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The Challenge of Interculturality in Today's Context

Timothy Scott, csa

As we look at the all-important issue of interculturality, it goes without saying that the Church was enormously affected by the Second Vatican Council. The Spirit blew, and Pope John XXIII set us on a course that gave birth to what the eminent Jesuit theologian Karl Rahner called a “world Church.” For centuries, Catholic Christianity had been embedded in a European cultural matrix. But in 1962 as the bishops of the world gathered in Rome; Africans, Asians, and Latin Americans prelates took their place and showed a very different face for the Church.

The Promise and Challenges in the Post-Vatican II Church

It is this cultural encounter that we are still grappling with today. We are still very much living in the post-Vatican II Church. The bishops who participated in the Council returned to their dioceses in the first world, and began to take much more seriously their responsibilities as bishops of the whole Church.

They encouraged our religious communities to reach out to the Global South, to Africa, Asia and Latin America. The translation of the liturgy into modern languages was a kind of inculturation in itself. It was a heady time, but one that proved very difficult for religious communities. The dual challenges of the oft-mentioned concepts *aggiornamento* and *ressourcement* provoked a crisis with which we are all familiar.

Through the 1960's and 70's thousands withdrew from religious life. The search for the original spirit and charism of the founders of religious communities seemed fraught with peril. The promise and excitement of the immediate post-conciliar period gave way to a loss of confidence.

In 1978 Pope Paul VI finally died and a self-assured and dramatic Polish cardinal appeared on the scene from behind the Iron Curtain: Karol Wojtyła. Pope John Paul II was European, but eastern European and schooled in the art of battling not with secularism, but with an all-powerful Communist state.



Cautious Approach

The relatively positive approach to inculturation that we find in the documents of the Second Vatican Council gave way to a more cautious approach to the reform. In *Catechesi Tradendae*, the 1979 post-synodal exhortation, Pope John Paul wrote:

On the one hand the Gospel message cannot be purely and simply isolated from the culture in which it was first inserted [...] nor, without serious loss, from the cultures in which it has already been expressed down the centuries; it does not spring spontaneously from any cultural soil; it has always been transmitted by means of an apostolic dialogue which inevitably becomes part of a certain dialogue of cultures (CatTrad, 53).

The Changing Face of Catholicism

The cultural matrix of European Catholicism seems almost intrinsic to the Gospel message. Yet now, in 2017, the face of Catholicism is rapidly changing. If one excludes “Latinos;” within ten years, less than 20% of Catholics in the world will be of European origin. That means 80% of Catholics world-side will be Latino, or African or Asian. Given these numbers, the election of Jorge Maria Bergoglio as Pope Francis is not so surprising. Moreover, an Asian or an African successor seems distinctly possible.



What are the implications of interculturality for religious communities as we go forward?

- 1. Contact with the other.** For the many communities who engaged in ministry in the developing world, the contact occurred *there* in the place of mission. In contrast, for the next few years, the intercultural contact will occur *here*.

We may welcome candidates from very different cultural settings who may wish to have at least part of the formation experience here in Canada. There may be new Canadians whose origins are from elsewhere and who wish to enter religious life here in Canada. There will certainly be members of our communities who have spent decades in ministry elsewhere who choose to return to our communities in Canada. So the place of the intercultural encounter will not be Haiti or Bogota or Yaoundé, but here where I live in Montreal.

- 2. Our communities as safe places to encounter the other.** Who is at home? Who is a guest? The place of encounter must be a place of welcome for all. The space cannot be “owned” by any one person or group. No person or group can be privileged in the encounter.

The living accommodations, the common space, the food, the environment need to reflect the diversity of experiences of the persons who share the space. This presumes that those who have been here *longer* need to make the additional effort to accommodate those whose experience in Canada is more recent.

- 3. Our faith as a key to experiencing the other.** We have the experience of Jesus as he reached out to those on the social and ethnic periphery. We have the experience of the apostles and Paul as they guided Christianity out of a purely Jewish matrix and allowed for its inculturation in the Greek-speaking Roman Empire. We have centuries of Christian inculturation in Europe.

The challenge for our religious communities and for the Church is a new inculturation in the context of an intercultural encounter, or as Pope John Paul put it, “a dialogue of cultures.”

“Religious Life Is a Place to Dream”

It may be difficult for us to imagine our faith distinct from the cultural matrix of European Christianity. An authentic intercultural encounter requires a critical examination of our cultural pre-suppositions and an increased flexibility in creating a place of welcome and encounter.

Finally, religious life is a place to dream. Inspiration and hope are not the products of careful committee work and planning sessions. They come about from a heart that is open to all kinds of new possibilities. They come from a sense of inner freedom that Pope Francis has so wonderfully demonstrated. As he has said again and again, in order to flourish, religious life requires witnesses to joy. For young and old, this is the challenge before us today. ■



THE STRANGER: A Biblical Journey

Sébastien Doane
Biblical scholar, doctoral student Université Laval

Current events are focusing our gaze on the other, the stranger, the one who flees his country to seek refuge and live his life. On the one hand, the United States has decided on a policy in which walls are erected for the sake of protection. On the other hand, more and more immigrant families are crossing the border to find a host country here in Canada.

As we know, biblical texts deal with the stranger/foreigner. But oddly enough, they do so in contradictory ways. According to the text chosen, one is supposed to either love or kill the stranger! I therefore invite you on a biblical journey to see what could inspire us in our own context.

