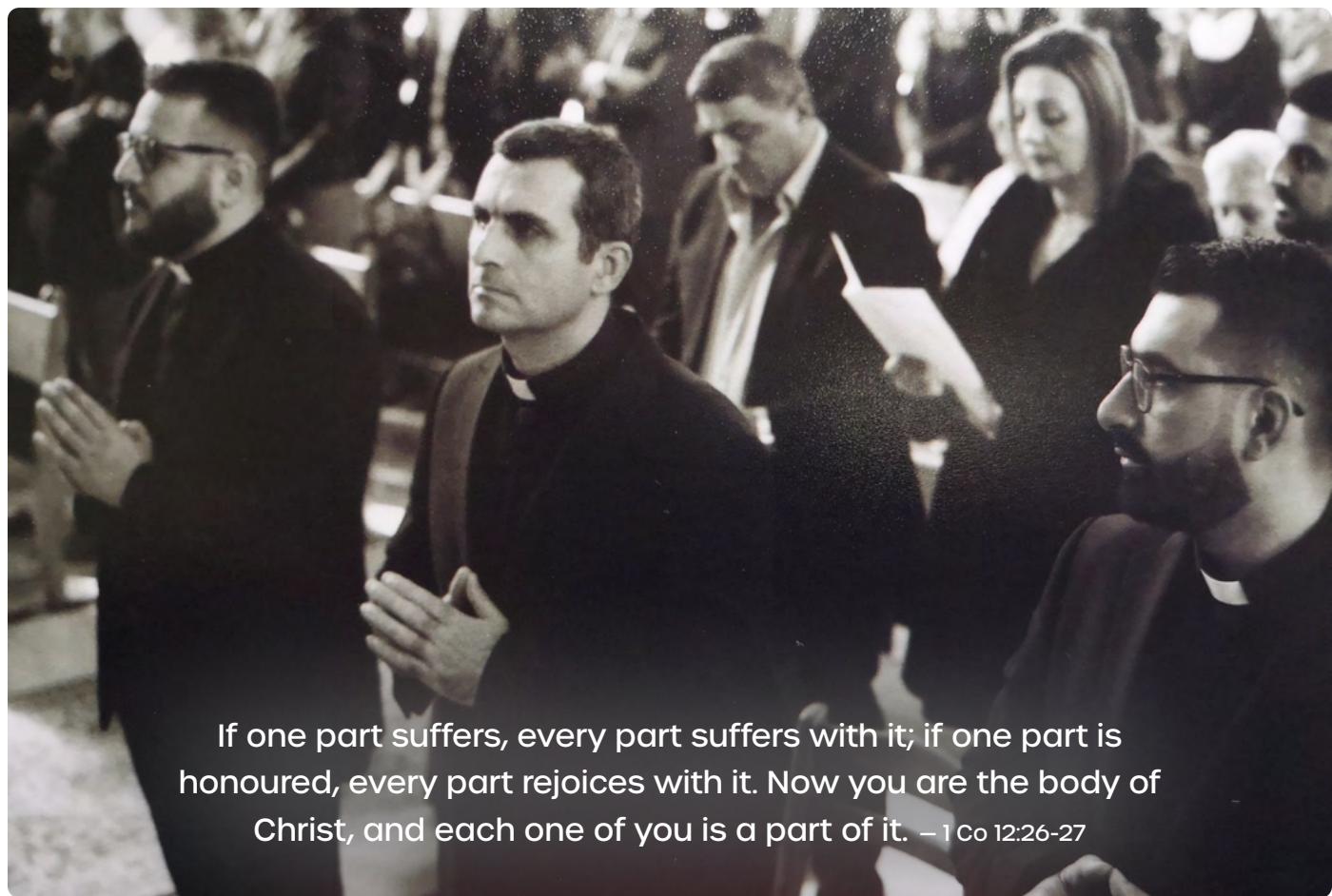
PILGRIMS OF HOPE

On the occasion of the 2025 Jubilee Year, a highly anticipated ecclesial gathering was held in the country, impressing the people, especially Catholics. On May 17-18, two days of prayer took place at Ilot de la Vierge in Ampefy, in the Miarinarivo district. This jubilee was a large gathering where each pilgrim could immerse himself in God's infinite mercy. The pilgrimage was organized for Christians unable to travel to the Eternal City. It included a variety of cultural and religious events, including Masses, exhibitions, conferences, and evangelical concerts, much to the joy of participants.

