

**NICOLLET'S CANADIAN MISSION AND HIS RELIGIOUS AND SOCIO-
EDUCATIONAL ACTIONS WITH THE RURAL COMMUNITIES OF GUIMARÃES
– MA (1953-1961)**

***MISSÃO CANADENSE DE NICOLLET E AS SUAS AÇÕES RELIGIOSAS E
SOCIOEDUCATIVAS JUNTO AS COMUNIDADES RURAIS DE GUIMARÃES – MA
(1953-1961)***

***LA MISIÓN CANADIENSE DE NICOLLET Y SU ACCIÓN RELIGIOSA Y
SOCIOEDUCATIVA CON LAS COMUNIDADES RURALES DE GUIMARÃES – MA
(1953-1961)***



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ABSTRACT: This article aims to present the religious and socio-educational actions of the Canadian Missionaries of Nicolet in Guimarães-MA from 1953 to 1965, a moment that is equivalent to their arrival and return to their country of origin. For that, we base ourselves on the formulations of Stephanou (2004); Micelli (1988); Montes (2012); and other authors who discuss the presence and performance of international missions in Brazil. We conclude that the performance of these missionaries and missionaries developed a set of strategies that strengthened their representation with the population of Guimarães-MA, specifically the rural populations.

KEYWORDS: Nicoletan Mission. Religious Actions and Socio-Educational Actions. Rural Communities.

RESUMO: *Este artigo tem como objetivo apresentar as ações religiosas e socioeducativas dos Missionários e Missionárias canadenses de Nicolet em Guimarães – MA de 1953 a 1965, momento que equivale a chegada e o retorno destes para o país de origem. Para tanto, nos baseamos nas formulações de Stephanou (2004); Micelli (1988); Montes (2012); e outros autores que discutem a presença e atuação de missões internacionais no Brasil. Concluímos que a atuação destes missionários e missionárias desenvolveram um conjunto de estratégias que fortaleceram sua representação junto a população de Guimarães – MA, especificamente as populações rurais.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Missão Nicoletana. Ações Religiosas e Ações Sócioeducativas. Comunidades Rurais.*

RESUMEN: *Este artículo tiene como objetivo presentar las acciones religiosas y socioeducativas de las Misioneras Canadienses de Nicolet en Guimarães-MA de 1953 a 1965, momento que equivale a su llegada y regreso a su país de origen. Para ello, nos basamos en las formulaciones de Stephanou (2004); Micelli (1988); Montes (2012); y otros autores que discuten la presencia y actuación de misiones internacionales en Brasil. Concluimos que la actuación de estos misioneros y misioneras desarrolló un conjunto de estrategias que fortalecieron su representación con la población de Guimarães-MA, específicamente las poblaciones rurales.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Misión Nicoletana. Acciones Religiosas y Acciones Socioeducativas. Comunidades Rurales.*

Opening words

In this paper, we will present the fundamentals and principles that guided the Canadian Mission of Nicollet and the socio-educational and religious actions belonging to its project with the populations of Guimarães - MA. To this end, we will make a brief historical rescue of the genesis of the Congregation and its arrival in Guimarães - MA. That said, we seek authors from the History of Education and Social Sciences who guided our analysis, without forgetting the social actors who directly lived with the religious Canadians in Guimarães.

We also carried out a survey of facts that led to the arrival and establishment of the mission in the country and, later, in Maranhão and the Baixada Maranhense, especially in the city of Guimarães, articulating it to the Restoration Movement of the Catholic Church in force in this historical-social context.

With this, we made use of this and printed sources (reports, photograph regiments) and testimonies, in an attempt to appropriate the performance of these missionaries in the social, religious and educational fields, mapping the actions developed by them and their implications in the reality of Guimarães - MA.

When we talk about the movement of international missions in the world, we need to place it in the broader context of the Movement for the Renewal of the Church. Catholic. This movement aimed to strengthen the Catholic religion through the discourse of popularization of the Church. For this, care practices were used, in addition to constituting a set of educational institutions.