Being a Stranger

When they reflect on their origins, the Hebrews begin this way: “My father was a wandering Aramean. He went down to Egypt and lived there as an alien... the Egyptians ill-treated us, they oppressed us and inflicted harsh slavery on us.” (Dt 26:5-6) The people of the Bible see themselves as a people of immigrants who have suffered discrimination and violence because of their ethnic origin.

The *Book of Exodus* tells how God identified with this oppressed people. He could have chosen the Egyptians, who had such an important civilization. But no, he adopts a people of immigrants who had become slaves in order to free them.

Kill the Other, the Stranger

When the Hebrews settle in the Promised Land, the *Book of Joshua* tells how God asks them to exterminate the Canaanite peoples. So, whereas the Hebrews were formerly victims of ethnic violence, they now become the aggressors, ready to kill the strangers to have control over the land.

Israel’s history will remain marked by military tensions with the other nations that surround it. We thus find several negative words against strangers. In particular, marriage with foreign women poses a problem (Ezra 9:1-15). For some biblical writers, these mixed marriages lead to the destruction of the people and must be prohibited.

The Stranger Shall Be Welcomed

The Old Testament also contains texts calling for an attitude of welcome towards strangers. For example, the *Book of Exodus* transmits this command twice: “Thou shalt not molest or oppress the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” (22:20 and 23:9)

The *Book of Leviticus* goes so far as to command that the stranger be loved: “You shall treat the stranger among you as though they were native-born and love them as yourself—for you yourselves were once strangers in the land of Egypt.” (19:34)



The prophets place the stranger beside the widow and the orphan as vulnerable people who must be helped. “Thus says Yahweh: Act uprightly and justly; rescue from the hands of the oppressor anyone who has been wronged, do not exploit or ill-treat the stranger, the orphan, the widow.” (Jeremiah 22:3)

The Stranger in the New Testament

The New Testament continues this tradition of welcoming the stranger. Several speeches of Jesus indicate the importance of the love for the other, even if he is a stranger, even if he is an enemy. Yet one narrative shows that Jesus himself had to go through contact with a Syro-Phoenician woman to take an interest in strangers or aliens. (Mk 7:24-30)

At the beginning of the encounter, Jesus refuses to cure her little daughter since she is not part of his people. By a bit of deft rhetoric, she makes him recognize that even dogs can eat the crumbs that fall from the table. Jesus therefore accepts to heal the child of a foreign woman.

“I Was a Stranger and You Welcomed Me”

Like the Hebrews who base their reception of others on their own experience in Egypt, Jesus identifies with strangers because he himself has been a stranger. From the very first pages of the *Gospel according to Matthew*, the family of Jesus must leave everything behind to survive the violence of a tyrant who is executing the children of Bethlehem. They then live the life of refugees in Egypt. Paradoxically, Egypt, the place of xenophobia par excellence in the Bible, now becomes a land of welcome.

The ministry of Jesus in the *Gospel of Matthew* ends with the Last Judgment (Mt 25:31-46). In this proclamation, the criterion for salvation is clear: give drink, welcome the stranger, provide clothing, visit the sick and the prisoners. Jesus identifies with strangers. We all saw the image of little Alan Kurdi lying dead on the Mediterranean beach. Chapter 25 of Matthew enables us to understand that it is Jesus who died with him because of our inability to welcome the stranger. Conversely, it is also Christ who is welcomed when helping refugees, even if they are Muslims.

We Are the Stranger

Julia Kristeva, psychoanalyst and author, says: “Strangely, the stranger lives in us; he is the hidden face of our identity. [...] Why, then, meet the stranger? This answer is this: Because men are all strangers to one another.”¹ Everyone has already experienced some form of discrimination. It is for that reason that we can understand the position of the stranger and even identify with him. No matter what the differences are, racial, religious, sexual, ideological, linguistic or other.

The story of Cain and Abel asks the question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (Gn 4) Well, I think we have to answer yes and even engage in concrete acts in the name of our faith.

Other biblical texts to read on this topic

The departure of Abraham, the migrant – *Genesis 12*

Abraham receives three strangers – *Genesis 18*

The inhospitality of Sodom – *Genesis 19*

The Good Samaritan – *Luke 10, 29-37*

Peter and Cornelius – *Acts of the Apostles 10* ■

¹ Conference given October 1, 2014, at the Collège des Bernardins in Paris in the “Law, Liberty and Faith” cycle of conferences.



London, UK, 4th February 2017
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The woman sitting beside me at an anti-human trafficking meeting told me she was a sex trade worker. She felt she could be helpful in reaching out to people who were trafficked. At one point, another person's use of the word 'prostitution' triggered a strong response in her. Later she explained: "That's the word that is used by those who have shamed us in the public." For people who choose to work in the sex trade, "it's a form of violence to not believe our words when we say we find something about sex work affirming."

As I understood her, suggestions that her personal history had left her without the freedom to truly choose this work were seen as attempts to strip away her sense of agency and identity. But she refused to be alienated from herself by the destructive power of labels and categories.

The Lummi Nation blocked the largest coal port ever to be proposed in North America. Then they sent the totem pole, which stood as a symbol of resistance against the fossil fuel industry and the many ways it threatens the wellbeing of land, water and people, on a journey to support other indigenous groups in the U.S and Canada that are engaged in similar struggles.

