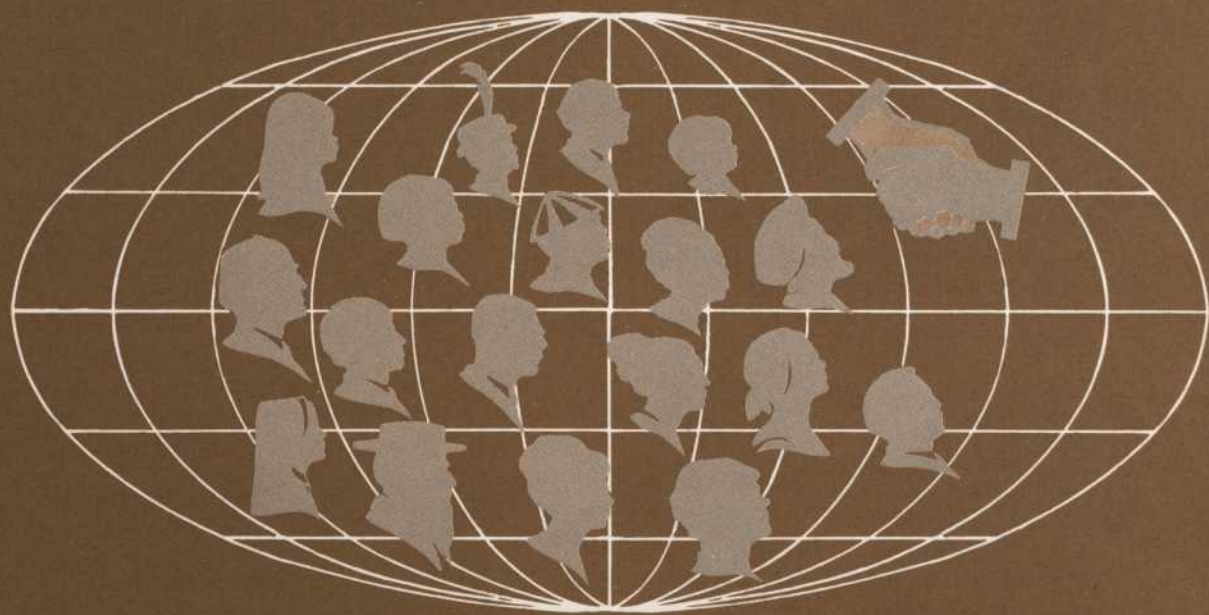


Precursor

75th Anniversary Issue

No. 4 1977



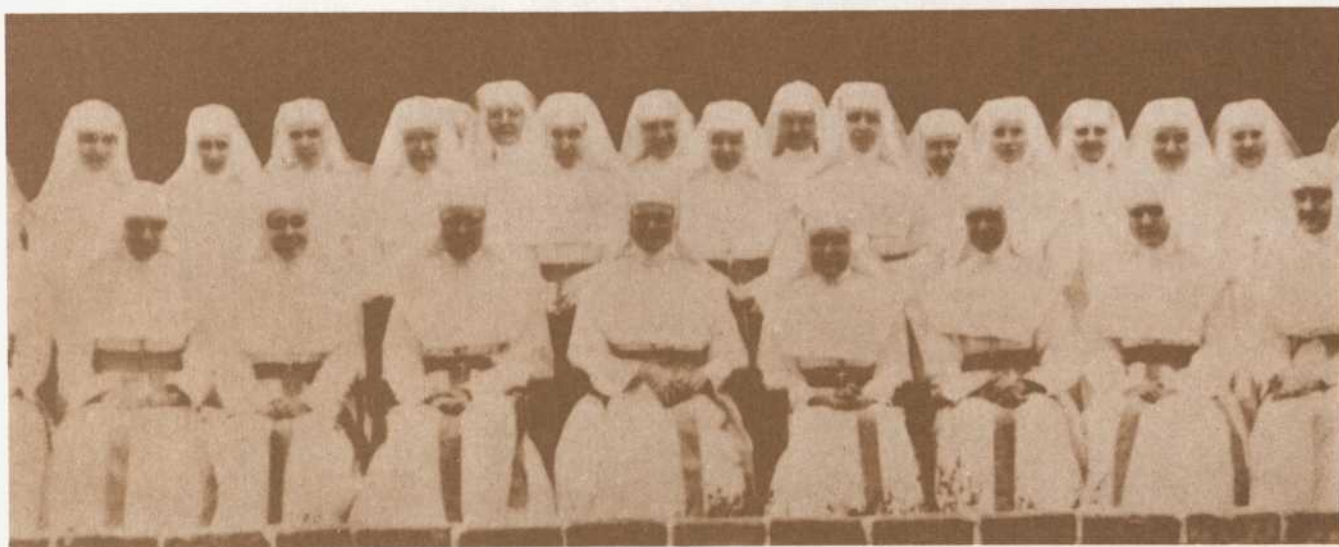
The M.I.C's in Africa and Madagascar

1948



1977

The M.I.C.'s in Africa: Historical Sketch



A family souvenir taken some twenty years ago on the occasion of gathering of M.I.C.'s from the different missions in Africa.

In response to the call of the Church through Msgr. J.M. St-Denis, W.F., the missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception settle on the African continent on May 19, 1948. To this first foundation of Katete, eight other mission stations are added, six of which are still under our direction in Malawi. On July 27, 1954, Msgr. Courtemanche, W.F. sees his desire fulfilled upon the arrival of the first M.I.C. team at Fort Jameson, (Zambia). The Sisters are welcomed successively in Kanyanga, 1957; Nyimba, 1958 and Chikungu, 1962. The mission station of Nyimba is now closed but the M.I.C.'s are still in three Zambian centers.

A Precise Objective

Why have these 122 M.I.C. missionaries left Canada to come one after another for almost thirty years to Nyassa and North Rhodesia, now called Malawi and Zambia?

In the first place, to help develop, in the words of Booker T. Washington, the potentials of the African woman, "her hands, her mind and heart."

In her heart — at the outset — the M.I.C. Sisters have implanted the seed of Christianity that germinated or will germinate at the time chosen by the Spirit always at work in the heart of each being. Her mind, they nourished with a knowledge that would permit her to find a place in the heart of this society of

which, as a woman and as a guardian of traditions, she becomes the promoter of the present evolution. Finally, the M.I.C. Sisters taught this African woman with such skillful hands, techniques and new practical sciences compatible with her feminine status.

If elevation of the status of womanhood proved to be the first objective of the missionary work of the M.I.C.'s in Africa, it was not, however, their only sector of activity. Education of the youth at all levels; more diversified health services; family, school and parish pastoral; catechetical instruction and evangelization through mass media have been the chosen means of their apostolate among the Africans for nearly thirty years.

Signs of Hope

While looking back on what has been since 1948, can the M.I.C.'s disclose some positive results of their evangelizing activity in Malawi as in Zambia?

Some concrete examples gleaned here and there enable one to answer affirmatively. Alex Chima, a former student, has entered the priesthood. Bernard Harawa has occupied the post of secretary general in education for Catholic schools and gives a remarkable Christian witnessing. Among the girls, the list will evidently be long. It would be emphasized that a good number opted for the religious life. One of them, Felicita Phulira from Katete is the incumbent Abbess of the Clarist Sisters. On the professional level, a student of the Secondary School of Karonga, Maria Theresa Mbisa is a physician specialized in pathology. There is a number of young wives and mothers who are successful in life. They are especially the hope of the local Church that is counting on them to exercise true leadership in the formation of an adult and responsible Church.

This extensive task, accomplished in three decades, has been made possible through

constant efforts of inculturation as for example, study of the language. Thanks to an M.I.C., Marie Marthe Therrien, who teaches Tumbuka, the language spoken in Malawi, to the arriving missionaries. Thanks also to the dedication of each Sister, not only in her specialized field but also in all spheres of organization and dealings with persons or things. Thanks especially to a life given in totality and sustained by prayers, team spirit and joy. Homage goes to the M.I.C. auxiliary team; the constant collaboration of this team with the religious and civil authorities, with the benefactors in order to use to the maximum the fruits of their generosity, seems to be an undisputable factor to the progress and success of the missionary work of the M.I.C.'s in Malawi and in Zambia.

It is in missionary thanksgiving that the daughters of Délia Tétreault — 24 in Zambia and 57 in Malawi — have worked and are still working on the African soil, preparing the way for those who will take over. Faithful to their commitment, they keep alive their "steadfast concern to go to the 'farthest'".