According to Stephanou (2004), missions are religious initiatives aimed at the propagation of principles of Christianity among non-Christian peoples, and are based on foundations of Christian theology.

Such movements are structured or inserted in stable communities and seek to integrate, with greater or lesser success, Christian principles with the reality of life of the peoples in which they are implanted. In this way, they go beyond the religious sphere and assume a social, economic, educational, assistential and, often, also artistic and cultural dimension as a means of achieving their goals of spreading Christianity.

Thus, this paper is structured as follows: Initially we present in this session the theoretical-methodological aspects and the intentionality of the study in an objective and concise way; Next, we present the foundations that governed the international missions focusing on the antecedents of the Second Vatican Council, emphasizing the Nicoletanos in Guimarães - MA. In addition, we highlight the socio-historical aspects of the arrival of these

missionaries and the religious, welfare and educational work with the impoverished of that reality in the circumscribed historical period.

We hope that this article, the result of a Master's thesis defended in 2013 in the Post-Term Program in Education of the Federal University of Maranhão, will contribute to the studies that deal with the relationship between the International Catholic Missions and their religious, assistentialist and educational practices, especially in the reality of Maranhão.

The movement of International Missions and the antecedents of the Second Vatican Council

This is understood as an ecclesiological pastoral council concerned with the updating of institutional practices of the Church, renewing the process of formation of religious, promoting the emergence of a strengthened Church capable of serving the community and consequently God (BOFF, 1973).

The aforementioned council and its previous movements demanded from the parishes of the world a greater involvement with the communities, providing a dialogue that emphasized co-responsibility and social participation, that is, a church that worked on behalf of the excluded groups, transforming them into active Catholics.

Such a process did not have the function of establishing a philosophy of culpability, of eternal submission, but would aim to seek a Christian unity, so proclaimed by Pope John XXIII, one of its founders (PESSOA, 2013).

The First Catholic Church saw the Council and its antecedents as a process of great relevance for the Church in the twentieth century, since in it was found the paths to a popular theological revolution (VALENTINI, 2011). The religious emphasized it as a guide of orientation, because it carries a historical turn in ecclesial life, a movement of doing for the Church to enter the territory of the popular and the dissemination of Catholic doctrine (PESSOA, 2013).

To better understand the Movement for the Renewal of the Church, we must extrapolate the understanding merely aimed at the Second Vatican Council, imposing on us immediately a reflection on the movements that preceded it. To this end, it is necessary to understand the concern of the movement that had been taking place over time, determined by the very processes that were already taking place within the Catholic Church.

Prior to this moment, the liturgical movement had already been unleashing its products thereof, embodying mainly in the references of the Church of Pius XII in the 1940s and, later,

with Pope John XXIII (1958 to 1963), who was, in fact, who laid the foundations of the aforementioned Council.

One of the examples of liturgy restoration is the emphasis on Christian dates and commemorations such as Holy Week and the Christmas period, which were instituted as the main dates of the Church in 1955. The liturgical reform ideologically had been prepared and, concomitantly, dates and facts would have to be evidenced for the construction of the identity of the People of God, among them, the Family Week, the celebration of the Patron Saint and the control of the brotherhoods.

Another movement that had been working in the Church internally was the biblical movement. Its aim was the best preparation of ecclesiastics in matters pertaining to the sacred scriptures, as well as experts who were important in discussing the various themes of the Council.

One of the main reasons is that the number of evangelical and spiritist followers in all countries grew significantly in the 1950s and that, consequently, began to dispute the faithful with the Catholic Church.

This emergence of other religions brought some discomfort to practicing Catholics and the ecclesiastical organization began to confront a whole series of factors that put in question its values at the political, social and intellectual level.

This transformation converged in the shaking of its relations with the State. With the advent of the Republic (1889) and the promulgation of the Constitution of 1988, they weakened their connections with the centers of power, due to the crises of recruitment and relaxation of attractions and retributions offered by clerical careers.

The decrease in the number of faithful collaborators of the Church, caused by the expansion of competition with other laity, religious or ethical systems of thought, brought demotivation in the face of the search for a clerical career.

