

Appointments with History

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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?

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 Tétrault, 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-Tétreault 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-Tétreault 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 Tétreault, which was already in place. On April 18, 2017, municipal authorities in the city of Laval inaugurated the Délia-Tétreault 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-Tétreault, 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-Tétreault (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 Tétreault for the purposes of her canonization, the ties with the Tétreault 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-Tétreault 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 Tétreault, 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).