How to Evangelize

1 - By Direct Transmission of the Message

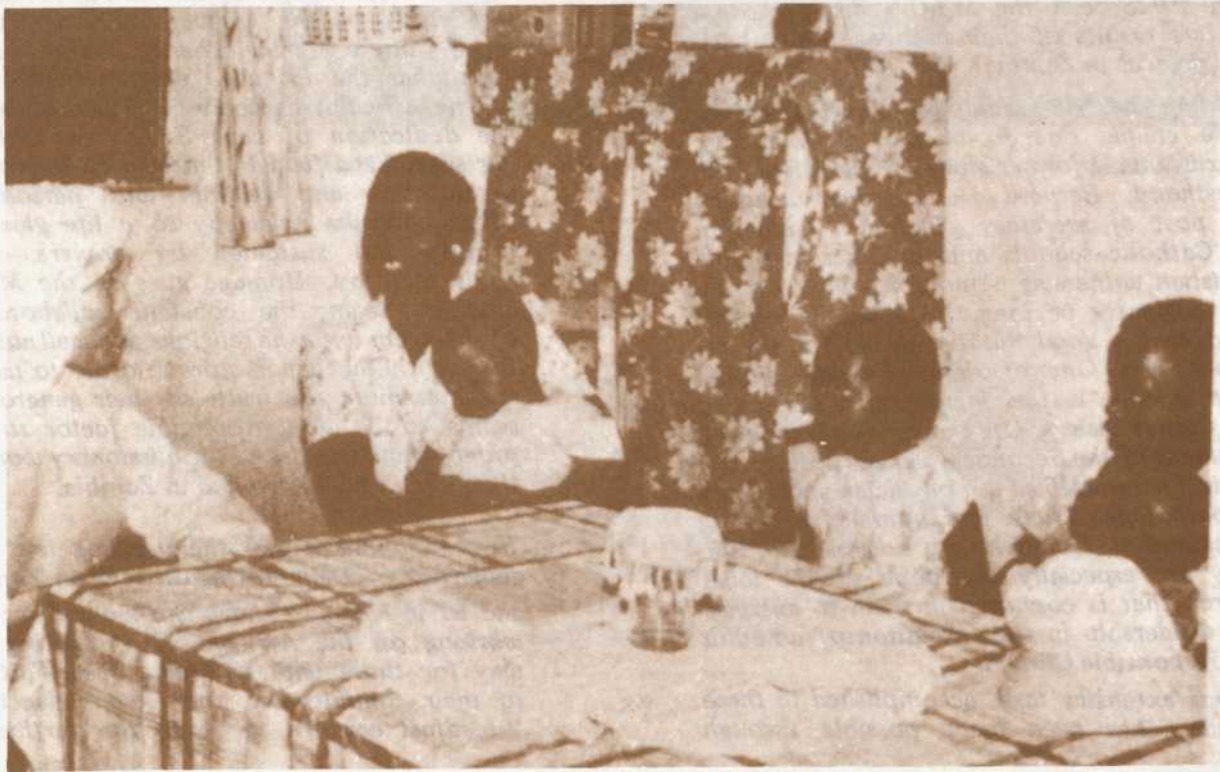
In his recent apostolic exhortation, "Evangelii Nuntiandi", Paul VI indicates the privileged means of communicating the Gospel message. Of these means he mentions among others: catechetics, utilization of the mass media and the indispensable personal contact.

Looking at our work of evangelization in Africa, we can ascertain that it is precisely these means which we borrowed to proclaim the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ.

Catechetics

"We are catechists, before all else", repeated our foundress, Délia Tétrault; the M.I.C. Sisters sent to Africa seemed to have kept well in view this role of educators of faith. In fact the local chronicles of our houses mention that the M.I.C.'s have always prepared children and adults for the reception of the sacraments be it in the missions or in out-stations. Obviously in school, one or the other has taught and some have also catechized Europeans or other foreigners in diaspora.

Let it be noted here that emphasis was laid on visits to the families as a means of meeting parents of the catechized and instructing them of their Christian duties. Statistics of the first two years at the mission of Katete illustrate this effort very well: from May to December 1948 — 357 visits; in 1949 — 888 visits. While adapting to the conditions of times and place, today like yesterday, we always collaborate in the work of the catechumenates.



Sr. Evelyn O'Neill visiting Monica and her four children in Chipata.

In Constant Progress

The year 1953 marks the beginning of the M.I.C. insertion in the Catechist Formation Center at Rumphu directed by the White Fathers. Sr. Jeannette Caron, first teaches part-time to the wives of the catechists in formation, then full-time from 1955 to 1961. Around eighty families have thus benefited from the two year intensive preparation for their future apostolate until the closing of the center in 1964. A favorable contribution of the German organization MISSIO helps later on to build a new center in Mzambazi. Sr. Jeannette continues to teach to the future catechists, men and women; the complete course spreads out along a period of two years. To

date, 64 catechists have been prepared.

At Chikungu, in the diocese of Chipata, Zambia, several M.I.C. Sisters are dedicating themselves, each in turn in teaching the wives of the catechists. Those working part-time at the beginning are Srs. Thérèse Gouin, Evelyn O'Neill, Gemma Ouellet, Marthe Laporte, Cécile Savard. Since 1969, one M.I.C. Sister has been working full-time giving courses on the Bible, psychology, child care, hygiene, nutrition, culinary arts, knitting and household management. Sr. Pauline Roy, who is presently in charge of the Center, underwent a specialized training at the Pastoral Institute of Gaba.

Successful Undertakings

The year 1972, the so-called year of the laity, has marked the catechetical orientation and has shown the necessity of sensitizing Christians to their duty within their local Church. This has given way to new and interesting undertakings. In the out-stations of Katete, the persons in charge recruit volunteer catechists who gather at the mission for a one-week course held annually. They go home with instructional materials and lesson plans prepared by the Sisters who afterwards visit them regularly for follow-up. Once in a while, these young catechists report to the mission stations to deepen their religious knowledge and take catechetical courses given by experienced teachers. To satisfy the need of preparing assistant catechists, the number of Christians becoming more and more numerous, the Catechist Training Center organizes special courses for leadership training. From 1973 to 1976, for three weeks, nine sessions are given, from which 425 Christians benefit. Thirty-five teachers also come to update themselves and 26 women members of the Catholic Action come for a one-week course. A six-month refresher course is also given to twenty catechists. At present, Sr. Jeanne Vallee is initiated to this Training Center.

member of the team composed of three Presbyterians: a minister, a director and a teacher; and two Catholics: a director and a teacher. This committee presents a detailed program for the eight grade of the course in 1971. (sic 1981)

From there the M.I.C. goes to Mzimba. There she pursues her animation work more specially for ten non-assisted schools of the mission. A center is in the process of organization but already some are looking for either the material, professional or religious help necessary for an adequate instruction of this important subject.

Another specialized work is undertaken at Karonga where in December 1971, Sr. Gabrielle Saucier becomes the animator of the Catechetical Center after a year's training in Gaba. A travelling team composed of lay teachers offers methods of initiation and application classes. Inspired by the customs and preoccupations of the people, their objective aims at establishing contacts between the Word and the concrete everyday life. All schools of the district open their doors to them and regular visits are made in collaboration with the officials of the Ministry in a climate of mutual confidence concretized in a common realization: "To bring the Message".

New needs, new help. Education itself needs specialists. Upon her return from the Pastoral Institute of Gaba, Sr. Thérèse Godbout of Rumphu was entrusted with the preparation of teachers for the catechetical instruction in the primary. On account of the diversity of religious beliefs in the schools, the Ministry of Education requests the collaboration of the different denominations to draft a common syllabus for religion. An M.I.C. is a

Finally, the Center of Karonga in 1976 is entrusted the specialized training of a Religious Education Contact-Teacher elected in each of the schools of the District in order to ensure the continuity of the attempts made towards an effective teaching of religion.



To spread the message is the common objective of this mobile team of the Catechetical Center of Karonga, under the animation of Sr. Gabrielle Saucier.

Use of Mass Media

In the "Evangelii Nuntiandi", no. 20, we read "modern man has passed beyond the civilization of the word . . . He lives in the civilization of image". Mass media constitute therefore in our days, an important means of proclaiming the Gospel and they are abundantly used for this purpose. The audio-visual services offer simple methods of enlarging pictures, slides and Bible illustrations.

In March 1977, the two centers of Karonga and Mzimba offer in collaboration with the Ministry of Education, sessions on audio-visual techniques at the service of the religious instruction. In 1976, Sr. Gabrielle Saucier with a Presbyterian minister is in charge of vacation courses at Domasi for two hundred school teachers from the three regions of Malawi.

During the annual instructions to the catechumens and Christians or in other occasions, slides with commentary are included in the program. Children or adults, even prisoners benefit from this visual teaching given by the M.I.C.'s involved in Zambia and Malawi pastoral work.

A Key Project

Undoubtedly the main project in pastoral media is that of the Diocesan Center of Communications of Chipata, Zambia. Sr. Evelyn O'Neill coordinates all sectors: press, library, broadcasting, circular letters, training of personnel.

The government favors Christian radio programs and is encouraging for more especially in the women's section. Already presented on Zambia Broadcasting are: the "Thought of the Day" at the opening program in the morning; a short evening prayer program at the end of the day; Sunday services and others. This Mass Media project also comprises the Book and Audiovisual Center which is almost in full operation. Some books in Chinyanja are in preparation and one hopes to realize very soon some communications for the youth, a formula that remains to be discovered.

It goes without saying that these undertakings in Malawi as well as in Zambia require important funding; several projects of financing have been submitted. Thanks to an aid already received, the movement is well launched. "Centrales" of distribution to the three principal Centers of Zambia, is one of the future plans of the region.

Indispensable Personal Contacts

Even if social communication means are an excellent media for transmitting the Evangelical Message, nothing can ever replace the personal contacts. The latter takes on a greater importance in a human context that fosters interpersonal relations. The visits of African homes mentioned at the beginning of this exposé are carried on not only by the pastoral workers but by all and each M.I.C. Sister who if not necessarily bringing the explicit Message, at least gives the testimony of the love of Christ for each one. Daily reception of the numerous visitors in M.I.C. houses is tied up with the same objective.

Several contacts through the animation of a committed laity are also necessary. In the Centers mentioned above, whenever possible, evenings of prayer, Gospel sharing are organized in view of a solid spiritual formation, a deepening of faith indispensable for those who must transmit it around them. The

promotion work of the laity in the local Church consists in training multipliers, leaders who will conduct Christian communities to their adulthood. Animation of Movements such as the Legion of Mary which has been updated since 1972, the lay women apostles called "Wachitemwano" (Apostles of Charity), the Church councils (L.C.C.) establish contacts that lead to a dialogue. In some parishes the religious are still in charge of an important sector; however, the impetus is given and increasing concerted efforts are made to develop an autonomous, fully responsible local Church in Malawi as well as in Zambia.

"Another sows, another reaps". It matters not who reaps the harvest. For the moment it is a question of a work of faith, hope and perseverance. The essential remains: "Reveal Jesus Christ and His Gospel to those who do not know Him".

A Catechetical lesson with audio-visual aids. Marguerite Legault captivates her audience, big and small alike.



