

MIC MISSION NEWS

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To sow seeds of joy and hope! — Since 1923

*100 Years
of an Undaunted Mission*



At the Heart of...
SOLIDARITY

**MISSIONARY PRAYER
INTENTIONS****JULY 2024****FOR THE PASTORAL CARE OF THE SICK.**

Let us pray that the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick grant the Lord's strength to those who receive it and to their loved ones, and that it may become for everyone an ever more visible sign of compassion and hope.

AUGUST 2024

FOR POLITICAL LEADERS. Let us pray that political leaders be at the service of their own people, working for integral human development and the common good, taking care of those who have lost their jobs and giving priority to the poor.

SEPTEMBER 2024

FOR THE CRY OF THE EARTH. Let us pray that each of us listen with his heart to the cry of the Earth and of the victims of environmental disasters and the climate crisis, making a personal commitment to care for the world he inhabits.

**Masses for readers' intentions
offered in the following countries:**

January: **Canada** • February: **Cuba**

March: **Philippines** • April: **Haiti**

May: **Canada** • June: **Bolivia**

July: **Malawi** and **Zambia**

August: **Hong Kong** and **Taiwan**

September: **Madagascar**

October: **Peru** • November: **Japan**

December: **Canada**

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A Grain in the Earth



By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.



No matter how small, every grain thrown into the earth produces a harvest. Multiplied, it becomes food, brings comfort and saves lives. However, there is a requirement to this production: in the earth, this grain must die... (cf. Jn 12:24).

Indeed, to speak of solidarity is to speak of the gift of self, of openness, of attention to others and to what is happening in our world. In fact, it's a call for a more equitable distribution of natural resources to all the peoples of the world.

This summer's issue explores solidarity, a call to generosity. It's true, we feel called upon from all sides to share what little riches we may have. There are so many countries where entire populations suffer from a lack of food, healthcare and decent housing due to wars or natural disasters. These situations call out to us, disrupting our daily lives and spurring us on to be generous, to rescue innocent victims and support all refugees or migrants displaced by these tragedies. Isn't Pope Francis right to advocate for global solidarity?

These pivotal moments become opportunities to grow and open up to others, calls to die to self, to selfishness, to be born into the gift of self, into love.

Moreover, as Emmanuel Bélanger reminds us, isn't solidarity the cornerstone of the Church's social doctrine, an invitation to recognize the dignity of the human person and the basis of all missionary action throughout the world through concrete commitments to the most disadvantaged?

Our faith tells us that, even after death, communion is established between the dead and the living. Sylvie Bessette gives us a glimpse of this, which you will be delighted to read.

In the Philippines, where typhoons, volcanic eruptions and floods are shaking the population, Sr Maricris Diuyan tells us about concrete gestures to rescue the people. People bravely roll up their sleeves to transport food and clothing to disaster victims. In Latin America, missionaries help the underprivileged to defend their rights against the better-off. In Vietnam, young M.I.C. members work in parishes with children and adults to give catechism lessons, because that knowledge of Christ brings comfort and helps people to open up to others.

All the texts in this issue call for happiness and openness, the guarantee of fulfillment after death to self. Isn't this one of the leitmotifs of our dear foundress Delia Tétreault who said: *Sow happiness by the handful, it is the bread that is most lacking on our poor earth.*

Take advantage of this beautiful season to sow your grain in the earth so that it may bear abundant fruit for those around you! Happy reading!

Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, m.i.c.

AT THE SOURCE OF M.I.C. HISTORY

THE PHILIPPINES

Excerpts from the DVD M.I.C., *The Philippines*, by Maria Anthea Raso, M.I.C.

Known as the “Pearl of the Orient Seas”, the Philippines is made up of 7641 islands (of which around 2000 are inhabited), shining like jewels in the sun. They are grouped into three main geographical zones: Luzon, Visayas and Mindanao. The Philippine Sea, to the east of the archipelago, is part of the Pacific Ocean.

The Philippines’ location in the Pacific Ring of Fire makes it vulnerable to earthquakes and volcanic eruptions. Its active and dormant volcanoes are spectacular phenomena. Its tropical climate brings recurrent typhoons and floods, causing immense loss of life and serious material damage.

In the 15th century, European royal powers, including Spain, subsidized exploration and colonization expeditions. Ferdinand Magellan, a Portuguese navigator working for the King of Spain, reached the islands in 1521. His arrival marked the introduction of Christianity to the Philippines. The Spanish influence had a profound effect on native culture, particularly in the fields of architecture, religion, art, music and literature.



Srs Marguerite Latour, Anna Girard and Joséphine Bolduc with Chinese students from Manila (1935).
Photo: M.I.C. Archives

More than three centuries later, in 1898, at the end of the Spanish-American War, Spain was defeated and ceded the Philippines to the United States, leading to 48 years of colonization. Just as the Philippines was making progress, the Second World War was declared and Japan became the occupier in 1941. Five years later, the United States granted full independence to the country, which became the Republic of the Philippines.

With a population of some 118 million and an average age of 24, the Philippines is the 13th most populous nation in the world. There are two official languages in the country: Filipino, the national language, and English. The Philippines is considered the most important Christian country in Asia.



Sr. Yvonne Routhier with patients at the Chinese General Hospital in Manila (1937).
Photo: M.I.C. Archives

M.I.C. in the Philippines

Chinese have long since settled along the country's coastal cities. In Manila, a neighborhood called Binondo Chinatown emerged.