FROM Alienation TO Communion

Sue Wilson, csj

If we look contemplatively we can see the steps, as they are taken, on the journey from alienation to communion:

Shortly after the attack at the Great Mosque in Quebec City, hundreds of Londoners gathered at a downtown park to show solidarity not only with the Muslim community in Quebec but also with the Muslim community in London. On that night, the compassion which bound us together was so much deeper and stronger than the death-dealing voices that tried to keep us apart.

Opening to An-other

Opening to an-other can be a challenging thing. When we are faced with viewpoints that are at odds with our own, we need to hold a difficult tension between opening ourselves to see from another's vantage point and remaining true to our own values. Often these efforts to hold the tension can lead to transformative change in our assumptions and ideas, our choices and actions.



Detail of the Last Supper (Abendmahl) by Sieger Koeder in refectory of Villa San Pastore in Italy. Jesus with outcasts of society. © Thoom / Shutterstock.com

Opening to an-other can lead us into a new way of being and urge us into transformative action in the world. We appreciate more fully the many ways that our labels and categories contribute to shaping social, ecological and economic structures that privilege some and create barriers for others.

Opening to an-other deepens into opening to Love as we surrender to the graces found within the transformation.

Opening to Communion

It used to be so common to think of the earth as other, and the universe as an-other far beyond. Now, often guided by indigenous wisdom, many people are opening to the awareness that we are earth and earth is us. These insights are accompanied by a shift in relationship: we are not living on earth; we are one of earth's living elements.

Dualistic consciousness sees an-other person as other. In part, it's connected with inner dynamics that permit us to hide from negative aspects of ourselves while projecting these qualities onto others where they can be criticized and rejected. By contrast, contemplative consciousness, which religious orders have been nurturing in their members, roots us in an ever deepening awareness of the underlying unity in all of our relationships – with God, earth and each other. Contemplative consciousness asks: How am I connected to what I see in this person? How am I connected to what is happening in this bio-region? How am I connected to the unjust social and economic structures that I see?

We need to transform unconscious efforts to deface and distort the other by consciously facing that which we would like to ignore. Consider the whole-making energy that has been moving within Canada after the deadly attack at the mosque. We have shifted from shock to soul-searching (shadow-searching) questions about the tenor of our public conversations and the depth of our islamophobia. It's a dialogue that is difficult and heart-wrenching, healthy and life-giving.

Participating in Communion

We often talk about how our actions, both personal and collective, need to flow from a contemplative heart, and this is surely true. But we also need to recognize how profoundly our inner life is affected and shaped by our social context. Participation in communion (the Reign of God) is rooted in the constant ebb and flow between contemplative restructuring of consciousness and action to restructure personal, social, cultural, economic and ecological relationships (systems).

Opening to an-other, particularly an-other who has been marginalized, is a key step in recognizing how unjust policies and systems have affected our inner and outer lives; it is integral to seeing how collective shadow patterns have been concretized in unjust social, political and economic structures and systems, leading to poverty, racism, classism, sexism, militarism, environmental damage and social violence.

To participate in God's communion is to make our individual and collective inner whole-making both visible and impactful in the world. And it starts by a graced opening to the other. ■

Seeing JESUS in the “Stranger”

Richard Zanotti, cs

I have been a Missionary of St. Charles Scalabrinians for 40 years and a priest for 36 years. The Missionaries of St. Charles is a religious community founded by Blessed John Baptist Scalabrini, bishop of Piacenza (Italy). He saw the need of a religious congregation of both men and women who would dedicate themselves to the care of migrants.

I come from migrant stock. My parents immigrated to Canada from Italy in the 50's. The parish we attended was staffed by Scalabrinian priests. They impressed me at a very early age to think about joining them. They attended to the many Italian immigrants that were arriving at that time.

“I Have Seen Jesus in Many Migrants”

I was exposed to different languages both in the Italian immigrant community from which I come and through my studies during high school and university. I speak Italian, Spanish and Portuguese, three languages that have helped me minister to the many immigrants that have made Canada and the United States their home.



Richard Zanotti, cs, and members of his migrant ministry team.

The biblical mandate to welcome the stranger and recognize Jesus in him or her has always inspired me in my ministry. I have seen Jesus in many of the migrants that I have been privileged to serve.

The service I give is pastoral but this also includes a concern for the many other needs that migrants have. In particular, the undocumented and temporary workers are those that suffer most from the traumas of migration. I have also been involved in advocacy work, which involves the important task of fighting for the human rights of migrants.

Pastoral Outreach

At the present time I am coordinator of Hispanic ministry in the Archdiocese of Vancouver. This involves outreach to the thousands of temporary farm workers that work within the archdiocese.

The simple faith of the farm workers and their trust in God's grace inspires me in my own faith journey. I offer my friendship and ministry as a support to these men and women who are separated from spouses and families and who work long hours in the fields and hot houses in the lower mainland region of Vancouver.

These noble persons who sacrifice themselves for their families help me to understand better the sacrifice of the Lord on our behalf. I am grateful that the Lord has called me to this ministry for my life as a person, as a religious and as a priest has been greatly enriched.

No One Is Exempted

I take the call of Pope Francis to heart, “defending (migrants’) inalienable rights, ensuring their fundamental freedoms and respecting their dignity are duties from which no one can be exempted.” (Vatican City, Feb. 21, 2017) ■

Learning to Become Peacemakers

Anne-Marie Savoie, RHSJ

Since 1995, several dimensions have been identified over the years as being essential for harmonious relations between people. An approach has been developed and formation in peace is now an integral part of the program offered at the *Institut de Formation Humaine Intégrale de Montréal* (IFHIM).