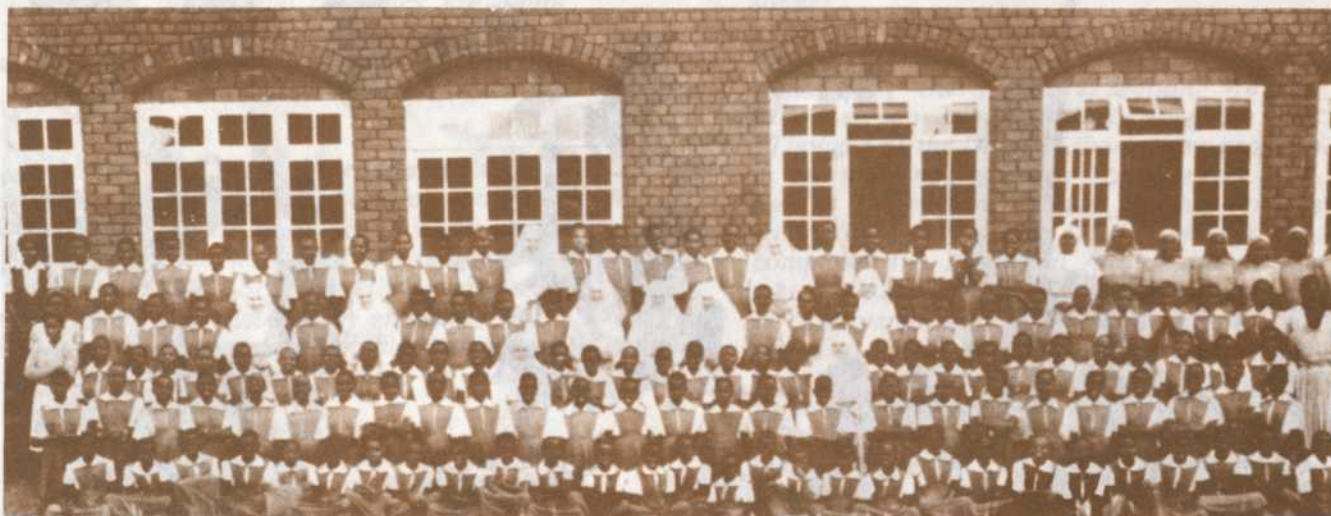
How to Evangelize

2 - Through Education

The first four M.I.C.'s assigned to the African continent reach Nyassaland (Malawi), to be exact, the mission of Katete, on May 19, 1948.

All avenues on the apostolic level are opened to them. They come as pioneers; it is really the planting of the Church in this corner of Africa. Among the many possibilities of evangelizing activities offered them, the education of the young women appears as urgent. This is a time when the people hardly believe in the necessity of an elaborate instruction for the girls. Do they have to be taught household tasks assigned to them: transporting firewood, fetching water, cooking, gardening? In the mentality of those days one or two years of schooling seems fully sufficient for them.

The M.I.C. Sisters of Katete with the approval and encouragement of their dynamic Apostolic Vicar Msgr. Marcel St-Denis, immediately decide in favor of an efficacious and concerted action for the education of the girls at all levels: primary, secondary and collegiate, even university. The present exposé wishes to define this extensive work carried out by our missionaries of Africa for almost 30 years.



A gathering of students in the school of Katete in the 60's.

First, Primary Schools

As early as November 1948, two founders of the Mission: Srs. Madeleine Loranger and Berengere Cadieux are in school. Out of 114 pupils in the School of Katete, one can count only 15 young girls. Without delay the two missionaries organize a boarding house to accommodate eight of them. Nothing elaborate nor luxurious . . . four huts enclosed with a fence of straw. Living close to these white women so attentive to their least needs is for these children from the bush an adventure more mysterious than fairy tales! It takes some time, however, to get used to this kind of life so new to them. Often the Sisters have to go in search for these small bush girls who left to regain their freedom.

The kindness and perseverance of the missionaries finally overcome the reticence of the parents. Slowly, but regularly the number of young girls increases.

As early as 1950 Imelda Saurette, one of the first M.I.C. educators in Africa prepares five young Africans for the teaching profession.

1954. Four pupils after completing their primary begin their secondary course. From now on the young African will have access to a higher education. Everywhere, an increasing desire for advanced and more complete studies is noted. In 1956, eighty-seven girls are enrolled in the first cycle of the secondary and more than 100 boarders are registered as interns.

This remarkable growth in the education of young women goes on year after year in all schools run by the M.I.C.'s. Here is a significant example. At the opening of classes in 1953 at Nkhata-Bay, two girls only are registered out of 150 pupils. In 1962 the same mission runs a school for girls with an enrollment of 320 from grades one to eight.

Towards the Africanization of Teaching

To this numerical increase of students corresponds a growth of the African teaching profession. In the M.I.C. primary schools this new manpower allows for a gradual Africanization of the teaching staff. At the beginning of the 60's lay teachers or the Rosarian Sisters of African origin can even take the direction of our schools.

At Karonga as early as January 1963, the Rosarian Sisters accept to take charge of the Boarding House and in 1967, of the primary school with 350 pupils. Gradually these Malawian religious take over the administration of the primary schools that the M.I.C.'s have established throughout Malawi.

This handing over is within the planning program of the Ministry of Education which has scheduled for 1970, the withdrawal of foreign teaching staff in the field of education. The same gesture is also made by the M.I.C. missionaries of Zambia when they hand over to the government two schools with 100 boarders in Kanyang and Chikungu.

Secondary Schools

Experience proves that the decision of the M.I.C. pioneers of Katete to give young Africans an access to higher studies is beyond doubt, a true prophetic gesture.

We remember that for the first time in the history of Malawi, four pupils from Katete in 1954 undertake their secondary education. This small grain of mustard seed will quickly become a big tree. One can judge by the following facts:

1956. Five Secondary girls are brought to Karonga. In 1959 they are 20 in number.

1963. Opening of a Girls' Secondary School at Mzuzu. Marymount offers the second cycle of the secondary course. Its first enrollees are 60, coming from the different regions of the country.

A Zambian dignitary distributes the certificate to the students of Kanyanga Academy, assisted by Sr. Jeannine Forcier (right) and Irene Champagne (left).



At Marymount Secondary School, Sr. Suzanne Rinfret, assisted by Agnes Kaunda, a charming student, introduces us to her adopted country.



Marymount Today

1976. Marymount welcomes 240 interns. The number of Malawian teachers keeps on increasing. The present headmistress, Sr. Victoria Chirwa, M.I.C. is from Zambia and she has seen the birth of Marymount. Three former students, two of whom are in the Malawian Congregation of the Rosarian Sisters are teaching in Marymount. As early as 1965 the school could count on one indigenous teacher, M.J.C. Kumwenda; since then, the number increases each year.

Up to 1976, Marymount, the only Secondary School exclusively for girls in the northern Region led a number of its students to the university level. Eighty-six out of 211 finishing students in the first ten years have now graduated from University of Malawi and 13 from universities abroad. Teachers, nurses, technicians, secretaries have also received their intellectual formation from Marymount.

Marymount School has for its objective to develop to the maximum the aptitudes and potentialities of its students and on all levels including arts and sports. One of our students won the prize in dramatic art at the National Festival of Malawi in 1970. The school still holds a number of records in the national athletic competitions.

The goal set in 1954 by the M.I.C. pioneers of the nucleus of the girls' secondary school in Malawi, is therefore attained barely twenty years later. The young African girl has taken her place in society; she participates in the intellectual and professional growth of her nation. As a result we meet her in all sectors and at all levels of the Malawian society.

Christian Formation

Formal teaching of religious and Biblical sciences based on respect of religious denominations is included in the academic program of the M.I.C. schools. Christian formation of pupils is also ensured by means of youth movements adapted to the local situation.

In the primary, the Xaverian Movement and the Eucharistic Crusade have awakened generosity and developed among the little ones the spirit of prayer and service.

The year 1951 sees the birth of Girl Scouting at Katete. Sr. Gabrielle Saucier officially founds the first troop whose objective is centered on mutual help and friendship. This movement aims at formation in action, courageous commitment in the very midst of everyday life. This happy initiative has been a success. Successively new troops were organized at Mzambazi, Karonga, Kaseye, Nkhata-Bay, Kanyanga and Chipata where Sr. Francoise Pageau takes charge of the direction. The troops are still in operation in the two last towns. Groups of Malawi Young Pioneers have replaced them in the mission posts of Malawi.

In 1964 a Catholic Forum is opened at Marymount with the aim of deepening Christian life and forming leaders. It enables the students to share their difficulties as well as their aspirations on faith, prayer and religion.

In 1966 the method of the Catholic Action Movement is adopted: See, Judge, Act. Actually the diocese of Mzuzu has 12 units of Young Christian Students in M.I.C. mission schools as well as in the government schools. These groups, thanks to a serious animation, are exercising a growing and beneficial influence wherever they exist.

School Pastoral

To animate the Christian life of the youth is one of the priorities and constant objectives of the M.I.C.'s on African soil. Since a few years this animation is oriented towards an authentic school pastoral.

This very apostolic work is carried out not only in Marymount but also among the stu-

dents of the co-educational school of the Government. It is too early to evaluate the results of this pastoral approach. What is sure is that the work materialized by Srs. Francoise Saucier and Marie Leclair interests the students greatly and sensitizes them to the Christian dimension of their life.



The personnel of Mzuzu School, a few years back.

Conclusion

This looking back on the M.I.C.'s educational activities in Malawi as in Zambia is necessarily incomplete. Nevertheless, this historical overview permits to situate their participation in the educative Mission of the Church, in collaboration with the government authorities, in view of the uplifting of the African woman.

This teamwork of education in which more than 40 M.I.C. Sisters have participated year after year, was made possible through the steady support of Governments, of International Organizations, of numerous benefactors. Literally the schools "sprung from nothing" and offer the students, simple but spacious

buildings adequately organized to meet their present-day needs.