In 1921, this ethnic group built the Chinese General Hospital. Having heard of the work of our Institute in China, Dr. Jose Teehankee asked the Archbishop of Manila, Michael O'Doherty, to send Sisters to work in this establishment and teach in the nursing school. Delia Tétréault accepted the request and sent five of them already working in China. They arrived on August 8 of the same year. Their knowledge of the language and culture facilitated their integration. As missionaries, they found ways to organize catechism classes for the patients. They held key positions in the hospital, which served Manila's Chinese population, which at the time numbered almost 40,000. Conflicting values put an end to their collaboration at the hospital and nursing school.

The Sisters also organized catechism classes at the Binondo church and, soon after, families requested the opening of a school. By 1935, enrolment was high for the lessons on Benavidez Street. The following year, plans were drawn up for the construction of a larger Anglo-Chinese establishment: the Immaculate-Conception Academy. Four years later, in 1939, the group moved to Tayuman, where the school remained open until the Japanese invasion of 1941 forced its closure.

World War II

During the Second World War, the twelve Tayuman Sisters were placed under house arrest. In 1944, three of them were first sent to Bilibid prison, then transferred to Fort Santiago in the Intramuros district. The others were held at the University of Santo Tomas camp, before later being taken to an internment camp in Los Baños, Laguna province.

In 1945, American paratroopers and Filipino guerilleros succeeded in defeating the Japanese army and freeing the prisoners. Our Sisters returned to their home in Tayuman, which they found in ruins.



Sr Melanie Delfin works with young people. - Photo: M.I.C.

The post-war period was difficult: one sister died and two returned to Canada. The other nine chose to stay and continue their mission in the Philippines. They agreed to work in a parish school, educating young Filipinos who were eager to learn. Some went to the parish of Galangin, in the Tondo district, to open a humble school in a former factory. Two years later, they built a larger one, which became Manila's Immaculate Conception Academy. The school offers a quality curriculum with the help of competent and dedicated Chinese and Filipino teachers.



Regional meeting of Sisters in Davao. – Photo: M.I.C.

In 1947, at the request of Bishop Maurice Michaud, P.M.É., a mission was opened in Mati for the Catholic education of children. The school was named the Academy of the Immaculate Heart of Mary.

In 1952, Bishop Clovis Thibault, P.M.É., called on the Sisters to take charge of the Our Lady of Good Counsel Hall center. The new building served as a residence for young female students from rural areas. It was also a retreat and training center for catechists. The Sisters' witness inspired some of them to get to know Delia Tétreault and become missionary nuns in their own right. A novitiate was opened in Baguio in 1955. Soon after, candidates from Asia and Africa joined them.

In 1964, the Department of Education carried out a school reform in favor of the Filipinization of schools. Our Sisters adapted and changed the name of the school to Immaculate Conception Academy.


To serve the needs of the Davao diocese, they accepted the direction of 2 parish schools and, for 15 years, collaborated with the PMÉ at the John XXIII Catechetical Center in Davao. The Sisters were committed to helping the less fortunate members of society. They set up the Sapang Palay Education and Training Center for the slum dwellers of Intramuros. At the Fatima Community Center, our Sisters set up an arts and crafts training program for unemployed young adults, helping them acquire skills in a variety of areas.

The Vatican II Council challenged us and invited us to renew our commitment to proclaiming the Gospel message in fidelity to the charism of our foundress.

What's Next ?

In the Philippines, we find many indigenous tribes, many of whom still live on the periphery of modern society, preserving their ancestral culture and traditions. We would like to highlight the important role our Sisters have played with the Mangyans, one of the ethnic groups living in the Eastern Mindoro region. They accompanied them in their efforts to protect their land, which was coveted by mining companies. After a long battle, the government awarded them certification of title to their ancestral domain.

Today, the M.I.C. in the Philippines continue their apostolic commitments in the archdioceses of Manila and Davao, and in the dioceses of Mati, Baguio and Malaybalay. The province has 69 Sisters and 9 local communities. The provincial team is based in Greenhills, the interprovincial English speaking novitiate in Baguio and the postulancy in Davao.

From its beginnings to the present day, the province has never ceased to grow and to pursue its mission of proclaiming the good news of God's love for his people. 

FRAGMENTS OF LIGHT



By Marie-Claude Barrière

Every year on December 10, International Human Rights Day, when our homes are lit up just a few days before Christmas, we are invited to share an even deeper light with our brothers and sisters in Christ: that of solidarity. How? By taking part in the Amnesty International Writing Marathon.

The *Write for Rights* campaign invites us to write letters or postcards for those whose most fundamental rights have been violated. Who are these people? Men and women from all countries and all walks of life, imprisoned or persecuted for their courage in denouncing the corruption of an autocratic regime, demanding freedom of the press or bearing witness to their opposition to the exploitation of natural resources on ancestral territories. And all of this quite peacefully, without ever resorting to violence.

What's extraordinary and moving about this worldwide surge of solidarity is the desire to bring a glimmer of hope to those who are suffering, to open windows. But, you might ask, how can we also reach their hearts, how can we restore a little of their lost dignity? Quite simply, with tender, gentle words, words that are free and authentic, that go far beyond conventional formulas in an attempt to bear witness to what binds us together against all odds: our common humanity.

For, as the English poet John Donne put it so well: *No man is an island, complete in himself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.* So when a *piece of the continent* is excluded, isolated or ostracized, it is up to those who still inhabit the mainland to reach out to it, to preserve its memory until it regains its place in the great human chain.

Letters and postcards sent to the four corners of the world serve to remind us that this *piece of the continent* is neither lost nor forgotten, that it is still part of us, that people are watching over it. That it cannot be humiliated, hurt or killed in total silence or complete indifference. That it remains alive and precious in the thoughts of all friends and supporters until its release. As if, with a warm voice, everyone were saying loud and clear: *I have not forgotten you. Fear not, you are not alone.*

However — and these questions are perfectly legitimate — does writing letters *really* set you free? Do they even reach these prisoners of conscience? Are they even read? Can a simple pencil miraculously turn into a small key to open a cell door?