Stages of Formation

This peace formation is based on drawing out strengths of individuals by teaching them to re-examine their meaningful experiences. During this training course, people learn:

- a) To recognize their openness to the other and discover the resulting impact on peace that this openness may effect.
- b) To discern in everyday life, that which fosters greater freedom in decision-making.
- c) How to rebuild peace in and around themselves by managing their emotions and frustrations.
- d) To recognize and overcome obstacles in themselves or in the other and become capable of approaching the other; becoming more comfortable with the unknown and with differences related to age, language, culture, ways of doing things, etc., that could keep them at a distance.
- e) Finally, there is a focus on how to awaken peace leadership within oneself by becoming aware of one's own biases as well as developing the capacity to break down prejudices between people and build bridges of peace.

An Immersion Experience

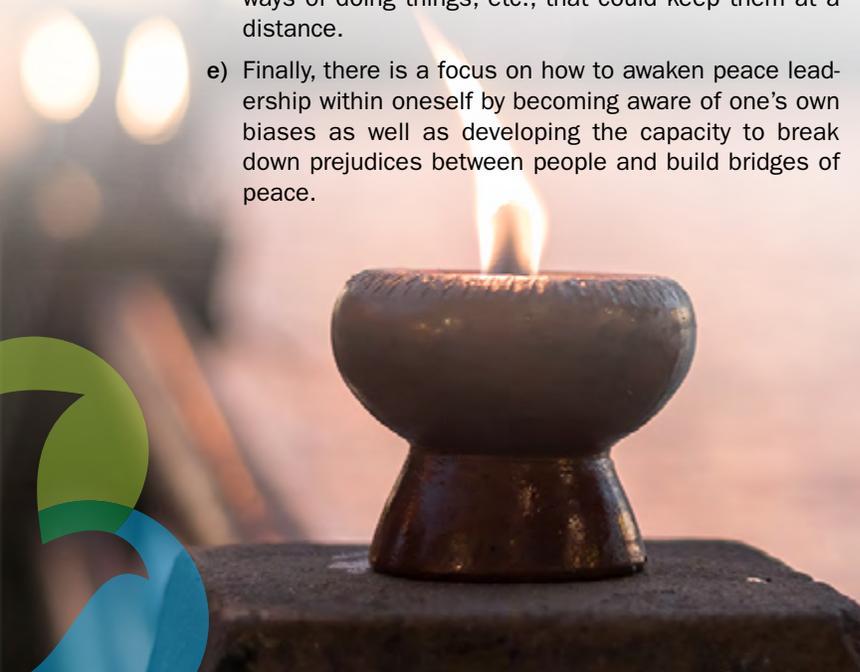
Each year, immersion students benefit from a week of peace formation. During the summer, a week of formation is also offered to anyone who wants to sign up for it. As part of the "*Processus et Mission*" (Process and Mission) seminar, our students get involved in specific projects with different groups in Montreal. This year, four groups of students are involved with children or young people with the goal of initiating training in how to become peacemakers.

Youth Commitment for Peace in Montreal

The following are excerpts from the testimony of eight students in Immersion two and three: Marie Berthe from Togo, Madeleine from Côte d'Ivoire, Agathe from Burkina Faso, Marie Monique from Rwanda, Hortense from Congo Brazzaville, Rufine from Cameroon, Luc from Belgium and Violaine from Canada.

Following the attack on the Great Mosque in Quebec City on January 29, 2017, we became aware of how much Quebec and the rest of the world needs peace. What future? How do we see peace? As part of the *Process and Mission* seminar, accompanied by Élisabeth Michaëly and Claire Lutz-Sierra, instructors in Integral Human Formation, we set up a collective project: *Les Secouristes pour la paix* (Relief Workers for Peace).

Since we are men and women concerned about the growth of young people and confident in their ability to bring about change in order to build peace, we reached out to them to show them how they are already actors of peace and how they can become even more engaged.





Uniting Different Cultures

“We shared with Alfredo Ramanandraibe, parish priest of Notre-Dame-des-Neiges in Montreal, the fire that is inspiring us to reach out and help young people between 12 and 18 years of age see themselves as actors of peace. Uniting different cultures is a very real need in this parish. The proposal to create a new group of young *Relief Workers for Peace* is helping to achieve this goal and make it a success. Following an announcement in the parish leaflet, fifteen young people signed up for the *Relief Workers for Peace* training. They come from different countries in Europe, Africa and the Americas.

We have already had three meetings with them; we meet one a month, from 3:00 to 4:30 p.m. At the first meeting, we collected their dreams for the present-day and all of them expressed their need for peace, which coincided with our objective. We created a relationship of trust with them by seeking out their interests through a question-and-answer game, songs, sketches and what it means to be a Relief Worker for Peace. Through their personal giftedness, and through their daily habits, our training helped them see their values and how they were making decisions for peace.”

Overcoming Fear of the Other

“By teaching them to examine their decisions, they were gradually discovering that an action done with love opens up to life and to peace. With these learning (or practical) skills, the teenage boys and girls begin with conscious decisions to build peace within themselves and in their surroundings. The parents are proud of the fruits of this project and are already seeing changes in the lives of the young people. One mother was telling us that her son is a little more cheerful and more open at home than before, which is fostering a better relationship between them.