Succession of educators, succession of events . . . what will be the M.I.C. future mission in the field of education on the Malawian or Zambian soil? The contemporary situation is a source of a great hope: Christianity grows, replacements increase. The essential is there: that the people receive the Message of Salvation in Jesus Christ; that they accept and live it. The missionary role among them who are becoming adults in their faith, will be fulfilled and, therefore, the words of Délia Tétrault will be realized "We must not settle down where we are sent. When Our Lord will be known in a place, we shall go elsewhere . . ."

Original French text by:

The M.I.C. Education Team (Africa)

How to Evangelize

3 - By Serving Christ "Who is Sick"

Upon their arrival in Africa in 1948, the M.I.C. pioneers immediately establish medical units. Sickness, the enemy of all but especially of infancy claims numerous victims with little chance of survival.

Among the M.I.C. missionaries we meet some health professionals who above all want to be daughters of Délia Tétrault who loved to tell them before their departure for the mission: "It is the sick whom you must take care of with tenderness, console, gladden and who are often converted by your good example, by your advice and by your untiring dedication in serving them."

Having centered her life on Christ, the religious missionary, this bearer of hope, recognizes Him, in His suffering members in whom she is interested. To serve the "sick" Christ: a true beatitude "... for I was sick and you visited me . . ." In the difficult hours of struggles with death, the M.I.C. nurse hands over the dying to Him who is the Life and who has promised life abundantly. It is in this perspective of faith and Christian charity that the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception work in the medical field in Malawi as well as in Zambia.

Curative Medicine: Dispensaries

Courageous and confident, the M.I.C. medical team welcomes a number of sick people afflicted with malaria, measles, gastro-enteritis, tuberculosis, respiratory and parasitical infections, wounds, abscesses, cuts, not to mention those in need of dental extractions and minor operations. The most dreaded disease without doubt, during the first decade of the M.I.C. apostolate is malaria, the first cause of high mortality rate among children and even among adults.

Each unit receives an average of 15,000 patients annually during the first decade of activities.

A better understanding of the benefit brought about by medical care is shown in an increase of visits to the dispensaries. As a result, a notable increase of clients is gradually registered. In 1975, our five stationary units treated 191,040 patients distributed as follows:



And the Beginnings **Dispensaries—Maternities**

Here customs play a big role. The pregnant woman is bound by a number of traditions and rites obliging her to stay in the village. And there are the "agogos" (old) experienced midwives who do not easily want to abandon their role. Oftentimes the poor mothers are brought to the health centers only after having been lavished with tentative fruitless care in the village. Here again serious problems arise. To penetrate into the mentality of the people on family affairs is not easy for the foreign nurse. This is when the presence of the African midwives becomes a valuable help. It will, however, require of them a long and necessary education to be converted to the idea that a young girl, a graduate from midwifery can fulfill this task adequately.

This change of mentality will be slow even if the delivery at the maternity clinic has undeniable advantages for the mother and child: physical and moral security, religious and professional help, practical teaching, prevention of infection and other complications.

To maternal and infant care assistance given at birth is added a course on hygiene and recovery of the woman. It is necessary that the young mothers become fully aware of these advantages and that the villagers give in to the idea of giving birth in the maternity clinics. The medical corps is more and more aware of the urgency of this work with the mother and the child in the private as well as in government sectors.

A happy mother of "triplets". Using all her resources and competence, Sr. Yvette Carle succeeded in keeping them alive. No wonder she is proud of them!



Preventive Medicine: Under-Five and Maternity Clinics

Gradually, clinics are opened here and there in centers already organized. However, as of May 1970, a report indicates that barely 10 percent of the under-five years population is reached and in this number 40 percent is found underweight. This effort of the government is backed up especially since 1968 by the Association of Private Hospitals of Malawi including M.I.C. units with the exception of Kanyanga. The number of clinics increase from 65 to 97 between years 1968 and 1970. Notwithstanding these united efforts the infant mortality rate remains, alas, very high: for instance 140/1,000, one third of the children do not reach the age of five.

Pre-natal care is also given as much as we are able to. The 2,800 visits made by the Center is very little to combat parasites,

anemia or to abate as far as possible the dangers that child delivery in the village brings and to diminish the mortality rate of young mothers.

Our medical team of Kanyanga in Zambia also participates in a program of prevention and vaccination. In 1971, Kanyanga alone registered a total of 1,524 pre-natal visits and took care of 8,581 children (0-5 years) distributed in four clinics.

The Zambian government authorities made a step forward when in 1974 they decided to form teams to vaccinate the children throughout the country. It is interesting to note that 30 lepers came to get their monthly medicine to prevent contagion in their villages . . . and several of them were cured!

The Mini-Plan

After its visit in 1971, the planning team of the WHO (World Health Organization) proposes to Malawi the planning of a national health program for essential services. During the time necessary for a work of such extent, a Mini-plan is at once prepared. Its goal: to immunize the greatest possible number of babies against contagious diseases and to reinforce the sanitary services already existing.

For the economic and sanitation interest of the country, the Ministry of Health accepts the recommendation and traces the program as follows:

- distribution of supplementary food for needy children;
- immunization of children against tuberculosis, diphtheria, whooping cough, tetanus, chicken pox and on a lesser scale, measles and polio in the under-five clinics;
- education of mothers: talks on nutrition, cooking demonstrations, counseling;

- prevention of malaria;
- graphic registration of the weight of the children;
- treatment of sick children.

To this effect under-five clinics are organized in all Health Centers already existing in the country, including private units, those of the government, of the missions, and of district and city councils. Once these stationary units are consolidated, efforts are made to reach the remote villages by mobile clinics. In May 1973, the Mini-plan starts to function. Without neglecting curative care to the numerous patients who come, the emphasis will be on the preventive medicine in the under-five and pre-natal clinics; also on a service of education and sanitary measures assumed by the inspectors of the Ministry of Health supported by publicity service through printed matters and audio-visuals.

The Mini-Plan and the M.I.C.'s

It is within this government plan then that our M.I.C. medical members will insert themselves. Besides the work already started as mentioned above, Mzimba has since 1970 its sanitary mobile unit exclusively serving five remote villages within a radius of forty miles. A sixth Center is added in 1974.

From the very beginning of the Mini-plan, Sr. Yvette Carle and Gertrude Pare accept to do the work of coordination of their respective districts: Chipata and Mzimba. They become coordinators of the MCH (Maternity Child Health) with the mandate to plan, visit the clinics and even some schools in remote places so as to inoculate the children and offer courses on hygiene to the adults. Their responsibility is also to ensure a good distribution of vaccines and powdered milk and to compile reports for the central control. The services of another M.I.C. Sister, Louise Denis, is required in 1976 for the district of Karonga. These are some examples of collaborating with public service, a new form of missionary apostolate.

The maternity-dispensaries dovetail as far as can be with the mobile clinics. Besides the mobile unit of Mzimba, there are six others operating not counting the stationary clinics in each unit.

Three years of operation can give a good idea of the zooming up of maternity cases. The public health and consequently, the present longevity estimated at 45 years, reveals without doubt an improvement in a few years' time, thanks to the pre-natal care, early immunization and hygienic measures that the mothers receive in the maternities.

And the Beginnings?

It is impossible to imagine that all these mothers could benefit from a day's sojourn in the first health centers. Everything started so humbly! Small huts, porches, small quarters, finally different makeshift buildings were the lot of the M.I.C. pioneers: Paule-Ida Coulombe, Pauline Longtin, Yvette Ricard, Berthe Champagne, Beatrice Tessier, Yvette Carle and Edwidge Lapierre. Certainly with the help of the dear Africans who molded and baked the bricks, who transported on their heads the materials for construction but especially with the gifts of benefactors or aid from charitable organizations, little by little buildings that are functional and welcoming have been erected.



Sr. Lyse Brunet, M.D. attends to every patient as if he were the first.

And the Present?

The M.I.C. medical team does not settle down. They try to adapt themselves to the continuous changing needs. At Kaseye, for example, a project for the construction of a hospital is underway for some years. Meanwhile the government hospital at Chitipa about 12 miles from Katete is enlarged and renovated. The plans for a hospital are changed for a Health Center including a maternity-dispensary. The team prepared in view of the planned hospital has gone elsewhere to serve. The M.I.C. physician, Lyse Brunet, the laboratory and X-ray technicians, Srs. Mireille Morin and Yvonne Casault lend a hand in the hospitals that belong to other religious communities. Yvette Carle, the anesthesiologist and Louise Lefebvre, a specialist in the operating room work in the M.I.C. Health Centers.

Intercongregational collaboration and collaboration with the government are in line with the M.I.C. plan of action. The hospital of Nyimba is turned over to the government in 1970 and Sr. Gladys McLean is employed in the government hospital of Chipata. She is still working there.

The prior objective of the medical team is to prepare the way for the natives to take into their hands not only the diffusion of the Gospel but also the works of charity. While taking care of the bodies, the living temples of Christ, why not at the same time reach out to the hearts of the people and open them to the Life? It is, therefore, a profound feeling of gratitude that comes from the heart of each M.I.C. acknowledging the gifts of benefactors and which have enabled and still enable them to realize what is there today. One has to admit that the local resources are and will long be insufficient to meet the present needs.

And the Future?

The past warrants it. The results obtained by preventive medicine, for example, the decrease of cases of whooping cough, as well as the necessity of following up the work begun with the mother and the child speak in favor of the professional and missionary objective of the M.I.C. health sector: to promote health under the twofold educative aspect (prevention, relief) and curative aspect: concern for the "sick" Christ. While not neglecting the curative aspect, emphasis is given more to the former.