Several authors claim that one of the main immediate consequences of the Council's antecedents was the possible union or exchange between scholars and faithful of different and sometimes even opposite religious positions.

One wonders, in this context, where have bishops found or sought teachings and accuracy on theological and philosophical grounds? Let us not think that this tangle of conceptions is only the fruit of the Renewal Movement of Catholicism, even though we know that it brought the emergence and advancement in the theological conception. The need to

transform the institution's stance had already been said, written, disseminated or recorded by the preceding theological and philosophical world.

Credit is given to the background of the Council in putting together the universe of theological research, resulting in a great wealth of ideas, also leading the faithful to a leading role that would only have been felt with the extension of these foundations to the whole Church, which was previously available only to a few.

At this historical moment, lay Catholics were becoming more aware of their position within the Church. The background of the movement gave Catholics, through the presence of International Missions, substantial theological support made explicit in their letter of foundations and the view that "[...] the church is a people, and that in the force of baptism we have equal rights within that people" (NICOLLET'S CANADIAN MISSION REPORT, 1953, 20).

Catholic action provided the awakening of the laity, in which the Church was able to penetrate the masses. In this process, spiritual, social and economic problems felt by Christians were addressed, especially those devoid of material goods and distanced from the institution.

The Council would be only the synthesis, the point of arrival of a long work of research, study and liturgical synthesis initiated with its antecedents, and would also be the starting point for the most popular stage ever experienced. This stage has a strong appeal to the participation of all the faithful in the incorporation of the feeling of belonging to Catholicism.

In this context, the Canadian Mission Brothers of Nicollet is located, coming from the city of the same name in Canada, belonging to an offshoot of progressive Anglo-Saxon Catholicism and whose main foundation was social work and the development of missiological principles rooted in the construction of social protagonism, especially of the most popular strata of the world.

According to oral accounts of people who lived with Canadian religious, the Anglo-Saxon denomination has more to do with the geographical, location, and origin issues than with the congregation's theological roots. The choice of Our Lady of the Assumption as the greatest symbol of the congregation was due to the attempt to value [...] a saint so revered in Latin America and who brought us closer to our local Catholic roots, giving a Latin identity to the congregation (SANTA FREDERICA, 2012).

The Congregation of the Brothers of Nicollet was founded in 1945 by the then Canadian bishop André Barbeau who, dissatisfied with the conservative principles of the Church itself, built in parallel a current that revised the representations of the gospel, however, without

escaping the foundations and ideologies necessary for the order and behavior considered plausible by the ethics of Catholicism.

The mission of which this congregation was a part was guided by "[...] formation of leaders, the organization of people, charisms and resources in search of a consecrated life for all the faithful" (REPORT OF NICOLLET'S CANADIAN MISSION, 1953, 20). For this, religious should insert themselves within the communities, trying to propose strategies of action in order to trigger a process of knowledge of the hidden potentialities of people seen as consecrated.

For these missionaries, the organization of communities, mainly needy and rural, was not only a matter of movement and logic, but an apostolic requirement, almost "[...] a specific dynamic in the Christian community and in society" (REPORT OF NICOLLET'S CANADIAN MISSION, 1953, p. 22).

This mission saw in the need for spiritualization and in the principles of solidarity and organization the possibility of strengthening, first within the Church, and expanding to the community in which it was located.

There was no point in an isolated project of society that did not seek community organization. This principle was emphasized in the mission's own governing document, which provided that:

[...] the organization aimed to make the members leave their own subjectivism to reach the apex of the collective, betting on the communion of ideas and development together (BYLAWS OF NICOLLET'S CANADIAN MISSION, 1953, p. 25, our translation).

Another issue concerns the management of the community as part of the macro project of the Canadian Mission, considering that it needed to have control of practices and knowledge, disseminated and legitimized through true discourse (FOUCAULT, 2010), in addition to the forms of organization that met the Catholic premises of growth of the people, of the power of the Bible, of the word of God.