The answer to all these questions is an enthusiastic yes! Because, according to Amnesty International, between 2002 and 2020, 127 out of 169 people have seen the light of day again, thanks to millions of anonymous contributors — a release rate of 75%. Nothing less! Lives have thus been saved discreetly, without fanfare, by the sheer weight of solidarity. This

is a far cry from the wishful thinking that might ease our consciences in the run-up to the holiday season. Writing has a unique power. Isn't it said that *the pen is mightier than the sword*?

Among the men and women released thanks to Amnesty International is Ibrahim Ezz El-Din, an architectural planning engineer and researcher with the Egyptian Commission for Rights and Freedoms (ECRF), who was freed on April 26, 2022 after 34 months of arbitrary detention for his human rights work. Here is an extract from the message he sent to the organization's volunteers to thank them for their support:

IN THE DARKEST MOMENTS
OF DESPAIR THAT I LIVED
INSIDE PRISON [...],
YOU WERE THE RAYS OF
SUN IN PITCH DARK.

[...] *Throughout the almost three years I spent in prison, I felt that every day I was losing a part of my soul and losing hope of returning to life again, to freedom. The only thing that enlightened my days*

and gave me hope was the news I was receiving that people still remembered me and demanded my freedom. In the darkest moments of despair that I lived inside prison [...], you were the rays of sun in pitch dark.

This testimony is enough to confound the most cynical who no longer believe in the power of numbers or solidarity, while rekindling the flame and strength of those who were already convinced. We can act. More to the point, we must act.

Who knows whether, in the darkest hours, by God's grace, these letters might literally become fragments of light? ☺

The Art of Bearing Together

By Anne-Marie Forest

For this illustration, I decided to focus on the house and the figures in the scene. During contemplation according to Saint Ignatius, we take the time to picture the place, to observe the characters, what they're doing, what's happening. Of course,

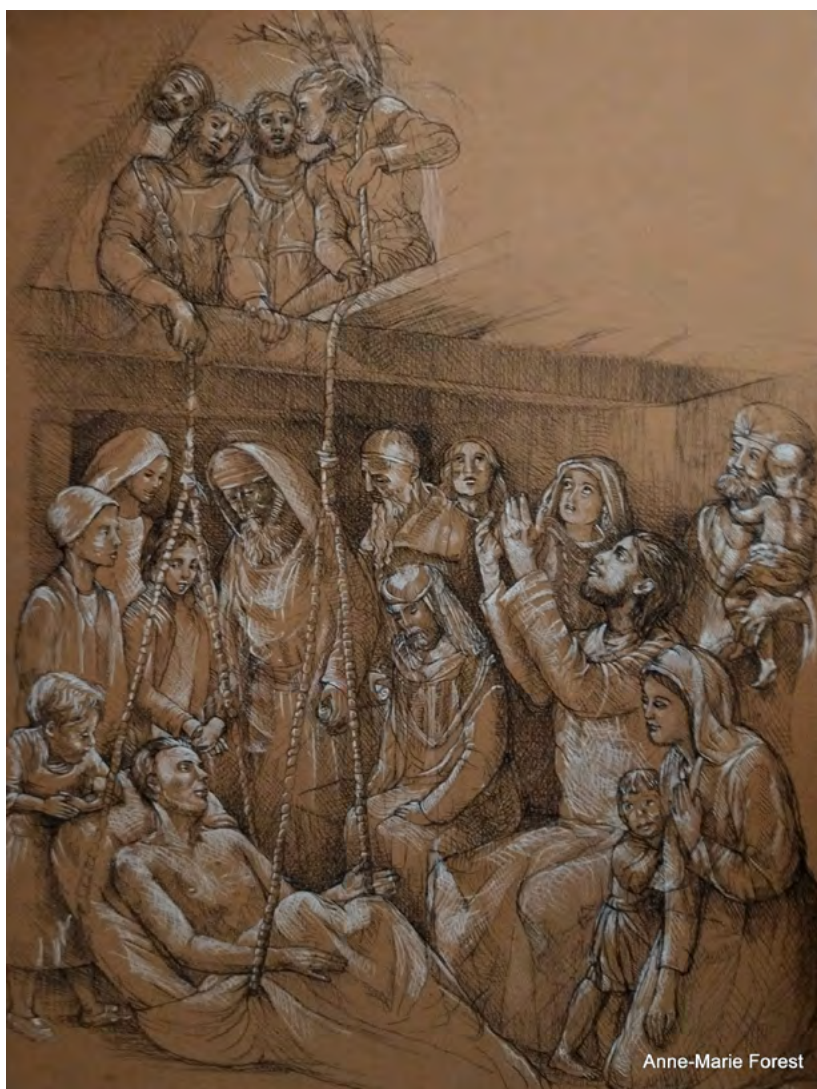
THEIR ACTION
EMANATES FROM
THEIR FAITH TO BRING
THE MAN TO JESUS.

someone else meditating on Mark's Gospel (2:1-12) might see it differently, depending on his life experience and what the Holy Spirit inspires in him. I've chosen to draw people of different ages, with different expressions, men and women, children and adults, even if they are not expressly named in the text.

The first thing that struck me in this passage was the phrase seeing their faith. It doesn't say *hearing* or *guessing* their faith, but *seeing* their faith. Jesus is a witness to it, because it is active. Through the gesture of the porters, he guesses the invisible, that is, their deep desire of healing for their paralyzed friend. Their action emanates from their faith, and these people go to great lengths to bring the man to Jesus. After this general overview, let's take a look at some of the protagonists.