In addition to the under-five and pre-natal clinics, which have been mentioned, centers of nutrition are organized for cases of malnutrition and marasmus. With the help of specialized workers, talks, demonstrations for mothers and especially a supervised diet for the children, the latter are reviving. Education through audiovisuals renders great service. Occasionally, the fathers are reached out. This approach can not but contribute to a better effect in the home if the mother upon her return from the maternity clinic gets support from her husband for food, immunization and other measures she will have been taught.

Therefore, education for prevention and preparation for replacement leads to a gradual

withdrawal of the M.I.C. presence. At Mzuzu as early as 1960, is handed over the care of the sick to an Irish community mainly medical, the M.M.M. (the Medical Missionaries of Mary) who have opened a hospital there. In 1970 the Zambian government takes charge of the M.I.C. hospital of Nyimba. This is followed by the mission of Rumphi which is passed on to the indigenous Community of the Rosarian Sisters in December 1971. Finally, in October 1974, the mission post of Nkhata-Bay is entrusted to the Medical Missionaries of Mary.

The number of qualified African personnel increases in the units. Nurses, midwives, assistants in laboratories where Mireille Morin contributes to their training, an auxiliary personnel and the recent addition of medical assistants form a personnel almost exclusively African. At present there are 22 M.I.C. Sisters working in the health sector.

Almost thirty years of medical service has permitted the M.I.C.'s to be the "gratuitous and welcoming presence of Christ the healer", sustained by a loving relation with the Lord; a presence that looks after the whole being to bring it to recovery." (Provincial Chapter '75, p. 34)

Original French text by:
the M.I.C. Medical Team of Malawi and Zambia



The team of the Karonga Dispensary. At the left, Sr. Beatrice Tessier, and Sr. Louise Denis, (right).

How to Evangelize

4 - By Uplifting the Status of the African Woman

Contacts with the Malawian society soon make us aware of its sense of family community, even clannish. The M.I.C.'s have been called to exercise in this social context their apostolate especially for the woman to ensure her development in all spheres including family education.

Gisèle Leduc, provincial assistant of the M.I.C. province in Africa, has interviewed the following Sisters: Thérèse Gouin, pioneer of Malawi; Edith Faucher, presently at Karonga; Yvette Demers of Chipata; Huguette Ostiguy of Chikungu, Zambia. These four missionaries who are very much committed to this promotion work of the African woman, while sharing their reflections on the subject give the results attained since their involvement along this line of thought and action.



Sr. Alice Pépin giving a sewing lesson to an African mother.

Nyassa - Malawi

- Gisèle** — It is said that the African woman is the soul of Africa, that she bears all the treasures of old wisdom, that she teaches life. Therese, regarding this psychology, what has been, according to you the attitude of the first M.I.C.'s in Nyassa?
- Thérèse** — Since our arrival at Katete in 1948, we understood that we would have a role to play among the African women. However, it took some time to pick up waves indicating the possible approach and in what domain. At the outset, we observed that the mother occupied the first place at the heart of the society and that we would have to work with her.
- Gisèle** — What reaction has provoked this discovery? How did you foresee the work to be carried out among the mothers?
- Thérèse** — We responded by opening "Nazareth", a center to educate the woman to her vocation in the family and in the society.
- Gisèle** — Nazareth! Why this name?



A course in cooking — Here Sr. Edith Faucher trains first class cooks able to satisfy any connoisseur.

- Therese* — Simply because the purpose was the formation of exemplar Christian families, based after this model family: Joseph the husband, Mary his spouse and mother of Jesus, the child: the ONE to whom all converge.
- Gisele* — But you said a while ago that your role is among the women and now you speak of the family. Could you please explain your idea?
- Thérèse* — We have to return to "Nazareth" to give the woman the true meaning of feminine values in the family as spouse and mother. To the treasures of her wisdom and life she bears, will be added Christian wisdom and the relationship of the very Author of life. Her patrimony will thus be enriched and her influence in the society greater. The Supreme Being, author of life already occupies a large place in her concept of existence and commands a deep respect for she has faith in life; she is a giver of life and her children are all the riches of the clan.
- Gisèle* — What means were used to attain this objective?
- Thérèse* — The teaching given her has covered all the facets of her mission as a spouse and as a mother. A Christian catechesis based on active charity is of primary importance. Practical applications normally follow for social and family activities of which the African woman is greatly responsible. Added to this is a series of courses on: hygiene, infant care, household management, culinary arts and dressmaking, and if necessary alphabetization. This overall knowledge contributes not only to the formation of the mother but also to her influence at home.
- Gisèle* — Has the African woman responded to this magnificent project of Nazareth?
- Thérèse* — Yes, and it is with their whole heart and goodwill that the women showed up at our Centers opened successively at Katete, Mzambazi and Mzimba. At first some Centers were not more than small workrooms, simple sewing clubs without quarters. Others, for example at Karonga, offered from the beginning, complete courses in addition to the First-Aid (Red Cross). The number has varied between 15 and 90, according to time of the year, place or other determining factors.
- Gisèle* — *Thérèse*, according to what we heard, it seems that this work once started progressed without difficulties and that mothers came more and more numerous. Is it right?
- Thérèse* — Would you allow me to make a point as to the absence of difficulties? In fact they came in great number and under different aspects: lack of personnel, inadequate quarters, irregularity and diverse levels of the students' culture, adaptation of the courses, financing and so many obstacles that we have to overcome and still must overcome.

- Gisèle* — Thank you, *Thérèse* Tell me Edith, are the Centers in question still open today?
- Edith* — No, these Centers are not all in operation at present. The M.I.C.'s are still teaching at Katete, Karonga, Mzimba, Mzambazi. A Spanish lay missionary is in charge of the Center of Mzuzu.
- Gisèle* — How do you explain the decrease of the Centers? Is the first need less felt now?
- Edith* — On the contrary; it is increasing. The African must evolve in a constantly evolving society. The spouse can not allow the status quo. If she does not accept to change with her husband, probably she will be replaced in the house by another woman better prepared for her role. The directors themselves understood the value of these Nazareths, now known as "Homecraft Centers". In Malawi there are around 355 teachers employed by the City and district Councils to give this valuable feminine education.
- Gisèle* — It is a question then for the M.I.C.'s to give their places gradually, I suppose.
- Edith* — Right. There is a concern for replacements. Presently we are assisted by African women or young girls. Our main objective consists of developing leadership among our students so that when their turn comes they become teachers in their milieu. As a result, since 1970 Mzimba has been receiving women or young boarders for an intensive course of three months during which a more complete formation is given them. To the course mentioned above we have added the following: nutrition, preparation of family budget, handicraft. Thus in giving more importance to the African woman, our goal is to sensitize her more to her role as spouse and mother and therefore, contribute to the harmony and stability of the homes.

North Rhodesia - Zambia **Fort Jameson: (Chipata)**

- Gisèle* — In July 1954, three of us settled at Fort Jameson now called Chipata. Yvette, can you tell us which was at that time the M.I.C. contribution to the development of the Zambian woman?
- Yvette* — As early as January 1955, the M.I.C. team opened a first school of domestic science and twenty women presented themselves. In the following month at the request of the Social Welfare we accepted to teach a six-hour course in the city school. In May of the same year, weekly visits to the wives of the guards of the new prison were added to the work of the Center.
- Gisèle* — Certainly, a good beginning! Did the teaching resemble that one of your neighbors of Nyassa? Were there any differences to point out?
- Yvette* — The difference is not on the material aspect but rather in the entirety of its development. The first installation in the heart of an African city and the government remuneration are aspects to be noted. In January 1958, we opened in the same mission a round house with a thatched roof, a yard with a residence for six young illiterate and less fortunate girls.
- Gisèle* — This house though original was probably not sufficient to meet the needs which, no doubt, were growing, was it?
- Yvette* — Evidently. After nine months the 'Beit Trust' finally obtained the necessary funds to construct a new Center inaugurated on October 26, 1959 under the name of "Our Lady Homecraft Center". At that time 60 to 70 women externs were received every year. As to the boarders their residence which terminated in 1962 enabled us to offer to thirty young 7th grade girls, a two-year course with a diploma recognized by the "Community Development".
- Gisèle* — Should I conclude that teaching to women has stopped with the opening of this officially recognized course?
- Yvette* — No. The two works continued to operate separately and even in 1965, the Center for young girls became "St. Anne's Homecraft Training Center" which developed within the standard admitting only pupils who had nine or ten years of studies. For women

the "Community Development" requires courses with a three-month residence. Once more, thanks to the help obtained from the 'Beit Trust' and from the government we were able to build new quarters which were used for the first time in January 1973 by twenty-four mothers with their twelve babies.

Gisèle — I see the difference of orientation from that of Malawi; but could you tell me if you have the same concern for replacement?

Yvette — Certainly, yes. Moreover, the Center for the young girls covers a training stage in view of teaching. This is why two graduates of St. Anne's are assisting my companions and myself in the Center of Chikungu and that many others are distributed throughout the country.

Gisèle — Are there other interesting things to tell us, Yvette?

Yvette — The two works about which I have just spoken are established at Chipata. They continue to flourish. Around 72 to 80 women come to register at the Center every year. At the beginning we only received practically illiterate mothers; now, several have finished their primary, even secondary studies. A still greater development in the required standard has been already noted in the Center for young girls. Fifteen M.I.C. Sisters through their constant work and their love for the Zambian woman have contributed to this evolution.

Chikungu

Gisèle — The latest foundation in Zambia dates back to 1962. Would you tell us, Huguette, how the work you are engaged in is inserted in the history of Chikungu?

Huguette — The work in which I have engaged myself began ten years after the foundation. However, in the decade that preceded it, a variety of formulas were used to enable the African woman to complete her domestic knowledge. Here is a brief outline: 1962: course for women in the vicinity.

1963: construction of a Center with the help of 'Beit Trust'. Courses are given for about four months to groups of women and young girls ranging from 12 to 17 years with residential intensive courses if necessary.

1965: affiliation to the "Community Development".