This vision was interspersed with conservative Catholic ideologies and more progressive strands (as the Canadians called themselves). According to Kadt (2007), the progressive vision was shared with post-war movements in the world, a humanist orientation, in which the deconstruction of "evil" would come as a result of the well-being of the population of the far reaches of Brazil, of the oppressed people, which was the large portion of the population.

The Catholic missions adhering to this paradigm saw in man their substratum and focus, their greatest commitment, supported by the banner of rupture with dependence and submission, which resulted in domination and social contradictions.

These movements emphasized the pioneering role of the Church in the development of formal and non-formal education, acting in the social field of excluded communities and at the same time strengthening the Church as an important social institution (KADT, 2007).

Some missions that arrived in Brazilian lands, when they visualized the catastrophic situations of destitution and poverty of the population, especially in the Northeast, began to criticize both the absence of provisions for religious assistance and the small proportion of resources directed to philanthropic confessional institutions in the 1950s. This transfer was around 2.5% of the budget directed to education (MONTES, 2012).

The posture of criticism of the exclusionary reality caused many religious to be confused with leftists, being often persecuted by local oligarchic forces. The international Missions, without meddling so much in government controversies, managed to build a human development as opposed to the economic, calling through their speeches and preaching forms of subversion and conservation.

These explanatory models were mixed and encouraged by dichotomous interests that sometimes encouraged the maintenance of the status quo, while preaching a transformative ideology. (KADT, 2007).

In this perspective, the religious Canadians denied centralized power, however, they believed in power in network, circular and only directed by those sent by God and who would strive to mobilize the "[...] poor without purpose [...]". To this end, they acted through informal education practices that aimed to unite people for the strengthening of Catholicism, "[...] with a people who speak one language and who are unique mediated by an effective system of communication, especially by leading the people to do God's will" (NICOLLET'S CANADIAN MISSION REPORT, 1953, p. 30).

The Canadian Mission placed great value on the principle of leadership, even if imprecisely, because the term would not be considered as a donative expression of a particular subject, but as a way of thinking proper to all subjects in the quality of social relations present within the organization process.

As one of the pillars of the Nicollets' action, leadership was discussed as follows:

We use the expression leadership as a global concept very capable of designating the ability of an individual to influence, motivate, make possible

for others to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organization of which they are members (REPORT OF NICOLLET'S CANADIAN MISSION, 1953, p. 34, our translation).

The aforementioned principle was confused with the ideal of protagonism transplanted to all practices experienced, especially in philanthropic actions - assistential, hygienist, educational - objectified in the communities, and especially highlighted in the educational practices of the educational institutions implemented and administered by it.

Given the above, we can affirm that the Canadian Mission of Nicollet guided its actions in Guimarães through this set of ideas that ground its interests and direct its strategies of propagation of its philosophical bases in the perspective of maintaining power in the various instances of society.

The missionaries of Nicollet in Guimarães – MA: religious and socio-educational actions

According to Stephanou (2004), Congregations are sets of religious belonging to the same order through a regular religious association. As far as Catholics are concerned, they are composed of priests, friars or nuns who organize themselves on the basis of common foundations, categories and principles. Although they differ in their most diverse ideologies and theological conceptions, they all converge in the sense of following Christian dogmas.

According to Araújo (2012), when trying to establish a renewed Catholicism in the interior of the State in the first half of the twentieth century, the missionaries made reference to the project of consolidation of the Church. This conception was disseminated in a very discontinuous way throughout the territory of Maranhão, because, in the first half of the twentieth century, very different and unequal material conditions were still experienced in relation to the rest of the country.

In the Baixada of Maranhão, this period was marked by the presence and strength of these Catholic congregations, with the "[...] traffic of missions that are established in this region to the coast, applying the ideas of renewal of the Church to the flooded and distant villages and villages located there" (PRADO, 1975, p. 28).