Jesus

Jesus is amazed and welcomes them with outstretched arms in thanksgiving or as a gesture of welcome. He is still seated, having been surprised as he addressed the group.



The Paralytic, Drawing (black stone) by Anne-Marie Forest.

The Four Porters

These men have just made an effort to get the paralyzed man's stretcher safely into the house. They are happy and, at the same time, on alert, worried. The miracle has not yet happened, but they are in the presence of Jesus. By painting them as young adults, I wanted to signify that they were capable of lifting such a load, and that they showed the boldness and determination of their age. Entering through the roof is in itself an act of intrusion that gives precedence to the person over the material. They are a group, they are Church, they are in solidarity, and they do not demand attention for themselves, but for someone else, someone in need. Like paramedics, they are in a state of emergency.

The Paralyzed Man

As for the paralyzed man, he is passive, abandoned, unresisting, his gaze turned towards the woman who performs a gesture of compassion for him, no doubt happy to have finally been laid on the ground. We don't know whether he's been in this state for a long time or whether it has just happened.

The Woman on her Knees

She seems moved by the paralyzed man as she puts her hand to her heart. (This could be Mary, witnessing the actions of her Son, and interceding with us.) She is addressing the sick man and has bent down to his level. The child clinging to her dress has been startled by the men lowering another from the ceiling. He asks himself questions, a little frightened by what he does not understand.

Young People Behind the Paralyzed Man

As I drew a little girl, I imagined it was her father she had come to cuddle. Despite the crowds, she has managed to sneak up on him. She is worried and curious about what will happen to him. The teenagers in the background are also waiting, both shy and reserved. They are not directly involved, but witnesses to the actions and words of the adults.


The Pharisees

These men are somewhat in the shadows, unlike Jesus, who appears in the light. Their facial expressions are uncertain: they are both surprised and a little scandalized by the impertinence of the porters, wondering what will happen next while scrutinizing the sick man. One of them is still in a sitting position. Some have a small scroll in their hand: they are the law!

The Father and his Baby

They stand behind Jesus, the father watching the four bearers. He is carrying a child, perhaps with the idea of presenting him to the Lord. The baby clings to his neck, not wanting to look or be seen by a crowd he does not know.

After looking at a number of characters, let's return to the big picture.

The house where the scene takes place is not a synagogue, but a place of intimacy. A place of brotherhood, closeness and family. The people we love or have met likewise inhabit our inner space, our private territory, our memories, our experiences. 

Here are some of the questions this meditation raises for me:

- *In my daily prayer, do I intercede for people in pain, near or far?*
- *How do I welcome those who force their way through my door, who demand my attention?*
- *Do I see and marvel at people's faith?*
- *What do I or others need to be healed from?*

Solidarity as a Principle of Social Life

Photo: Pexels – jibarofoto, 2014274.

By Emmanuel Bélanger

To speak of solidarity as a Catholic, we must first understand that it is an important part of the Church's social doctrine. It is one of its four fundamental principles, the cornerstone of which is the dignity of the human person, upon which rest the three others that form its backbone: the common good, subsidiarity and solidarity.

I hope that this reflection will be an opportunity for the reader to delve into the *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* and bring out from its treasure both the new and the old (Mt 13:52).

We must turn to the Holy Spirit to help us face the challenges of life in society. The Christian is not *of the world*, but is called to work *in the world* (Jn 15:19). He must therefore transform it as if it were fermenting. Indeed, *the principles of social doctrine, in their entirety, constitute that primary articulation of the truth of society by which every conscience is challenged and invited to*

interact with every other conscience in truth, in responsibility shared fully with all people and also regarding all people (Compendium, 163).

The principle of solidarity seeks to achieve a profound unity between men and peoples. Today, more than ever before in human history, it is easy to forge links between people who are physically far apart. This interdependence made possible by globalization must also be accompanied by an ethical and social commitment to reduce disparities and open up channels of charity throughout the world

For the Church's social doctrine, this can only be achieved if solidarity is understood as a principle that rules institutions, so that the sinful structures that govern relations between men and peoples are transformed into structures of solidarity in which the Golden Rule is fulfilled: *You shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Mt 22:39).

Solidarity can be embodied in a monetary donation to a faraway land, but it is even more perfect when it is embodied in our fellow man or woman, the one we come into contact with, the one we get to know and who, here and now, needs us to recognize his or her infinite value and the dignity of his or her person.

The principle of social solidarity must also be anchored in the principles of the common good and subsidiarity, where attention to others leaves room for their dignity, initiative and participation in society. Christian solidarity is not paternalistic.

What's more, it cannot be understood as a mawkish feeling of condescension towards one's neighbor. It is also a moral virtue, that is, a stable force of will that enables us to give ourselves completely and serve our neighbor as another Christ, rather than seeking to profit from him or her and treat him or her as a commodity.

[JESUS], A JEW RAISED IN THE TRADITION OF THE ANCIENTS AND A NEW MAN, WAS IN SOLIDARITY WITH WOUNDED HUMAN NATURE, RIGHT UP TO HIS DEATH ON THE CROSS.

If this principle unfolds horizontally in the here and now of Christians, it also requires cultivating an awareness of the generational debt they owe to their predecessors, who built the world and the society in which they live. This is the intergenerational social cement that prevents the younger generations from falling into contempt, and the older generations from falling into cynicism.