One youth, who joined the group on the recommendation of his mother, said that he decides himself whether or not to come to the meetings. That decision came after a workshop in which the youths learned to recognize the ways that prevent them from freely making decisions that are values-based. Thus, they were able to recognize their personal pathways of “likes” and desires on the one hand and those of obligation, imposition on the other, thus moving them towards free decision making, which differs from reactionary decisions and impulsive action. They have learned to walk the line from impulse to decision, from obligation to personal commitment. They have seen how to move from acting out of impulse to a responsible decision, one that is rooted in their values.”



“Trusting one another, they managed to surpass the fear of the other (the unknown), a foundational experience that will allow them now to dare to take the step towards peace. Training continues in this manner with them.”

What We Have Seen Among our Students

We have seen people experiencing better relationships with authority. We have seen people from different countries sharing community life in harmony despite differences in culture and ways of doing things. People from “enemy” countries have become able to collaborate on joint projects. We have seen Tutsis and Hutus from Rwanda who had lived through the genocide, living together and sharing as brothers and sisters, when they were once enemies.

What We Have Seen with our Alumni

In the **Democratic Republic of the Congo**, postulants of the Sisters of St. Chrétienne are initiating children in becoming peacemakers with their director of formation.

In the **Central African Republic**, together with our alumni and students from different congregations (Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, Daughters of Wisdom, Missionaries of Christ the King, Little Sisters of Jesus, Montfort Missionaries and several indigenous congregations), Christians and Muslims follow peace formation together and then become ambassadors for peace in their community.

In **Rwanda**, couples are committing themselves to becoming families of peace and inviting other families to do so as well.

In **Haiti**, sisters from various congregations, including the Sisters of Charity of Saint-Hyacinthe, the Missionary Sisters of Christ the King, the Spiritans, are initiating children to become small builders of peace bridges in their schools and families.

In **Lebanon**, the Good Shepherd Sisters are initiating children to peace by giving them the opportunity to participate concretely in receiving Syrian refugee children, and doing so in war conditions.

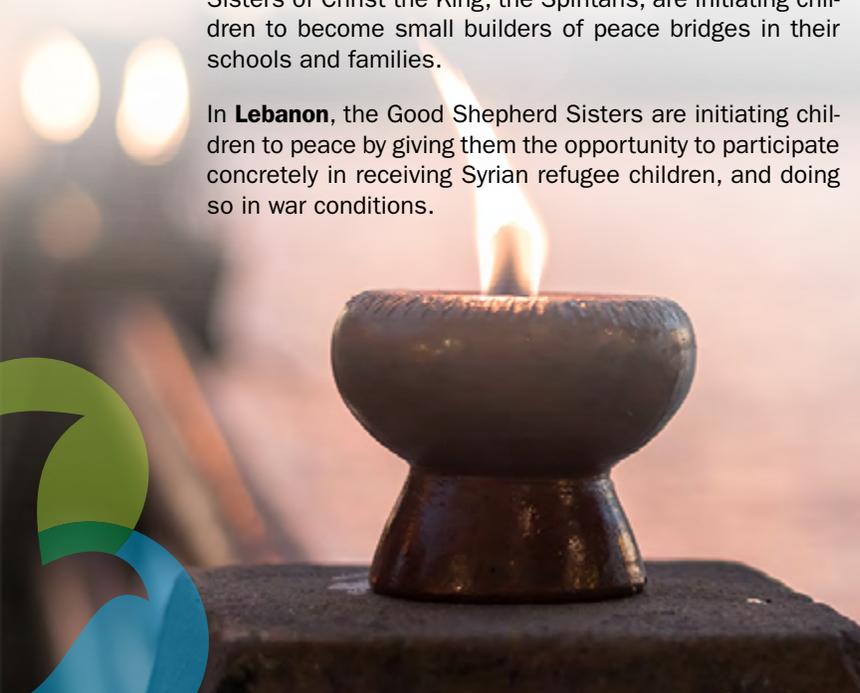


A Project for the Future

In **Colombia**, the Provincial Council of the Montfort Missionaries has decided to offer peace training to two groups starting in October 2017. The first group will be comprised of 100 people that will include their fellow Montfortian brothers, parish leaders, youth group facilitators, and men and women religious. The second group will consist of 250 lay Montfortians. The objective of this formation is to contribute to their country's efforts for the peaceful integration of former guerrillas into civil society.

Opening up to the other is an apprenticeship that is increasingly necessary in a world in which the stranger quickly becomes “threatening.” There are many formation courses in our different locations. The formation offered at the IFHIM was developed by one of our own¹ and was first tested in Quebec. Now it continues to reach people of all ages, both in this province and elsewhere. ■

¹ Marie-Marcelle Desmarais, «Un urgent besoin de bâtisseurs de paix dans tous les coins du monde» [“An urgent need for peacebuilders in every corner of the world”], *Le Magazine de la personne*, Montréal, IFHIM, vol. 3, n° 1 (mai 2002), p. 16-22.



Receiving... Passing it on...

Lorraine Caza, CND

At the summit of our Christian experience is the Eucharist that Paul spoke of to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 11:23: “For I have received from the Lord what I also handed on to you.” *Receiving... passing it on...* it is something that is said about our lives, it is said about our cultures, it is said about our education, it is said about material treasures, yes—but it is also said about immaterial riches.