With this, there was a considerable decentralization of Catholic power – with the creation of the Prelature of Pinheiro and, later, of the bishopric of the same city – which, prepared by missionary action, brought to the region a structure that internalized the preaching

of standards that were previously presented only in an exception regime (PARÓQUIA SÃO JOSÉ, 2009).¹

Rome authorized the creation of a Prelature for the Western Lowlands of Maranhão in 1939, and entrusted it to the Italian Order of Missionaries of the Sacred Heart. This more forceful presence contributed to foster the creation of a cadre of individuals more in tune with orthodoxy, and who could function as local reference points about what a good Catholic had been (ARAÚJO, 2012).

The expansion of the ecclesiastical structure and its effectiveness together with the quantitative increase of a less syncretized Catholicism gave a differentiated matrix to the old ecclesiastical project of reform of popular culture. If Brazil was long officially recognized as Catholic, despite being profoundly plural in the field of religiosity, it seems to me that the Baixada Maranhense had been experiencing, since about the second half of the twentieth century, a process of internalization of Romanesque Catholicism (ARAÚJO, 2012, p. 39, our translation).

In Guimarães, influenced by the expressive number of descendants of Portuguese, Catholicism had a strength and power of decision even in administrative matters. The city had a Catholic representation, with a significant amount of events and religious achievements. In addition, there was a predisposition of the youth to graduate as priests and nuns in the seminaries and convents of the capital.

Thus, many young people moved from Guimarães to study and prepare priests at St. Anthony's Seminary and convents in the capital. Many were ordained others only had a desire to flee the unfavorable and poor conditions of the village. With this, it was perceived that the power of local Catholicism set up its cadre of religious supported by social inequalities.

On the other hand, it was the religious congregations that developed in the municipalities of Maranhão the work that the municipal administrations could not undertake. Merging philanthropic and welfare actions, the congregations united the foundation of schools, cultural centers, theaters, hospitals, asylums, etc. to the work of evangelization.

The various contemporary examples of intervention in the political space of organized religious agents, imposing on the political authorities their representation of the social order and public morals, contradict the sociological-political characterization of modernization. Thus,

¹ It is a type of ecclesiastical circumscription erected to meet peculiar needs in a territory (territorial prelatore) or a group of faithful (personal prelatore). The territorial and personal prelatore are similar to the particular churches and, like these, have faithful, clergy and own pastor (MONTES, 2012, our translation).

they repose the question of the boundaries and limits between public and private space, religion and politics, sacred and profane practices (BURITY, 1998).

These issues imposed on the Church an increasingly complex and contradictory involvement with the social world, since disputes for social capital and prestige arose, as well as fights for positions of power in public life as a consequence of the direct participation of ecclesiastics in the political scenario (MICELLI, 1988).

With this, the religious expanded their scope of intervention in public life, diversified their spheres of action, inscribed themselves in debates of the most diverse, not always focused on the question of spirituality, but made productive incursions into the ethical-moral, political and economic debates of the social world.

Specifically in 1950, a special mission of release arrives in Guimarães, that is, to perform Mass, headed by the then bishop of the Prelature of Pinheiro, D. Afonso Maria Ungarelli, bringing to the region news about the beginning of a set of actions of the Congregation of the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

The MSC, as they were known, arrived in the region only in 1949, because their arrival would be postponed due to the Second World War.

[...] When everything was ready for the journey of the first missionaries, World War 2 broke out and it was necessary to wait for the end of the conflict (1945), to start again and see what could be done. From then on, we engaged in this mission (TESTIMONY OF DOM CARMELLO CASSATI IN REFERENCE TO THE CANADIAN MISSION IN GUIMARÃES, 1996, p. 08, our translation).

These Italian religious "[...] founded both in Pinheiro and in Guimarães: schools, boarding schools, mothers' clubs, youth clubs, artistic centers, vocational schools" (OLIVEIRA, 2000, p. 45). In short, they promoted a great socio-educational and religious reform in the community, stimulating popular culture, religion and folklore, through the exhibition of theatrical and pastoral plays in the *Guarapiranga theater*.