Finally, it is in Jesus of Nazareth that the pinnacle of solidarity is lived out. He, a Jew raised in the tradition of the ancients and a New Man, was in solidarity with wounded human nature, right up to his death on the



Santa Cruz – Cross from the Tree of Life in the ancient Basilica of San Clemente, Rome. – Photo: Emmanuel Bélanger

cross (Phil 2:8). It is in the wake of this new humanity in Christ that our being takes on the renewed dignity that enables us to live Christian solidarity in a radical way.

Pope John Paul II sums it up well in this passage from his December 30, 1987 encyclical:

In the light of faith, solidarity seeks to go beyond itself, to take on the specifically Christian dimension of total gratuity, forgiveness and reconciliation. One's neighbor is then not only a human being with his or her own rights and a fundamental equality with everyone else, but becomes the living image of God the Father, redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ and placed under the permanent action of the Holy Spirit. One's neighbor must therefore be loved, even if an enemy, with the same love with which the Lord loves him or her; and for that person's sake one must be ready for sacrifice, even the ultimate one: to lay down one's life for the brethren (cf. 1 Jn 3:16) [Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 40].

At the Heart of SOLIDARITY



Help for typhoon victims. – Photo: M.I.C.

By Maricris B. Diuyan, M.I.C.

Times of crisis are turning points in people's lives, both personal and social. A person may find in it an opportunity to grow and succeed, but the opposite is also true: the situation can lead to regression and frustration. Whatever the case, a crisis is a traumatic and stressful experience, and it takes a helping hand to cope and survive. Disruptions such as pandemics or natural calamities are disastrous for most of us, but life goes on, and we must learn to be steadfast and resilient.

Bayanihan Spirit

This type of upheaval is nothing new for the Filipinos, as the archipelago straddles a typhoon belt that brings a number of cyclonic storms every year. In times of disaster, the *bayanihan* spirit is deeply felt by individuals and groups who come together to lend a helping hand. The word *bayanihan* comes from *bayan*, meaning "city or community". It is closely related to another word, *damayan*, which designates the act of compassion toward others. Thus, *bayanihan* can be described as a typically Filipino compassionate solidarity.

This solidarity is expressed in many ways: it may involve organizing donation drives, repacking basic necessities or food, or even risking one's own life to save that of others. Giving help or assistance without expecting anything in return, even if the other person is a stranger, is a distinctive feature of Filipino culture.

It's worth noting that, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the *bayanihan* spirit was present in many forms. The epidemic left most of us vulnerable, but individuals and communities mobilized to improve the lives of others. Our schools, for example, faced many challenges in managing distance learning courses where flexibility, creativity and resilience were at stake.



Working with parishes to help people. - Photo: M.I.C.

At the Immaculate Heart of Mary Academy (IHMA), located in the southern Philippines, we faced these same difficulties in operating safely, as far as possible in the context of a rapidly evolving and unpredictable pandemic. In such circumstances, the united staff of the IHMA, led by the MIC Sisters, were committed to maintaining the school's level of efficiency and morale. The momentum kept the school community motivated with the inspiring idea that no one would be left behind.

We care as one

This led to the creation of the slogan *We care as one*, which appears on the IHMA Facebook page. All employees were assured that there would be no redundancies and that their salaries would be paid regularly. On the other hand, all members of the school, especially the teachers, did their best to give online or modular distance courses.

The canteen staff, who was the most affected among the laity, found creative ways of distributing snacks through online purchases and delivering them to students' homes. The Sisters also provided invaluable assistance to their neighbors. During lockdowns, they reached out to others, especially those who had lost their jobs, including public transport drivers and conductors. They then launched a project to collect goods and food, which were distributed to those in need.

In addition, typhoons and floods have not spared Mindanao (in the south of the Philippines), greatly affecting neighboring provinces during the pandemic period. When these natural disasters occur, when everyone is affected, Filipinos are spontaneously ready to help and give whatever they can. For their part, the MIC Sisters collected goods and foodstuffs which were transported throughout the diocese of Mati for the survivors and victims of this tragedy.

M.I.C. solidarity

In early 2024, uninterrupted torrential rains and massive flooding washed away several houses and triggered destructive landslides that led to the closure of stretches of road and the evacuation of several villages in Davao Oriental. This left most commuters and motorists stranded. The landslides rendered the roads impassable, isolating some communities in the city and in the center of the province, and causing the loss of farms for a large number of farmers and their families. The local government, through its engineering department, has created a temporary route, but it is still risky to use it.

This crisis situation led the MIC Sisters in Mati to respond to the immediate needs of the affected members of the population. They were helped by the ICA Mission (Immaculate Conception Academy), through Sisters Irene Ferrer and Violeta Tutanés in Greenhills (Metro Manila).

The Mission office sent boxes of food and toiletries. Likewise, Sr Vilma Masinda sought the support of some former student friends, also in Manila. Thanks to this initiative, cash donations were received, a good portion of which was sent to the Social Action Center of the Diocese of Mati (Davao Oriental).

Another portion was used to buy bags of rice for the affected farmers and their families. As the main roads leading to the flooded areas were still difficult to access, the MIC Sisters passed relief goods along local roads. At present, some affected residents, especially farmers in Davao Oriental, are still struggling to recover from the losses and damage to their farms, but they never lose hope, believing that they can overcome all hardships. They thank God and the MIC Sisters who generously help them and remain constantly with them in these moments of crisis. ☺

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Living Among the Excluded

The way we help people in need has evolved greatly over the centuries. Initially, this help was motivated by the duty of Christian charity. For a few decades now, the support offered has aimed to include people in need, with a view to uplifting them while ensuring that their dignity is respected.

By Maurice Demers

Missionary nuns have been at the forefront of this transformation. Indeed, the Latin American Church underwent major changes in the twentieth century. Following Vatican II, the Latin American bishops met in Medellín in 1968. At the end of this Episcopal Council, they agreed that the Church would, above all, work on behalf of the most disadvantaged. Thus was born *the preferential option for the poor*.