1970: collaboration for the formation of leaders who would take the direction of sewing clubs for the village women. For this purpose, the Sisters visit the clubs and encourage these loyal efforts. Finally, participation in the alphabetization of adults in the same year.

Gisèle — I suppose you are assigned here.

Huguette — Yes. In 1972 a new orientation was given here at the Center. In order to form more leaders, to meet the increasing problem of Grade Seven pupils who have to discontinue their studies for lack of place in the secondary, we organized residential courses of one year for young girls or for girls who have not attained more than Grade Seven. Two houses were then constructed and a big garden prepared.

Gisèle — A garden? You are the first one to mention that.

Huguette — All boarders have a small garden, but for us it is something special. Besides the teaching of regular subjects such as English and Math, a strong emphasis is put on agriculture and poultry raising. This refers to a cooperative project initiating these youngsters to selling and buying that will help them in small local industries. Thus they foresee the possibility of increasing their family income while procuring a better food diet.

Gisèle — Very interesting. Do you see the results of this new approach?

Huguette — The twenty-four young girls who leave us every year become better wives and mothers because they are better prepared. Some teach domestic sciences in the primary schools, others join the "Community Development" or assume the direction of women clubs in the villages and many are apt to make some profits through these domestic industries of handicraft. It seems to me that this work meets the present need of the country. It enables us to work actively for the uplifting of the status of the African woman and of the Christian family.

1952



1977

The M.I.C.'s in the Happy Island

M.I.C. Call to Madagascar

Along the west coast of the Island, in the South ecclesiastical region, is a small interesting city of Morondava. The La Salette Fathers of the American province are in charge of this church. Until the 50's the education of the youth was entrusted to the French Religious of the Province of Corenc. For lack of personnel to carry on their work, these Sisters were obliged to leave the place.

Msgr. Etienne Garon, the Apostolic Prefect at that time, after an unsuccessful search for Sisters in France, entrusts to Father Girouard, a La Salette missionary, the mission to try in America. This is why in 1951, he is in Montreal and comes to knock on the door of the M.I.C.'s. The General Council of that time welcomes him, receives his request without giving him an immediate answer but nevertheless, gives him hope.

Taking Flight

A year later on August 19, 1952, a first group of five M.I.C.'s leaves the Motherhouse for Madagascar. It is a long voyage considering the distance and length of time. On September 19, exactly one month after their departure the pioneering team sets foot in Morondava.

But who are these courageous women from the end of the world to attempt once more the adventure of the proclamation of the Gospel? They are Srs. Adelaide Tremblay, Marie-Annette Bonin, Cécile Desjardins, Carmelle Caron, Marie-Odila Plante.

And why do they come from so far to be among a people, certainly congenial but whose language, customs, mentality they do not know? Sent by their local Church to share with their brothers in this faraway island the Good News of Salvation in Jesus Christ, they bravely face the inevitable difficulties of adaptation in a foreign land. Immediately, they buckle down to work with resoluteness.

The Implantation

During the first weeks, the newcomers observe, listen, initiate themselves to the existing works: the Malagasy School, European School, boarding house, orphanage, workroom. And throughout this necessary initiation, studies of the vernacular language. Their hands are full!

The tasks are distributed among the five Sisters: Sr. Adelaida Tremblay, superior of the group, coordinates the activities in and outside the house. Sr. Marie-Annette Bonin becomes the headmistress of the European School and teaches too. Sr. Cécile Desjardins takes charge of the boarding house-orphanage and the workrooms. Sr. Marie-Odila Plante in taking over the direction of the Malagasy School is in-charge of the secondary department and of the preparation for the official examinations. Sr. Carmelle Caron teaches at the elementary of the Malagasy School besides doing a number of other jobs.

The Canadian M.I.C.'s are the only religious in the Apostolic Prefecture that counts 15 priests at most. Hardly 10 percent of the population adheres to Catholicism. Therefore, Christian education of the youth constitutes an excellent means of evangelization, since this task enables our educators to make frequent contacts with the families.

The founders in Madagascar.



Growth

From 1952 to 1958, three other M.I.C. Sisters: Srs. Marie-Antoinette Bolduc, Lucienne Ferland and Thérèse Leblanc arrive from faraway Canada. How gladly they are received in the Happy Island! There is so much to do for a few hands!

1958. A new contingent of five M.I.C.'s is brought to Madagascar. There is a question of opening a new house in the diocese of Antsirabe in the center region of the island, commonly called the "High Plateaus". In fact it is a matter of assuming the direction of the School of Ambohibary, an important and pretty little village of this region.

Sr. Adelaide Tremblay who has experience in opening houses assumes the direction of this new M.I.C. mission.

1959. The school with an enrollment of 538 pupils is divided into eight classes. Therefore, in Ambohibary as in Morondava the M.I.C.'s evangelizing activity is centered on the education of the youth. However, a peculiarity is to be noted here. A small dispensary opens on January 5 of the same year. The Christians pool their efforts together to build it themselves. Sr. Anne-Marie Breton is the first nurse. This dispensary will receive the sick of the region until its closing in 1969.

The year 1963 brings new changes with the opening of a third house: St. Therese of Mahazoarivo at Antsirabe. Srs. Antoinette Boduc, Marie-Annette Bonin and Estelle Messier form the founding team. Some months later, Sr. Marguerite-Marie Legendre, a recent arrival from Canada takes over the direction of the new foundation. Sr. Gabrielle Fontaine completes the personnel.

The main work entrusted to us is the parochial school which at that time has 652 pupils distributed in eleven classes. In 1965, the construction of a home economics section made possible through the help of the German organization, MISEREOR, is annexed to the School. Its first directress is Sr. Françoise de Varennes.

1964. The M.I.C.'s open a fourth station in Madagascar. This time in Tsaramasay, a working-class district of the big capital of Tananarive. September 1st marks the official opening of this school with 600 pupils. However, the residence is not completed before 1965. On March 15th of the same year, Msgr. Rakotomalala, Archbishop of Tananarive, makes the honor of blessing the house. This residence also serves as welcome house for the M.I.C.'s travelling from one mission post to another across the island, across the island.



Thérèse Leblanc with a Crusader.

1966. In response to the request of our Archbishop, one of our companions, Sr. Thérèse Gendron, takes charge of a school for the poor children: a school with a hundred pupils distributed in three classes. This school known as Our Lady of the Rosary of Antohomadinika is twenty-minutes' walk from our residence. We keep its direction until 1972 when the Trinitarian Sisters of Italian origin accept to take over.

On July 16th of the same year, a fifth M.I.C. mission post is started at Mahabo, a village of some importance on the West Coast of the island. This is the fifth school entrusted to the M.I.C.'s in their twelve years of presence in Madagascar.

A special work is awaiting the missionaries, that of training catechists. Mahabo belongs to the diocese of Morondava which has 20,000 Catholics dispersed among 160,000 non-Christians. Only eighteen priests attend to this big population. The preparation of committed Christians who could take the role of catechists, therefore, becomes a necessity and an urgency in similar situations. Thus it is in this work judged to be of primary importance that the members of the M.I.C. team will use their heart, talents and strength. This first team is composed of Srs. Thérèse Leblanc, Fernande Gouge, Carmen Langlois and Marie-Claire Audy.

After Twenty-Five Years of M.I.C. Presence in Madagascar

The last statistics show 46 Canadian and Malagasy M.I.C. Sisters working in Madagascar. Why are they still there after 25 years? Why are they as committed, enthusiastic and happy as the pioneers of 1952?

Upon her return from Canada after the Capitular Session of 1976, Denise Bourgeois, Provincial Superior, asked some of her companions what was the significance of their mission in Madagascar. During her stay in Canada, Denise herself was asked a few times: "Why do you return to such a far place? Could you not render a service just as valuable in Quebec? Are you really happy there? . . ."

Here are some testimonies that Sr. Denise gathered from the M.I.C. personnel of the house of Morondava: the first M.I.C. foundation in Madagascar.

" . . . In response to the call of the Church of Morondava, for the last three years I have been in-charge of a collége of 15 classes of the elementary and secondary levels. In our region, the school appears to be a privileged means of fostering a Christian atmosphere in the milieu, a unique opportunity of making contacts and inserting ourselves in a population where the great majority are non-Christians.

In my animation work in the college, I give priority to catechesis and youth movements. The time schedule, periods, are foreseen so that my M.I.C. companions can be freed for the evangelization work in the parish and in the bush villages.

My life in a milieu that is multi-denominational and multiracial, is particularly hinged on human contacts, an important element for communicating the Message. In my work as educator, I draw my joy from living in the midst of countless opportunities that present themselves for a gratuitous gift: taking care of a wounded pupil, receiving parents, establishing good relations with public schools, collaboration with the School Board and others. However, my greatest concern is for the formation of a competent indigenous personnel. While sharing my knowledge with them, I endeavor to communicate to them my missionary ideal. It is my most ardent desire that this animation with twenty teachers may outflow to our 720 college students and awaken in them the taste of living their life fully.

At the heart of my ecclesial service, the ever-present memory of my "sending off" by the Church of Albanel, in the diocese of Chicoutimi urges me on to give witness to the living Christ in the bosom of the universal Church. In my daily life interlaced with insecurities, re-commencements, apostolic joys, I find the universal dimension of the human heart hungering and thirsting for love and to be loved. I have the blessings of living to the hilt the dream of Délia Tétreault; to be a missionary in thanksgiving! And it is new each day!

Adrienne Guay, M.I.C.



SR. FRANÇOISE JEAN



SR. NOËLLA BERNARD



SR. ADRIENNE GUAY



SR. MARGUERITE RAZANABELO



SR. JULIETTE TRUDEAU



Sr. Rosalie Raivomanana with a group of little Crusaders.

"... In Madagascar I have been teaching to the youngsters for almost three years. My work among the young Malagasy impels me to make my own their way of thinking and acting, their sense of humor and sharing, of understanding better their acceptance of the stranger, of discovering through their language — which is not easy — the values and riches of their culture.