In the perspective of disseminating their ideological universe, the Catholic missionaries of the Sacred Heart also made communication possible, through a system of speakers strategically installed in the city with the denomination of Voz Guarapiranga. This spread ways of being, thinking and acting Christian, through Catholic messages and songs, thus contributing to the standardization of behaviors and models of identity for the population.

The missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus also implemented the Artistic and Worker Center Vimarense, the Nucleus of Volunteers, the Parish School and the patronage of São José

to house poor male children, attending to their hegemonic project of society and taking advantage of both the representation of cultural granary and poor and abandoned village.

All these actions reflected those already developed in Pinheiro, because there they also founded gymnasiums, daycare centers, boarding schools, producing a much larger work, considering at that historical moment the strategic place of the Princess of the Baixada (FURTADO FILHO, 2000).

Already in the year 1955, the Canadian Mission arrives in Guimarães and Alcântara with a group of religious from the congregation Brothers of Nicollet, "[...] in good time to develop a prodigious religious and educational work" (OLIVEIRA, 2000, p. 171), headed by Father João Baptista Caya, accompanied by three others: Monsignor Marcel Pepin, along with Fathers Jorge Picard and Homero Proulx.

These arrive along with other missions that have been directed to other municipalities in the region, such as the case of St-Hyacinthe and Ottawa to Cururupu and Turiaçu, and Sherbrooke to Peri-Mirim and Bequimão.

Oliveira (2000, p. 47) records a great enthusiasm of the population with the arrival of the Canadian Mission in the 1950s and with the improvements that they could bring, not only in the spiritual plane, but in the educational and infrastructure plan of the city, in times of increase of the "[...] debauchery and poverty."

Figure 1 – Monument in honor of Our Lady of the Assumption



Source: O Vimarense (2009)

Photo 1 presents the Monument in honor of Our Lady of the Assumption, located on Rua Sotero dos Reis, erected in the 1960s by the religious of the Canadian Congregation of Nicollet. This intentional source represents the power of Catholicism in the local reality and the

imposition of symbols (BOURDIEU, 2007) that reinforce and determine such ideological power.

The Canadian priests found in Guimarães a population still very Catholic, however, with faithful who took turns among "[...] the caboclos of umbanda and mina entities and the actions of Christian popularity [...]" (OLIVEIRA, 2000, p. 51). From this, they implanted in almost all rural communities the Church of Our Lady of the Assumption and the Sunday catechism classes.

In these rural communities, mostly made up of blacks, religious and welfare services were taken to their satisfaction, given the existence of saints of "diabolical religions" – as the Afro-descendants were called – who were camouflaged by the Catholic images on the altars of the cafuas of black families (OLIVEIRA, 2000).

Figure 2 – Arrival of the Sisters of the Assumption in Guimarães in 1957



Source: Parish House Collection. 1954

Photographic image 2 records the sisters who arrived in Guimarães in 1957 after the coming of the Canadian Fathers with the intention of contributing to the process of catechization and schooling of the Vimarense people. All of the above, with their clothing consisting of gray habit for the mothers superiors and cream for the others, rosary in hands and crucifix on the neck, universal dress of nuns from traditional congregations, even the religious of Nicollet calling themselves progressives. It can be deduced that they mixed symbols of traditional Catholicism with progressive discourses and postures so that confusions were not built in the representation of the faithful caused by very abrupt changes, fearing that the Church would lose its identity (SÃO GUILHERME, 2012).

Initially, came Sister Magdalene Brochu, Sister Georgette Desrochers, Sister Maria Adélia, Sister Maria Assunta, Sister Yvette Reymound, or, as she was called, Sister Santa Caridade, along with the others, Teresinha, Sister St. Wenceslaus, Gertrude, Ana do Salvador and Rita Dellors. It seems to us that the aforementioned sisters began to adopt names in Portuguese as a way of establishing greater proximity to the local society.

They were the mediators of the welfare actions that, through a philosophy of solidarity and breaking sin, injected teachings about the need to cultivate the fear of God and to follow the mission of Jesus on earth and, especially for women, to achieve the Marian ideal of obedience to their husband.