Sister Murielle Dubé, of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, remembers how this call transformed her missionary work: *I was very influenced by Medellín [...] As Missionary of the Immaculate Conception, I can say that we lived this call to reach out to the poor with intensity*¹.

This is how the missionaries became close to popular groups, embracing their social struggles and bearing witness to their experiences. They linked up with the people to demand respect for their rights and ensure social justice. In the pages of The MIC Mission News



Sr Agnès Bouchard receives a gold nugget for her solidarity with the miners. Photo: M.I.C.


magazine, we read: *Increasingly aware that evangelization cannot take place outside the social reality at the heart of the mines, all their pastoral, catechetical and social action now revolves around this theme: evangelization and liberation*².

Some missionary nuns have chosen to work in the poorest sectors. For example, Sister Agnès Bouchard, M.I.C., who worked in Peru in the 1970s, recounts how the Sisters in her community refused to set up a private school, opting instead to work in rural areas in poor, marginalized communities³.

Working alongside an impoverished population led them to question their privileged living conditions (in comparison with the mission country). Sister Suzanne Robert, from the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, gives a concrete example of this reflection:

We had to rethink [...] our place of residence because it was beautiful, it was big, it could have been legitimate, but there were very few of us. So, to be on the same level as the others, we decided at some point to sell the house and move to a smaller place, closer to people⁴.

This enabled them to share in the daily lives of those they were helping.

The preferential option for the poor inspired nuns in mission to support people in need. They helped them to defend their rights and worked to provide better living conditions for the population, with the aim of fostering the emergence of greater social justice. Decidedly, these women have been at the heart of SOLIDARITY. 

¹ Maurice Demers interview with Murielle Dubé on January 26, 2018.

² Anita Perron, M.I.C. *Twenty years of history M.I.C in Bolivia*, The Mission News, Anniversary Edition, n° 3, 1977, p. 16.

³ *Engagement, résistance et foi: les missionnaires québécois en Amérique latine*, documentary by Maurice Demers produced by Stéphanie Lanthier, 2020, 20 min. This video can be found at www.missionnairesquebecois.ca.

⁴ Maurice Demers interview with Suzanne Robert on June 27, 2017.



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Great Solidarity

Michelangelo's Creation of Adam. – Photo: Shutterstock

Talking about solidarity calls for an open heart, attention to others and availability. Indeed, solidarity invites us to forget ourselves in order to be close to and compassionate towards others. It's not always easy, it's a practice that takes time.

By Marie-Paule Sanfaçon, M.I.C.

When I was very young, my mother used to say to me: *Look after your little sisters! I have a lot to do with a family of nine children.* She didn't have much time to pamper herself. That's how I learned to open up to others. Later, the scouting movement taught me to do at least one good deed every day toward my neighbor. These gestures of solicitude learnt at an early age leave their mark, teaching one to pay attention to others and, little by little, becoming second nature, an awakening to what is going on around one's self and in the world.

Social Events Challenge

With modern means of communication, we quickly realize that our world is a *global village*, as the Canadian philosopher Marshall McLuhan so aptly put it. In the digital age, no one can think that they are alone in the world. All events affect us, from north to south, east to west. With the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, we are affected one way or another. Floods, forest fires, volcanic



From left to right: Madeleine, Angéline and Claire Sanfaçon. – Photo: M.-P. Sanfaçon

eruptions, earthquakes — all these scourges destabilize and afflict us. Nowadays, we cannot remain indifferent to what is happening on our planet, but we must not wait for major disasters to get involved and help others: they are hoping for a soothing word, a gesture of friendship or a helping hand, depending on the circumstances. My solidarity will certainly be welcome. The person who receives feels valued and loved, and the other, who gives freely with love, discovers the depths of his personality, which is tenderness, solicitude and greatness of spirit.

No Man is an Island

How right the English poet John Donne was when he wrote, in 1624, that *no man is an island!* These words still cause us to reflect today on the meaning and vocation of the human person. Can we be totally self-sufficient? From birth to death, we depend on each other, which is why we need to create bonds of solidarity.

Perhaps you have seen the film *Castaway* starring Tom Hanks. It tells the story of a FedEx employee who is stranded on a desert island after a plane crash.



Computer graphics: Thérèse Lortie, M.I.C.

For years, he struggles to survive. A ball found in the debris of the crash becomes a touching imaginary friend, a fictitious presence who will save his life and help him accomplish his mission. At Creation, God said: *It is not good for man to be alone...* We are beings of connection, of solidarity, made to love, hence the importance for each and every one of us to take an interest in the other.

Founders of Communities

Whether Francis of Assisi, Ignatius of Loyola, Marguerite Bourgeoys or Delia Tétreault, each of them did not want to live out his charism in isolation. No, because sharing, the union of hearts, strengthens a person's inspiration. So, solidarity is a feeling that brings us closer to God. Most of the great saints did not want to live their love of God alone. They all wanted to join with disciples. Didn't Jesus himself choose apostles to carry out his mission on earth? A community is a theological place where each member becomes responsible for fidelity to the Gospel and the growth of others. A place where individualism is banished, a place that fosters communion of minds and hearts and brings us closer to God.

THE GREATEST SOLIDARITY
WITH HUMANITY IMAGINABLE
IS REALIZED IN THE PERSON
OF CHRIST.