This incarnation in the distant lands is carried on through me, I know — this incarnation of the Son of God desirous of making himself present to them in order to be recognized and accepted as one of their own.

Is not teaching the youth the best means to espouse these imperatives of the milieu? These imperatives contain a scale of different harmonies giving place to the witnessing of a life animated by the Spirit and through his dynamic action operating invisibly in each one. Whatever responsibilities are exercised in the Church, it is always the same God who acts. Do we sufficiently believe that?

Francoise Jean, M.I.C.

"... I find my greatest missionary joy among this team of young people, Christians and non-Christians of 16 to 20 years old.

Every week, they come together with a desire to deepen their faith in Christ. They are thirsty for

truth, for free giving, for sharing experiences and ways of helping people who are less fortunate.

The Bible is our place of reflection. Contact with the word of God sheds light on struggles and problems and my young missionary heart vibrates with a great hope: to associate them to Christ who liberates, transforms, satisfies.

I have been working in the Church of Morondava for the last three years. Even if I am in the heart of my country, I have clearly the impression of living my missionary vocation fully while prolonging the incarnation of Christ in the midst of my own."

Rosalie Raivomanana, M.I.C.

"... For me, to be an M.I.C. does not only mean to be sent by my local Church to reveal Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him. It is also to be a bearer of joy and hope for those who do not have them. That is simply trying to be, in the midst of 80 boarders, a significant presence of His welcome, His goodness.

The catechetical instruction that I give every week in a non-sectarian college (Lycée) makes me live my M.I.C. ideal still more. One of my great apostolic joys was to assist at the baptism of a young Moslem girl whom I had catechized. This event made me realize personally how Christ liberates and can lead us to happiness."

Yolaine Lavoie, M.I.C.

"... At home in Morondava, I experience a great joy at working among those who are entrusted to me.

My main responsibility is catechetical animation. The city with its suburbs is divided into ten sections. Catechetical instruction for the children who go to non-sectarian schools is organized in each of these sections, every year. Some volunteer catechists, young and adults, render this service among the young of their milieu. So, during a period of eight months these volunteers dedicate themselves to the religious instruction of these children. Bearing at heart this obsession to reveal Jesus Christ to those who do not know Him, my joy is deep to be able to respond to a pressing invitation of my local Church: to form and animate a committed laity."

Marguerite Razanabelo, M.I.C.

"... Last year I arrived in Madagascar with a keen desire of giving the best of myself to the less fortunate. I was immediately confronted with a hard reality; the Malagasy language. Impelled by the desire to know the people better, I spared no efforts in learning the language for a year. At present, I stammer . . . and while teaching the youth of the secondary level, I multiply the exercises of apprenticeship. I admit we must have courage to master this language that is so different from ours!

In the midst of this service of education and linguistic training, I find my joy of living for the sake of my faith in these words of Jesus: "Unless the grain of wheat fall on the ground, it bears no fruit". Surely, to be able to express myself easily would give great reassurance. Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit does not need our human means; through these efforts, he can, beyond the language reach the heart of these Malagasy of whom too many do not yet have the joy of knowing Him".

Noëlla Bernard, M.I.C.

"... I am happy because I realize my missionary ideal here and that in my everyday life. By working for the well-being of my companions, I allow them to give themselves more to the direct apostolate among our Malagasy brothers.

My task that is accomplished with love and joy makes me happy".

Juliette Trudeau, M.I.C.

Ambohibary in 1977

What was expressed by the M.I.C.'s of Morondava has also been lived as intensely by their companions in the other houses of the Institute in Madagascar.

After nineteen years of intensive work, the School in Ambohibary is now in full swing with a staff of 20 teachers for 985 pupils from 7 to 20 years old under the vigilant care of Louise Picard. She is efficiently assisted by the following: Angèle Lemaire, teacher of second languages in the secondary level; Elizabeth Méthot, animator of the Center of formation for rural youth; Claire Caron who initiates the young girls to domestic arts according to the methods adapted to the context of the life in a Malagasy village; Marie-Claire Audy, in charge of the missionary promotion in the school and also supervisor of the persons responsible for this sector, in other schools.

The M.I.C. Sisters not only assure the smooth running of the school but also endeavor to create a climate of understanding, mutual help, openness to others, favorable to the transmission of the Gospel Message, ultimate goal of their missionary life ideal.

A young Moslem being catechized by Sr. Yolaine Lavoie



Antsirabe in 1977

The present group of five M.I.C.'s is carrying on the apostolic labor undertaken in 1963 by the founding team. They are running a private parochial school with primary and intermediate levels at St. Theresa of Mahazoarivo. Sr. Estelle Messier coordinates the educational activities with her well-known ability while ensuring the priority of religious and moral education. She is assisted by Sr. Fernande St-Pierre, instructor of the second language in the secondary department and animator of a prayer group that gathers every week in the school. Sr. Julienne Rasoarivelo completes the trio as a dressmaking instructor for the grown-up pupils in the complementary course. She is also the adviser of the Eucharistic Movement (EKA).

Sr. Louise Guimond lends a hand to the different parish organizations more particularly to VAKAMA (Catholic Aid).

Finally, Sr. Jeannine Lavallée, in-charge of the team, is a science teacher at the St. Joseph's College directed by the Marist Brothers. She still finds time to extend to the novices of the different novitiates in the city the benefit of her theological knowledge.

Here, it seems important to note the close collaboration among the religious Congregations of the parish and the parish committee. It is a way of expressing the Catholicity of the Church and the charity that reigns among the members.

The leitmotiv of the group is to light up the apostolic flame in the school and parochial milieu while leaving to the Spirit the concern of spreading it.



M.I.C. Community of Antsirabe L. to R. Louise Guimond, Jeannine Lavallée, Fernande St-Pierre, Julienne Rasoarivelo, Estelle Messier.



Gisele Dion, Catherine Ravoanomejanory and Jeanne Desclos of Tsaramasay.

Tsaramasay in 1977

The house of Tsaramasay is now the M.I.C. Provincial House of Madagascar. It is the friendly occasional residence of the M.I.C.'s who have to come to the capital for a few days for business, studies or rest. In Tananarive, like in our other missions of the Island, the school constitutes the main activity. More than 900 students are enrolled of which 670 are in the 14 classes of the primary department and 250 in the five classes of the secondary.

Sr. Gisèle Dion, the director of the school, gives courses on pedagogy to 32 teachers of the same school. In addition to her numerous duties as provincial bursar, Sr. Rose-Hélène Turgeon looks after the finance administration of the school. At present she is initiating an indigenous who will undertake the work in the future.

Catechetical instruction at all levels is entrusted to Srs. Mariette Provencher and Jeanne Desclos. The latter is in charge of the youth movements. Sr. Marie-Odila Plante is in charge of the library and Sr. Thérèse Gendron of the sewing courses. Two Malagasy Sisters, Josephine Rasoanjanahary and Catherine Ravoanomenjanory, animate the Committees on Liturgy and other youth movements. Sr. Claire Guérard helped by one or the other of her companions, visits the poor and the sick. Her greatest joy is to bring them the Eucharistic bread.

Besides their professional activities, pastoral or social action work always calls for the cooperation of the M.I.C.'s. The Holy Spirit is at work; to Him is entrusted this evangelization of the poor to whom each one is committed to bring the light, the love, and the liberation for which they are so eager.

Mahabo in 1977

In Mahabo as in the missions of the great island of Madagascar, the main activity is at first, the parochial school. Although it is still in operation there is a question of closing it for lack of personnel. And that is to the great regret of the missionaries.

On the other hand the work for the formation of catechists is in full swing. Thus in October 1976, a moving ceremony is held for the sending off of twelve catechists for evangelization work in the different sectors of the diocese. Their mission is to preside over the Sunday prayers, visit the sick, give good religious instruction to the groups entrusted to them. In order to assume this task, they undergo a serious and adapted doctrinal preparation given by a team of four members: the spiritual animator, sometimes a La Salette Father; a lay teacher, graduate of the School of Catechetics of Tananarive; a catechist, Franciscan Missionary of Mary; a language teacher, member of the M.I.C. team.

The M.I.C. share in this very important work of the Malagasy Church does not stop with the formation of catechists. These Christians who are called to give religious instruction to their compatriots come with their family from all corners of the dioceses. While the fathers are in class, the other members of the families are attended to. The children of school age go



Sr. Noella Parent with a happy family.



Sr. Fernande Gouge supervizes the work of a young mother.

to the Mission School while the very little ones are entrusted to the care of young girls trained for this purpose. In the meantime, domestic arts are given to these young mothers by inculcating in them the basic principles of good household management.

Everyday these mothers take courses on family education: budget preparation, child care, cutting and sewing, knitting, embroidery, for which they show remarkable skills. Culinary arts is an essential part of this program. You should see how the big dark eyes of these charming and docile pupils sparkle when they have succeeded in baking a beautiful cake with the means at hand, for there is no oven in the bush . . . ! What is being asked from these mother-students is that when they return to their homes, they share the knowledge received with the other women in their village. We are therefore preparing multipliers.

These young families always keep pleasant memories of their sojourn at the Formation Center. The team is so happy to receive them aware that they too are "bearers of the Good News" who have at heart the great desire for the human and Christian promotion of their Malagasy brothers and sisters.

Original French text by:

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As Mellowed

After fifteen years of presence of the Missionaries of the Immaculate Conception in Madagascar, the foundation of a Novitiate appears "as a mellowed fruit" in a local Church which in turn can give missionaries to the universal Church.

An official visit of Mother Madeleine Loranger, Superior General confirms this project in 1965.