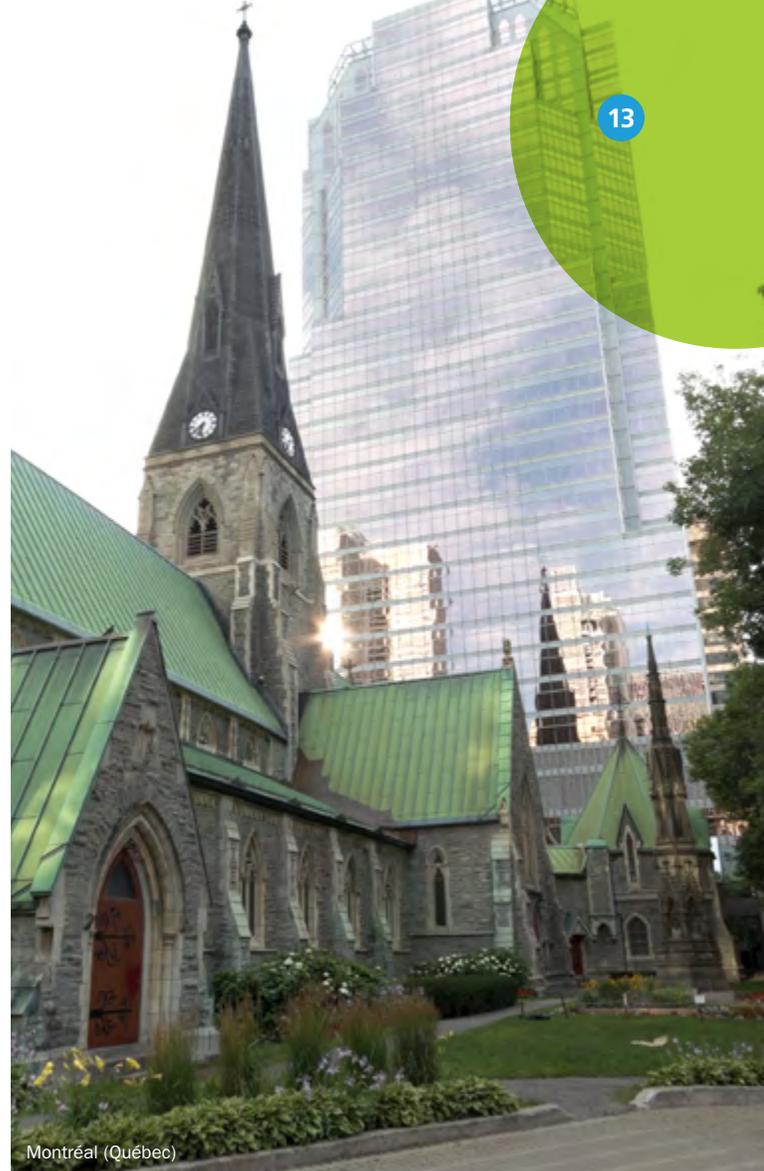
Leaving One’s Trace

I cannot refer to the reception-transmission binomial without remembering at our convent Chofu in Japan, 35 years ago, when I met a well-known theologian of the Reformed Church who had published a book on the theology of the suffering of God, a book that had greatly impressed me.

At the time, Professor Kazoh Kitamori confided to me that, during the war years when the book was published, certain colleagues and friends had made the following suggestion to him, since they found his work important. “Let’s bury 50 copies of your book in the mountains of Japan. If the worst happens to our country, maybe someday, someone will find one of these copies. The need will be great at that time to have access to this kind of thought.” So his colleagues and friends were basically recommending that Kitamori leave his trace. I often find myself advising people to do the same: to leave a trace of their passage, particularly in a time of transition like the one we are currently living in.

Not Without Suffering

I think of our sister, Jeanne Bossé, who, at the age of 96 and 97, agreed to be interviewed (twice) about her life on Japanese soil by one of the women whom she had long catechized. She told me: “I am happy with these two books,¹ it will allow me to extend my mission beyond the grave.” Basically, any educational mission extends well beyond the earthly life of the educator.



Jeanne Bossé was happy to offer her testimony to her beloved Japan, but she told me that this adventure also brought her the greatest suffering of her life. That was because the author and editor of the second book, for marketing reasons, refused to allow the name of Jesus to appear in the book. “But, as Jeanne never stopped saying, it was for Jesus Christ that I came and lived more than 50 years of my life here!” At the end of a sleepless night, she wrote out the text that she wanted to be included and they finally agreed to put it in an appendix. Yes, leaving one’s trace can require trials and sufferings...

Why Remain Silent?

This year we are celebrating the 375th anniversary of the founding of the city of Montreal, which was first called Ville-Marie. How much determination is needed to ensure that the origins of this establishment are not ignored!

¹ English translation of the titles of the two books published in Japanese: *Smile Brings Happiness* published at the age of 96. *Happiness Comes after Tears*, published at the age of 97.



The man who dreamed Montreal, Jérôme Le Royer de la Dauversière, and those who supported him in this extravagant project, the Maisonneuves, the Jeanne Mances, the Marguerite Bourgeoys, wanted to “celebrate the praises of God in a desert where the name of Jesus Christ has never been uttered.” They believed that French and Native Americans could together constitute a Christian community in the image depicted in the Acts of the Apostles. Does the undeniable mystical dimension of the beginnings of Montreal prevent proclaiming who the pioneers actually were? Is the same kind of marketing that silenced Jeanne Bossé playing out here as well?