Figure 3 – Facade of the Convent of the Sisters of the Assumption in Guimarães

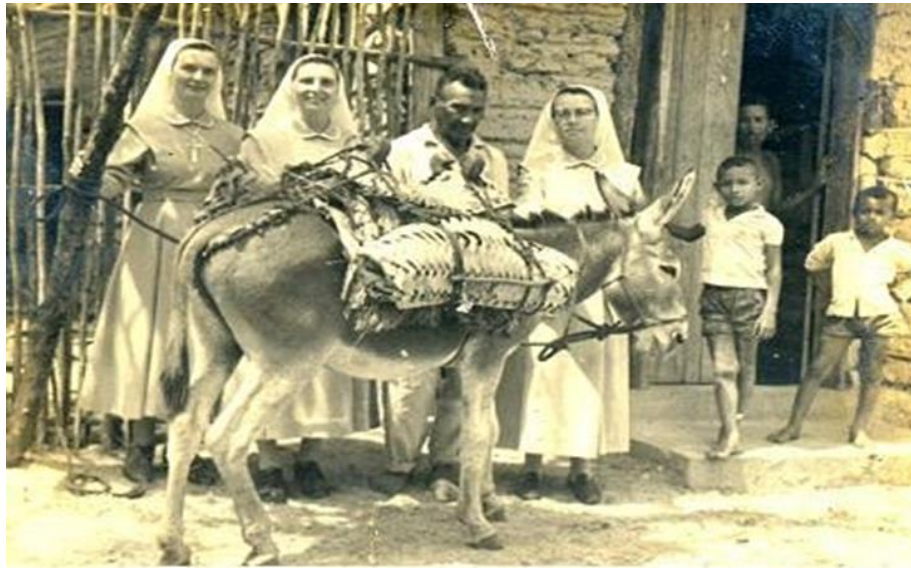


Source: O Vimarense (2012)

This building housed the nuns and young women of the region, who were driven to follow the religious life and become servants of Our Lady of the Assumption. The space consisted of 10 rooms, a chapel, a prayer space, a living area and a refectory. It was a colonial house that had belonged to a nobleman Portuguese in the early seventeenth century.

The said mansion was built by slaves with stone, sand and lime. Currently operates in this place the Union of Rural Workers, and there the nuns developed a set of religious activities and accommodated dozens of young women of humble origin.

Figure 4 – Canadian nuns visiting the Quilombola Community of Damasio, 1957



Source: INESA Archive

The photograph above depicts the visit of the nuns Sister Ana do Salvador, Sister Maria Adélia and Sister Rita to the interior of Guimarães, serving the needy families of the black community of Damásio. It features children selling water along with their farmer parents. The humility of the house reflects the conditions of poverty experienced by a large portion of the rural population of the municipality.

In this visit the above nuns maintained the first contact with this community teaching health and hygiene practices in addition to encouraging prayers and attendance at Masses. The Damasians welcomed them very well (CUBA, 2012, our translation).

The *little Canadian sisters*, as they were affectionately called by the population, went to the homes of poor and black families in the countryside, gave guidance and taught domestic practices and body care, for protection against diseases, in addition to attending to what, according to them, was lacking in the inhabitants of that place, which was the "[...] absence of God the Father almighty" (CUBA, 2012).

The investment in issues related to hygienic education was linked to the intensification, in the mid-twentieth century, of the debates on hygienism (ROMANELLI, 2010). This ideology emerged as an emerging movement associated with the naturalistic discourse in vogue. He advocated a healthy life in the perspective of eradicating diseases seen as coming from miserable populations and that had already been extirpated in developed countries.

In this perspective, the nuns of Niccolet began to focus mainly on children, since many made the streets their spaces and did not have habits of cleanliness and daily cleanliness. As a result, diseases such as worms' diseases and epidemics of poverty proliferated: tuberculosis, gout, stupor, roundworm, among others.