The Early Beginnings

Thus in September the house of Antsirabe welcomes three young girls for a year of probation, pre-requisite to the postulate. Sr. Agathe Durand is assigned to accompany the aspirants, then the postulants and novices in their life's project. It is all new! So many possibilities are offered at the height of the Conciliar stage and in the period of universal renewal of the religious life! In August 1967 the novitiate is opened with two novices. These have already lived the MISSION a little, sharing the life of the M.I.C.'s, leaving the house regularly to give catechesis on Sundays on the city border or for a few hours of school or parish pastoral work.

A Step Ahead

In November 1967, a second house is provided at Antsirabe convenient to novitiate life and needs. Two novices and a postulant are the first occupants with their Canadian Sisters, Sr. Claire Guérard and Agathe Durand. Domestic work, hours of study or teaching in the city schools, participation in the parish life and privileged periods for the spiritual growth are integrated in the initiation program on religious life.

In the same year, inter-novitiate encounters are inaugurated gradually regrouping the members of other novitiates in the city for two or three weekly courses, for the monthly recollection and the annual retreat. The La Salette Fathers who are professors in the Seminary of Antsirabe are valuable collaborators in these different undertakings.

Sr. Catherine Ravaonomenjanahary, the second Malagasy M.I.C., pronounces her first vows on August 8, 1969 in the chapel of the Novitiate; Sr. Josephine Rasoanjanahary had previously lived the first stages of her religious life in Canada.

Continued Progress

In July 1971 Sr. Monique Préfontaine takes charge of the Novitiate. With her young Malagasy companions she lives through the rough period of socio-political events of 1972 ensuring a precise information and the spiritual discernment necessary in these circumstances!

At a slow pace, that of the grace of vocation and of religious growth, vocations come and are still coming. The formation entrusted to Sr. Françoise De Varenne for nearly four years, is adapted to the capacity of the persons and to the realities of the milieu in which the M.I.C.'s are called to work together. The present lifestyle is characterized by a participation in parish activities: district meetings, preparation of adults for baptism, religious instruction pre-requisite to first communion and confirmation of children, animation of youth movements, vocation days. This involvement in the parish pastoral presents all the advantages of a missionary formation that is fully integrated and of a serious vocation discernment, that is to say, a basic experience and tested personal convictions.

At present, Sr. Suzette Jean participates in the life of the novitiate of Antsirabe, sharing her religious experience, her dynamism, her musical ability and the fruit of her teaching work.

Thus a minute spot in the big Malagasy Island simply becomes in its humble history, a concrete sign of the internationality of the Institute and of universal communion in the Church of Jesus Christ.



Seventy-five Years for the M.I.C.'s

"Celebrating a jubilee," said Msgr. Roch Pedneault, auxiliary bishop of Chicoutimi, on the occasion of the anniversary celebrations, "is like looking at both sides of a coin..." I believe the same is true when it is a matter of appraising what the 1977 jubilee year has given us to experience. As coordinator of these celebrations I had been mandated to plan out and present to the general council the projects likely to underscore intense period for missionary promotion work both within and outside our Community. To "animate" that is, to arouse renewed vitality could only be the work of the Spirit; to what depth the current of thanksgiving and missionary zest we wanted to arouse has reached - God alone knows! It is looking from the outside that I can try to assess the significance which our foundation anniversary has assumed both within and outside the M.I.C. world.

Within the M.I.C. World

"Looking at both sides of the coin," is first of all looking back on the past and identifying the deep roots whose sap nourished for 75 years this tree which has become our Institute and has yielded fruits in five continents. Yes, a little mustard seed whose fecundity can astonish and also elicit wonderment! As one cannot speak of Foundation without calling to mind the Foundress, it is the beloved and revered person of Délia Tétrault that the jubilee celebrations brought us to consider closely and to bring it to light while taking advantage of all these occasions. Truly a multifacet diamond this personality of the Canadian Church is!

The birth anniversary of our Foundress last February 4 officially opened the jubilee year. In asking 400 M.I.C. Sisters gathered in our house at Pont Viau on that day what their sentiments were, one would hear them exclaim one after the other:

- What zest of thanksgiving went up to the Lord; what marvels, indeed, He has done for us!
- How proud I was to be an M.I.C. It was also like on the most beautiful profession days: it gave me back the enthusiasm of my youth!
- Never before have I felt so strong a sense of belonging to my Community!
- What an example and what an inspiration in this compromising YES of Délia to God's calls!
- How challenging is this message of our Foundress!

And this message was brought to mind by Sr. Monique Préfontaine, our superior general and by the slide-show entitled "Living a Life of Love" during its premiere presentation to the members of the Congregation on February 4, 1977.

I would sum up this message in two calls springing forth from the heart of Délia Tétrault in contemplation. "God has given us everything, even his own Son; what better way to repay Him. . . than give him children, chosen ones who will also sing his goodness throughout the ages." And the other one which she insistently repeated in her letters to the Sisters: "Lavish your tenderness and smiles, sow happiness plentifully; it is still the bread most wanting in this poor world of ours!" This life program is simply not a euphoria; rather, it leads to wonderment, joy and thanksgiving while remaining a challenge, an invitation to renewal and fidelity. Indeed, such was the very outcome of the jubilee feasts beginning with that of February 4th with its unforgettable circumstances as over forty priests of the foreign Mission Society concelebrated Mass presided over by Msgr. Angelo Palmas, the Apostolic Pro-Nuncio.

Outside the M.I.C. World

Jubilee - a return to the Source, memoirs of our origin, a salutary and dynamic reminder that has launched the M.I.C.'s again on the paths. . . for joy calls forth an overflowing and cannot be confined in a sealed vase. In taking Psalm 125 we proclaimed. "What marvels indeed, the Lord has done for us!" We must go to proclaim it everywhere. This is why a truly jubilant celebration had been organized on February 6 at Marieville.

Délia Tétreault went back to the town where she was born, arousing enthusiasm and pride among hundreds of her fellow townspeople. Yes, it was good to have agreed to share with them first of all the marvels celebrated, that is to say, the materialization of a dream of a child who saw a vast wheat field transformed into heads of children . . . presage of a future that Délia certainly could not have understood at the age of six. But this frail child of a once-upon-a-time village, has since then taken on the personality of a prophet: She, who all along her journey had understood God's gratuitousness and that only a gift can respond to a gift, inculcated her missionary zeal right at the beginning of the century in the Canadian Church. For this woman apostle, it was urgent "for French-Canada to take her place, her role as a nation in the Catholic apostolate." The apostolate — a means to give thanks!

This wonderful reality has been proclaimed to thousands of friends and relatives of the M.I.C.'s from all continents where they are, for more than 30 sets of slide-shows translated in five languages were circulated from Japan to Africa. And while we were enjoying in Eastern Canada in more than fifteen dioceses, pleasant encounters, echoes from Western Canada and overseas were coming their way to Montreal. Whether it be through Archbishop Shira Yanagi in Tokyo, Bishop Gayot in Cap Haitien, or from Vancouver's Archbishop Carney, the Church was recognizing through their voice that the Kingdom of God is indeed being revealed to "the little ones", thanks to the fidelity of the one who after the example of Mary of Nazareth has proclaimed herself, "the humble handmaid of the Lord and a slave of His will" (from the personal notes of Délia Tétreault).

Expression of Gratitude

Indeed, the jubilee celebrations have multiplied, spread out throughout the calendar year affording opportunities of meeting thousands of relatives and friends who also marveled at the work wrought by the Lord through poor instruments. But the occasion had for us a two-fold purpose: to our praise of the wonders of the Lord, we wanted to add the expression of gratitude overflowing from our hearts for those who having understood the missionary vocation have in multiple ways encouraged and supported it! We have with joy taken advantage of these delightful gatherings to tell them: "Thank you for being with us, for it is in your name that we leave; it is thanks to you that we can be witnesses of the Good News overseas as well as here: we are, therefore, all together missionaries of Jesus Christ!"

If the aim of this article was to make a summary of the Jubilee celebrations and to bring out the meaning of the experiences lived, the writer also wishes to be the spokesman for the M.I.C.'s of all nationalities to express their deepfelt gratitude to all Church leaders whose authorized voice has both graciously and generously rendered homage to the Foundress and expressed their so comforting kindness to the members of the Institute. To their relatives, parents and so many devoted, discreet and generous friends, to all those who have joined them in the celebration of these Feasts and especially to the readers and benefactors of the PRECURSEUR and the M.I.C. MISSION NEWS, they wish to repeat: "Thank you for being what you are for us. May the Lord who justly rewards the laborers of his Vineyard hear our prayer and shower each one with his choicest blessings and this according to his/her dreams and needs."

And the Other Side of the Coin ?

"Our life should be an everlasting hymn of thanksgiving." How well this exhortation of our foundress fits into the framework of a jubilee year. A flashback beyond space and time has really made the M.I.C.s vibrate. More than one has allowed the Muses to translate into poems or songs the inspirations of the Spirit working within. Having looked at the hidden side of the coin, all have in wonderment recognized the Work of God. With a deep desire to prolong in the coming tomorrows the vital intensity of their 'here and now,' they pursue on "all places and squares" the zeal inculcated since three quarters of a century ago: Animated by the spirit of thanksgiving, the Sisters of the Immaculate still and always want to bring to the world a message of hope which makes one capable of living a LIFE OF LOVE!

Pauline Longtin, M.I.C.

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		- ROCHE-À-BATEAU , Haiti, Les Antilles.	
		- TROU-DU-NORD , Haiti, Les Antilles.	



Table of Contents

AFRICA

The M.I.C.'s in Africa: Historial Sketch 2

How to Evangelize

1. By Direct Transmission of the Message 4
2. Through Education 8
3. By Serving Christ "Who is Sick" 12
4. By Uplifting the Status of the African Woman 17

MADAGASCAR

The M.I.C.'s in the Happy Island 21
After Twenty-Five Years of M.I.C. Presence in Madagascar 23
As Mellowed 28

SEVENTY-FIVE YEARS FOR THE M.I.C.'s 29

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