Great Solidarity

From Creation to the present day, God has cared for the humans and wanted them to be happy. As we read through the Scriptures, we see a God who is attentive to what is happening down here. In His great solicitude, He sees the misery of His people reduced to slavery and chooses Moses to deliver them. He never abandons them and, in His wisdom, He sends the prophets to remind them of the right path. But the greatest solidarity with humanity imaginable is realized in the person of Christ. St. Paul understood this well when he wrote: *He who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.* What great solidarity! God becomes one of us to save us. Is he not Emmanuel, *God with us*? Jesus, the Christ, is the perfect expression of His presence in solidarity in the midst of humanity. *I will be your God, and you will be my people.* God is more than solidarity, He becomes one of us. God is COMMUNION. ☺

This issue of The MIC Mission News magazine focuses on the concept of solidarity. For my part, I would like to touch upon another concept that is often overlooked, but which lies at the heart of our faith and is its most beautiful expression: THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.



SOLIDARITY IN OUR FAITH

By Sylvie Bessette

When we recite the *Apostles Creed*, we say: *I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.* What can we learn from this article of the Credo?

The Church teaches us that the call to communion in Christ is universal, reaching out to all believers, living and dead alike. Those who have believed in Christ and

tried to live by his teachings (for over two thousand years!) have now returned to the home Jesus prepared for them with his Father. They can now pray for us who are on our journey on earth, hoping for God.

This communion in Christ is not a one-way street. So when we turn to a family member who has left us for advice, strength, courage and love, as we did when they were alive, we remain in close union with him.

In his book *Les mots de la religion chrétienne*, author Xavier Renard teaches us that *the communion of saints is an article of faith that recognizes, in God, a union of living and dead believers; it implies that the prayers and merits of some can benefit others*. Isn't this a fine illustration of the word solidarity?

During his pontificate, Pope Paul VI wrote these magnificent words in his Credo of the People of God:

We believe in the communion of all the faithful of Christ, those who are pilgrims on earth, the dead who are attaining their purification, and the blessed in heaven, all together forming one Church; and we believe that in this communion the merciful love of God and His saints is ever listening to our prayers.

SOLIDARITY APPLIES NOT ONLY TO MATERIAL GOODS , BUT ALSO TO PSYCHOLOGICAL OR SPIRITUAL NEEDS.

In the concept of the communion of saints, we find a principle of reciprocity between living and dead believers. Those who have gone before us can pray for us, we can pray to them, and we can pray for them too.

If we apply this principle of faith to everyday life, it teaches us a difficult virtue: humility. Indeed, to be in solidarity, we have to accept that our generosity is not

a one-way street: one day, we lend a hand to someone in need, and the next day, it may be our turn to ask for help. Christian solidarity comes from the heart, and does not imply a sense of superiority or invincibility. It implies remaining available to whoever needs our presence, our action, our love.

This is an essential facet of solidarity. The very word implies an exchange, not a one-way, top-down action. Solidarity applies not only to material goods (help for disaster victims, earthquake or tsunami victims, the less fortunate, people struggling with addiction...), but also to psychological or spiritual needs.

Many years ago, I suffered from severe depression, and I could not have managed on my own or with one-time treatments. My family supported me on this long road to recovery. I had always presented myself as a strong, reliable mother, always ready to help my children, but I found myself on the other side of the mirror, depending on others. They responded to my distress. It was an extraordinary experience of solidarity and reciprocity. I was not as strong as I used to be, but they loved me all the same.

Compassion, charity, altruism, openness to others, civic-mindedness... All these words can evoke the concept of solidarity. It is up to each of us to find our own resonance with it and live it to the fullest. 🍷



Live with Love and Bear Witness with Joy

By Pham Thi Dieu Hien, M.I.C.

Delia Tétréault, our venerable foundress, once wrote these words:

Our Lord gave his apostles the task of going out to evangelize only after exhorting them to love one another. This means that, if they did not love one another, their work would be sterile.

Her words remind us that love is the greatest commandment Jesus wants us to live. As nuns, our core values are centered on Jesus and rooted in love and charity. We follow the examples of his life and teachings by showing mutual support and concern for one another.

Community life isn't just about living under the same roof. It is about sharing responsibilities, carrying them out with joy, love and care for one another. As Daughters of Thanksgiving, we learn from Mother Delia to do everything with love and joy. We share our talents and resources. We relax together. Different and from diverse backgrounds, we have to live in the same community.

We are all invited to learn from our Lord how to wash each other's feet and live in love. Humility, openness and understanding are essential. We learn to be open to mutual love and a sense of participation in order to live in a strong and healthy community. We are called to be leaders and members of service, in the image of the Lord who came to serve and not to be served, so we must love and care for one another.



Neighborhood friendships. – Photo: M.I.C.

Our life is not just between us. It is important to participate in the Church's mission. We collaborate with the parish priest and his assistants. We give communion at Mass. We teach catechism and English in parishes and in the diocese. We get to know parishioners by



The joy of living together. – Photo: M.I.C.

visiting them and praying with them. We also support members of a pro-life group and take part in their activities. We share goods with our neighbors and give gifts to their children on special occasions.

We find ways to ensure the presence of M.I.C. among young people, to encourage vocations. We get involved in their activities. We also network with other religious congregations in different dioceses. As our four youngest sisters attend different schools and have the advantage of speaking English as a second language, we give English classes and share our life experiences.

We invite young women and single professionals to our community meetings and parties. If they wish to become candidates, we offer them a period of experience in community life and apostolic commitment. We teach them English to prepare them for their novitiate in the Philippines. We offer them attention and support while they stay with us to discern their own vocation.

To get closer to nature and take care of the environment, we grow a few plants and vegetables in our small perimeter. The plants decorate our chapel and house, and we harvest the vegetables for our meals. Their care and growth give us joy and vitality. Wherever possible, we use as little plastic as possible, recycling and disposing of waste. We save water and electricity. We also celebrate Earth Hour every Saturday evening. On this occasion, we turn off all the lights and recite the rosary as we walk through our little garden. Our

prayer intention is most often for the well-being of Mother Earth, our common home.