Do Not Wait

People, families, communities and institutions are experiencing major anthropological and cultural changes in the immense social upheaval that we are currently undergoing.

How do we work today to ensure that the fundamental values and the meaning of life that have marked the lives of so many generations are not lost?

We must not wait for a time when we are already in the process of entrusting to outside persons such things as educational institutions, health centres, social projects, or cultural initiatives before we begin planning the transfer of the spirit of the work, the transfer of the means to ensure the growth and adaptation of “such and such” a service. Our baptismal vigilance obliges us to start right away, either by making wise decisions or by giving our help and support to those responsible for making those choices.

Questions in Search of Answers

Some people will recall a meeting in Montreal in October 2016 when the question for consideration was: Who will announce Jesus Christ in our corner of the world in 2025? It begs the question: Can we contribute in any way so that a distribution of the generous gifts from religious institutes will better ensure faith-education services in a future that is no longer so distant?

What importance do we give to intergenerational encounters within our respective institutes? What importance do we give to intergenerational encounters between or among different institutes? Such meetings are not without importance in terms of how to pass things on.

What interest and what support will we bring to initiatives enabling charisms to flourish in the worlds of education, health and welfare; institutions that will continue to humanize and spiritualize humanity in other ways? Do we encourage life stories not just within our ranks, but in families and in movements that have helped to humanize our environments?



Montréal (Québec)

Are we being attentive when young people point out to us that large sections of faith-inspired commitments in our societies are threatened with being totally eclipsed? I have in mind the concern of a Catherine Foisy, whose goal is to ensure that the immense contribution that Canadians make to foreign missions, on all continents, will continue to inspire tomorrow, the day after tomorrow, and so on. What kind of care are we taking of our material and immaterial archives? What concerns do we have to protect artistic treasures? And finally what initiatives do we take to give our members and to our communities a little “extra” in life? These questions apply to today, of course, but they also can be applied to the future.

Two Final Remarks:

- Behind Montreal’s founding is the mission of the Jesuits and their marvelous initiative of writing up an annual report on their engagements in the New World for a number of years. *The Jesuit Relations* played a major role in stimulating the missionary consciousness of 17th-century France: they truly assumed their responsibility for transmission, for passing on the news. Without the annual reports of the Jesuits, who would have dared the adventure of 1641–1642?
- For the Year of Consecrated Life, the Congregation for the Institutes of Consecrated Life and the Societies of Apostolic Life have offered us a circular letter entitled *Keep Watch! Journeying in the footsteps of God*.² I come back to the two icons highlighted in this Letter: the cloud of the Exodus (Exodus 40:36-38) and that of the prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17:1–2 Kings 2). The Word of God passed on across the centuries is the Word of God that I receive today and that I will not tire of passing on to others. And the cloud in the desert... it’s as small as a man’s hand and it continues to teach us to live. ■

² Published on September 23, 2014.



Sainte-Marie de Beauce: At the inauguration of the commemorative park and the unveiling of the plaques. In the foreground, Micheline Marcoux with the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception – © M.I.C.

Place Délia-Tétreault, Outremont – © M.I.C

Appointments with History

Micheline Marcoux, MIC¹

Keeping alive the memory of our family or community history in order to transmit its legacy to present and future generations is quite a legitimate desire. In this year marking the 375th anniversary of the founding of Montreal and the 150th anniversary of Canada, it is a good thing to highlight the history of religious communities and their legacy to this country.

So many women and men founders of religious congregations, as well as some of their members, have been at the origin of important works in the fields of health, education, social services, arts and other aspects that are often discreet but no less real. These women and men have contributed in both Quebec and the rest of Canada. There are some interesting creative challenges ahead to make these works known and recognized!

Initiating Projects with the Community

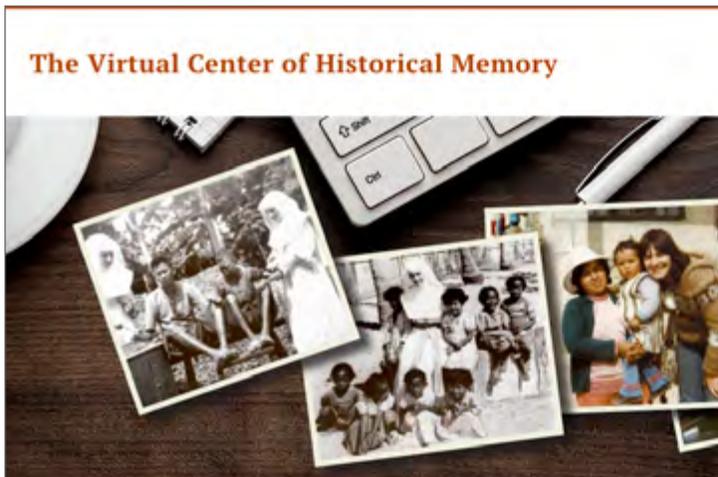
At a time when many people are seeing the urgency of safeguarding religious heritage and seeking ways to showcase it, some religious institutes are being proactive and promoting projects that work hand in hand with civil authorities and

people in the community. Several opportunities have been open to us in recent years to make our community a place where we remember those men and women who forged our future and who have made a significant contribution to society and the Church.