During the event, various songs and prayers were sung and recited throughout the Saturday evening vigil. The vigil was preceded by the sacrament of reconciliation, the recitation of the rosary, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The following day, all the bishops of the Episcopal Conference of Madagascar, as well as the apostolic nuncio, were present at Mass. During this gathering, the entire island of Madagascar was consecrated to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

Sisters Marie-Colette, Rosalie, and Berthine participated in this event with the group from our Soavimasoandro parish. They admired the faith of the people, their attention to prayer, and their enthusiastic participation in liturgical activities. They felt privileged and happy to have taken part in this pilgrimage and received the plenary indulgence, thinking of Sister Linah and many other parishioners who could not attend. Thanks be to God, the two days passed without any incident. ☩

Charbel, Louis, and Jean-Marie. Three Maronite priests in Lebanon and Egypt. Photo: Emmanuel Bélanger



If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. – 1 Co 12:26-27

The Communion of Saints and Today's Martyrs

Emmanuel Bélanger

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS AND THE JUBILEE OF HOPE



The Jubilee of Hope has now closed its doors, opening new paths toward the Kingdom of Heaven. Christians can only enter it if they first accept the heavenly bread given to them. Communion is first realized in the fact that Christ allows us to share in eternal life with Him. And how does this happen for us

pilgrims still on earth? Through the sacraments. Let us take a step back to understand this clearly.

COMMUNION IN HOLY THINGS AND AMONG HOLY PERSONS

When we speak of the *communion of saints* in the Apostles' Creed—so called because it is rightly considered a faithful summary of their faith (CEC, 194)—

it has two closely related meanings: communion in holy things (*sancta*) and communion among holy persons (*sancti*).

First, the *holy things* are the sacraments. Earlier, I mentioned the Jubilee doors that the faithful around the world were invited to cross. Baptism is the door through which people enter the Church (CEC, 950) and which grants access to the fullness of the sacraments. The sacraments make real what they promise: the glory of God and the salvation of the world by participating in the very life of Christ.

**SAINTS ARE THOSE WHO,
RECEIVING THE ABUNDANCE OF
THESE GIFTS, LIVE AND SUFFER
IN AND FOR CHRIST IN ORDER
TO BEAR FRUIT FOR ALL.**

(CEC, 961)

Each sacrament allows communion that unites us with God and our neighbor, but this is especially true in the mystery of the Eucharist, for it is through communion with the Body and Blood of the Saviour that the unity of the faithful forming one body in Christ is realized (LG, 3). It is through the sacrifice of the Cross and the Eucharistic banquet that holy things achieve the unity intended among holy persons, i.e., the faithful sanctified by the presence of Christ Jesus and His Holy Spirit in them and in the Church. Saints (*sancti*) are those who, receiving the abundance of these gifts, live and suffer in and for Christ in order to bear fruit for all (CEC, 961).

THE EUCHARIST AND THE UNITY OF SAINTS

For this reason, in the Eucharistic liturgy of most Eastern Churches, the celebrant proclaims *sancta sanctis* (holy things for the holy ones) during the elevation of the sacred species — here in the Arabic version of the Maronite liturgy Al Aqdas lil Qoudissin — so

that those who spiritually partake of the Eucharist in spirit and truth can also physically come forward and consume Christ in the offerings. They are holy and worthy to participate in this feast through and in Jesus alone.

MARTYRDOM: A WITNESS OF FAITH

This long introduction to the communion of saints leads us to another mystery present in the Church: martyrdom.

From Greek origin, the term means *witness*. Martyrs are those who testify to God's love even to the point of giving their lives, following Jesus' example. Not every saint is a martyr, but every martyr recognized as such is fully a saint.

To balance the theological introduction, it seemed appropriate to show how the communion of saints makes Christians supportive of one another and invites us to pray for those most persecuted for their faith.

CONTEMPORARY MARTYRS

According to the Nigerian NGO InterSociety, over 16 years, the Islamist group Boko Haram attacked and destroyed nearly 20,000 churches in Nigeria, and approximately 52,000 Christians were killed. In recent years, targeted kidnappings of priests and seminarians have increased. Some escape by fleeing or paying ransom, but many are killed by their captors. Since 2022, 76 priests and religious have been kidnapped or murdered.

From November 14 to 21, during the Red Week organized for the tenth year by Aid to the Church in Need (ACN), churches and monuments worldwide — including the newly restored Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris — were illuminated in red, the colour of martyrs' blood, to remind us that even today, one in seven Christians lives in a country where religious freedom is violated.