Our daily Eucharist and prayer life enrich us spiritually. Our sharing of our personal experience of God enables us to touch each other's lives. Each time we evaluate our life and mission, we are grateful for the presence of others in the community, as each brings joy and life. The family spirit has manifested itself in the love, care, openness and generosity among us.

IT IS A PERSONAL DECISION TO LIVE OUR LIVES IN GRATITUDE AND SELF-GIVING.

Although there are limits in each of us, we do our best to grow together and make our lives happy and meaningful. We appreciate the community's reminders and corrections because they help us understand each other better and become better people. We see God in our midst. We want to maintain our joyful spirit in life and service, continue to build a welcoming community, grow together in all aspects of life and carry out our apostolate with generosity.

To conclude, I'd like to quote Sister Josephine Leal, our beloved provincial superior of the province of St. Joseph of the Philippines, who wrote to our small community in Vietnam. I find it interesting to reflect on what she evokes:

Community life is life-giving when we all invest ourselves in it and don't wait for others to do the same. It is a personal decision to live our lives in gratitude and self-giving. So I hope you will adopt this attitude to build a better community life. We can be unhappy in life if we are content to wait for others to serve us. It is our life and our commitment to give ourselves to God and to others. May you stay healthy and radiate this joy and thanksgiving every day!

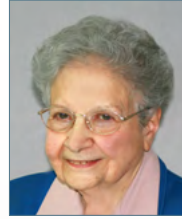
We humbly ask our foundress Delia and Mary to intercede for us as we carry out God's will in a spirit of love, joy and thanksgiving. 🌿

With You, O Lord



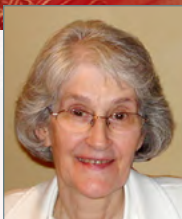
GILBERTE PERRAS, M.I.C.
Sister Aimée-de-Jésus
1927-2024
Sainte-Catherine-d'Alexandrie,
Quebec

To an aunt who was talking to her about the future, 12-year-old Gilberte declared: *I'll never be a nun.* However, on August 8, 1945, she entered the M.I.C. novitiate in Pont-Viau. 2 years earlier, when she was 16, the M.I.C.'s visit to her school had been decisive. In 1963, she left for the new mission in Ancud, Chile. By 1968, her pastoral zeal was so extraordinary that she promoted self-development with the help of Caritas Chile and Caritas Ancud. Farmers and fishermen were the beneficiaries. Her kindness, joy and dedication engendered an atmosphere of mutual community support. Serene, Gilberte returned home for good in 2005 and benefited from the MIC Health Services in 2008. On January 4, 2024, she entered the eternal Feast of Harvest.



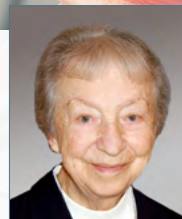
MARIA-TERESA-DE-JESUS TRUJILLO, M.I.C.
Sister Maria-Teresa-de-Jésus
1924-2024
Versailles, Matanzas, Cuba

Sister Maria-Teresa was the first Cuban national to enter the Pont-Viau novitiate on January 22, 1952. No sooner had she returned to her country in 1957 than a government requirement forced her to leave in 1959. *That was my flight to Egypt,* she said. An innate catechist and a tender presence with the most disadvantaged characterized her apostolic insertions. In 1969, in Champerico, Guatemala, she was well received by the port company, and worked with her companions to meet many social and religious challenges. When she returned to Quebec in 1982, her same charisma was on display as she worked with immigrants. No doubt the House of the Father, which welcomed her on January 14, 2024, will have celebrated her centenary on the following March 4.



LOUISE GAUVIN, M.I.C.
Sister Louise-du-Rosaire
1936-2024
Montreal, Quebec

After reflecting long and hard on a possible call to religious life, Louise realized this was her path. On August 8, 1957, she said yes to the Lord and entered the novitiate. As she admits, her deeply Christian parents were implicitly complicit in her decision. With her diploma in hand, she taught in Haiti from 1968 to 1983. On her return to Quebec, she worked for the Missionary Press, facilitated activities in schools and visited the elderly and/or the suffering. As illness brought her closer to her final call, which she received on January 24, 2024, Sister Louise reread her life and saw in it the loving fidelity of Jesus. She wrote: *MAGNIFICAT! How good you are, Lord Jesus.*



GERMAINE PÉRUSSE, M.I.C.
Sister Germaine-du-Sacré-Cœur
1930-2024
Deschailions, Quebec

Germaine entered the novitiate on August 8, 1952, in good health and with a wealth of varied studies. In Africa, from 1959 to 2009, she was a well-loved educator who was very close to her students. This experience proved to be a good introduction to the culture of that continent, a valuable learning experience when she served as director of the first novitiate in Chipata, Zambia, in 1987. Humility, availability and deep faith punctuated all her apostolic and community commitments. Back in Quebec, her accounting skills were required by the Missionary Press, and Escale Myriam appreciated her as superior. Then it was her turn to receive health care until her well-deserved rest in the House of the Father on January 31, 2024.



All-powerful God,
you are present in the whole universe
and in the smallest of your creatures.
You embrace with your tenderness all that exists.
Pour out upon us the power of your love,
that we may protect life and beauty.
Teach us to discover the worth of each thing,
to be filled with awe and contemplation,
to recognize that we are profoundly united with every creature
as we journey towards your infinite light.
Encourage us, we pray, in our struggle for justice, love and peace.
Amen