Pope Francis talks about going to the peripheries, getting out of our comfort zones, of going to people and of being with them. With the closing of heritage houses and buildings, some of which date back to the beginning of the colony, we are witnessing several manifestations of public recognition in those communities where their work was carried out.

Whether it's from a small municipality or a large city, the departures of religious communities does not leave indifferent those who have benefited from their services over the decades and for more than a century. On both sides, alliances are being created to keep alive the memory of those people and the works of their institute in the community.

What about each of our institutes or congregations? What initiatives can be taken to reveal this story to the younger generations and those to come?



www.pressemic.org – © M.I.C

Initiatives of the M.I.C. Sisters

To illustrate this point, I will share some examples experienced in recent years by my own institute, the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception (M.I.C.).

- In 2002, during our Institute's centenary, several religious or civil activities took place across the country, including an exhibition entitled "Sunshine in their Baggage," presenting aspects of the life of the Venerable Délia Tétréault, our foundress, and the work of her missionary institute. The exhibition was created by professionals from the *Musée de la Civilisation* in Québec City, in collaboration with a few sisters. Government assistance enabled it to be presented in three Canadian provinces, namely Quebec, Manitoba and New Brunswick.
- In 2015, for the 150th anniversary of the birth of our foundress, the team at the Délia-Tétréault Centre initiated a project with the professionals of the Outremont Art Gallery (GAO) to present an exhibition. Outremont municipal authorities and people in the community were honoured to contribute to this activity that recalled the history of nuns in their town for more than a century.
- In 2016, when our Mother House was being sold and the Délia-Tétréault Centre was being relocated to our house in Pont-Viau, these same professionals ingeniously managed to recreate Delia's Remembrance Room and the exhibition near the tomb of the Venerable Délia Tétréault, which was already in place. On April 18, 2017, municipal authorities in the city of Laval inaugurated the Délia-Tétréault Museum in that very location.

More Gestures of Recognition

- In July 2005, in Sainte-Marie de Beauce, Quebec, a commemorative park was dedicated to the religious communities that had previously worked or were still working there. Plaques were unveiled that told the story of the five congregations or institutes being represented in the park: Sisters of the Congrégation de Notre-Dame, Brothers of the Christian Schools, the Sisters of Charity of Quebec, the Oblates of Bethany and the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. "I want this park to remind us daily of the importance of the heritage that these religious communities have bequeathed to us and I want it to inspire in us the same ardour in the future development of our beautiful city," said the mayor about the site.
- On September 8, 2009, the City of Outremont inaugurated Place Délia-Tétréault, along with a commemorative sculpture on Maplewood Street, the cradle of the Institute. This was done on the occasion of the centenary of the first missionary mission to China. And on November 30, 2009, the City of Laval named the Berge Délia-Tétréault (near the Viau bridge) and inaugurated a similar sculpture commemorating the centenary of Pope Pius X's approval of the Institute.
- Since the opening of the Cause for Beatification of Delia Tétréault for the purposes of her canonization, the ties with the Tétréault family have intensified. In Marieville, Quebec – the birthplace of Délia – a commemorative plaque recalls the family home where she lived. Next summer, the city will officially open Délia-Tétréault Park.
- In another field of activity, on November 8, 2016, the *MIC Mission News* inaugurated the Virtual Center of the *MIC Historical Missionary Memory*, a website featuring "the digitization of an important Canadian heritage collection." In this collection, all the issues of the magazines *Le Précurseur* (French version) and *MIC Mission News* from 1920 to the present can be found. An invaluable resource for historians and researchers today and tomorrow!

These few events highlight the ties created with people from diverse backgrounds to keep alive the memory of our history. They are occasions of mutual pride and recognition of our common heritage, which is part of the heritage to be bequeathed to present and future generations. Some beautiful challenges have been met by working together and they carry with them the promise of new appointments with history! ■

¹ Since 2016, Micheline Marcoux, M.I.C., has been Vice-Postulator of the Cause for Beatification and Canonization of the Venerable Délia Tétréault, foundress of the Institute of the Missionary Sisters of the Immaculate Conception. She was Director and Editor-in-Chief of the magazine *EN SON NOM* (2008–2014). She also worked at the *M.I.C. Missionary Press* (1991–1997) and the *Mond-Ami Service* (1985–1990).

THE CRC AT A GLANCE

Mission Statement

Established in 1954, the Canadian Religious Conference (CRC) is an association that brings together 250 leaders of Catholic congregations of religious men and women in Canada.

“The CRC is both a voice for and a service to leaders of religious institutes and societies of apostolic life. Our mission is to encourage our members to live fully their vocation in following Christ. We support them in their prophetic witness to justice and peace within society and the Church. The CRC looks for innovative ways of interpreting faith and life so as to embrace the new vision of the universe.”

Mission statement adopted in 2010

Theological Commission of the CRC

The Theological Commission was established by the Administrative Council of the CRC in September 1999 to deepen the meaning of consecrated life according to a theological approach that integrates the contributions made by human and social sciences. The Theological Commission proposes future directions that will inform consecrated life in a creative and prophetic way while taking into account the various charisms of the congregations.

CRC Publications

Published three times a year, the *CRC Bulletin* presents reflections on different aspects of consecrated life in relation to the orientations and objectives of the Canadian Religious Conference.

Issued monthly, the *CRC Newsletter* (formerly *Le Lien CRC Link*) provides information on the commitments and activities of the CRC, on the life of religious congregations, on the life of the Church and on community groups involved in social justice.