THE PRESENCE OF PRIESTS: AN ESSENTIAL WITNESS

In testimony given by a Nigerian priest to ACN and broadcast by the Catholic television channel KTO, he explained why the presence of priests is fundamental: they make consecration and the Eucharist possible, and without the Eucharist, there is no Church.

IT IS THE PARADOX OF GRACE: WHEN THE CHURCH SUFFERS AND IS PERSECUTED, FAITH IS AT ITS STRONGEST.

A powerful lesson for the West, which suffers from a lack of vocations and where churches are closing or desacralized. In Nigeria, Sharia law, still enforced in 12 northern states, prevents the building of new churches. Yet the Body of Christ—the Church militant,

in communion with the Church in waiting (purgatory) and the Church triumphant in heaven—continues to grow and, through martyrdom, bears witness to Christ.

THE VICTORY OF LOVE AND TRUTH

At the Good Shepherd Major Seminary in the Archdiocese of Kaduna, vocations continue to grow despite danger and fear. There were 250 seminarians in 2024 and 280 in 2025. It is the paradox of grace: when the Church suffers and is persecuted, faith is at its strongest. As Tertullian, a 2nd-century Christian writer, said: *The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.*

From this lived communion comes the victory of love and truth. Jesus Himself tells us in the Gospel of John (8:32) that the truth *will set you free*.

May we have the freedom and faith of our brothers and sisters in Nigeria, who even today bear witness to the Good News of Jesus Christ against all odds. ~

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With You, O Lord



LORRAINE LÉVESQUE, M.I.C.
Sister Alain-de-la-Roche
1932-2025
Québec, Québec

On February 1, 1952, our Sister Lorraine entered the novitiate, equipped with a solid business education and rich work experience in this field. During a missionary trip to Cap-de-la-Madeleine, she chose our community when she saw our Sisters. *The happiness reflected on their faces was a major factor in my decision.* A few years of teaching in our schools were followed by a technical course. And so she became responsible for material administration for 53 years as general, provincial, and local bursar. Serene joy, peace, and gentleness coloured her life in community. But illness would have the last word, and it was with her usual calm that she recognized and welcomed the Father's call on August 2, 2025.



JACQUELINE VILLEMURE, M.I.C.
Sister Rose-Jacqueline
1942-2025
Timmins, Ontario

An only child, very gifted and precocious, Jacqueline made her first communion at the age of 4. At 6, building on what she had learned from her mother, she started elementary school in 3rd grade. Determined, at the age of eleven, she declared to her mother: "I will be a missionary or cloistered nun, or I will not be one at all! I will give myself completely to whatever costs the most." On August 8, 1959, at the dawn of her 17th birthday, she entered the novitiate. A few years of community service were followed by studies in senior management. Without neglecting the calls of religious communities or organizations here and elsewhere, she became a specialist in Chinese culture. Around 2020, slowly, an incurable illness would take her, on December 4, 2025, to the eternal celebrations.



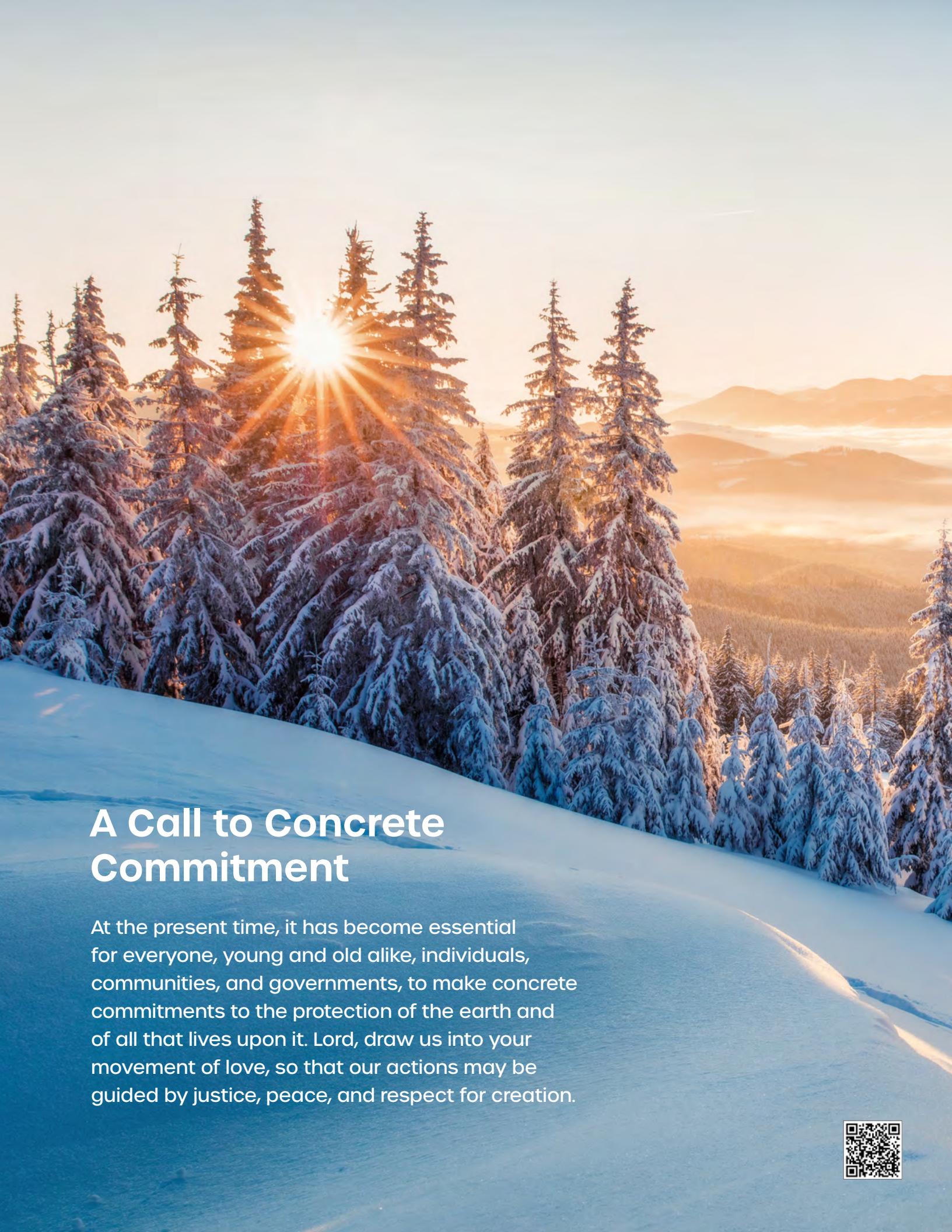
RITA PLASSE, M.I.C.
Sister Saint-Romuald
1930-2025
Acton Vale, Quebec

Come, I need you was the leitmotif of Rita's life. As a young girl, she enjoyed moments of prayer with her family. As a teenager, her involvement in Catholic Action opened up new horizons for her. In 1947, a retreat with the M.I.C. led her to our community, and on February 1, 1948, at the age of 17, she entered the novitiate. After completing her training, she studied music at the École Vincent-d'Indy and then at the Université de Montréal. In Japan, Madagascar, at the mother house, and in Granby, this art was her specialty. In 2019, due to illness, Rita was welcomed into our Health Services in Pont-Viau. She lived her last *Come, I need you* on July 20, 2025.



LUCY VIRGINIA HUNG, M.I.C.
Sister Lucy-Virginia
1935-2025
Taishan Kwangtung, China

The Christian and cosmopolitan environment in which Lucy Virginia grew up explains the depth of her relationship with God and with others. She had contact with our community on several occasions, finally joining in 1959 at the postulancy in Baguio, Philippines. She said: *The Lord wanted me to be a missionary from the beginning of my religious life.* In 1965, the Chinese Hospital in Montreal benefited from her dedication. She spent her last thirty years in Quebec, particularly serving in the Generalate and the Missionary Press. In May 2025, she moved to Villa Opale in Lachine, and it was there that, suddenly, on October 31, she joined the procession of saints.

A wide-angle photograph of a snowy mountain landscape. In the foreground, a large, snow-covered hillside slopes down. A dense forest of tall evergreen trees, heavily laden with snow, stands in the middle ground. The sun is low on the horizon, its bright rays breaking through the trees and casting a warm, golden glow over the scene. In the background, more snow-capped mountains are visible under a clear sky.

A Call to Concrete Commitment

At the present time, it has become essential for everyone, young and old alike, individuals, communities, and governments, to make concrete commitments to the protection of the earth and of all that lives upon it. Lord, draw us into your movement of love, so that our actions may be guided by justice, peace, and respect for creation.