The fact that Canadian religious were well received in the communities is related to the delivery of donations that appeased the conditions of hunger and poverty, achieved in local commerce. Through this action, they emphasized the power of God's word and education, encouraging parents of families to send to the seminary and convent those who tended to the profession of faith to serve God as priests and nuns. Those who were sent by their parents would have refuges in the boarding school of the Parish House and in the Convent for the achievement of their goals of serving God. The house served in the form of a Major Seminary the children of the popular class, who decided to follow the mission of priests and nuns from the schools of the congregation.

Many went there to escape abandonment and poverty, since most of the boys from poor families, when they were not fishermen, were water carriers and sold this wealth so difficult in some localities for the survival of the families to which they belonged.

Figure 5 – Sisters of the Assumption with children selling water, 1957



Source: Parish House Archive

From left to right, the sisters Teresinha, Maria Adélia, Gertrude, Maria Assunta, São Venceslau, São João and Rita, again with boys from the water transport in Guimarães. The fact that the children dedicated themselves to the sale of water to support their families brought as a consequence their isolation from contact with the school, thus making it difficult to overcome the abyssal poverty to which they were destined.

In this perspective, water, due to its scarcity, assumed great importance in the mid-1950s, and this element was fundamental, not only related to the construction of public works, as an agent of disease prevention and health promoter, but, mainly, it was a factor of economic subsistence of poor families.

Thus, the first great achievement of the Canadians was the creation of a structure of treatment and access to water built with bamboo, being until today boasted by the people of Guimarães.

However, in the communities, the nuns faced this initial difficulty with the population, because water was conceived as a bargaining chip and every house should have a colt so that the larger "boys" would sell water in the greater Guimarães, something that the religious did not accept. The non-acceptance of this practice was due to the fact that it hindered the realization of the hegemonic project of educating children and, at the same time, propagating the Canadian Catholic work.

The priests also conducted studies on access to communities, financed the construction of small local roads, clearing and reaching localities that lived in total isolation.

Thus, the Brothers of Nicollet initially organize the social conditions of the Vimarense people, meeting the needs, which the public power could not offer. To achieve its objectives, it prepared the space for the implementation of its educational project through improvements in the social field of Guimarães.

The socio-educational actions were installed with a focus on a generational direction that ranged from professionalizing issues to actions that united assistentialism, non-formal education and sensitization about health actions. These devices were present in the daily life of the institutions maintained by the men and women religious.

Initially, with the tutelage of the Kindergarten St. Joseph, there was an articulation for the development of actions that united the teachings of the sacred scriptures for the children served in the institution. In primary school, schools were referred to assistance actions to improve their conditions of misery, from which most children were submerged.

A set of educational actions aimed at professional training was also developed through the creation of Vila Gem in 1963. This offered technical courses to young and adolescent students of the confessional educational establishments of the congregation and some actions of guidance on food and nutritional issues (PESSOA, 2013).

In all the activities developed inside the establishments, they were articulated to other dimensions both to the aspects of health, nutritional practices and religious actions. The nuns

performed "[...] visits when they understood that children and adolescents were going through situations of penury" (CARDOSO, 2012). Thus, the condition of nurses and caregivers of the nuns legitimized a work that united assistentialism and education, and the teachings of Catholicism were disseminated in these meetings.

According to Pessoa (2013), diverse congregations, regardless of origin, tended to carry out actions that united education and assistentialism camouflaged in a typology of socio-educational actions.

Such actions were consistent with the republican proposal to civilize the population, disciplining and moralizing their customs through the inculcation of civic-patriotic and not only religious values. According to CUBA (2012), "in the mothers' club we prayed and sang the hymn, on many occasions we praised Mary Mother of God and the homeland. They learned to sing the hymn with us." On these occasions "food was served and there was talk of cleanliness, care of the woman with body and respect for the husband" (CUBA, 2012).

In this same way, the youth was also attended by socio-educational and religious actions, which, in their case, were mediated jointly and the scenario for the dissemination of this knowledge were the confirmation classes, both on the radio *A Voz da Paróquia*, and in the Teatro Guarapiranga. Given this, both the radio with its programs disseminated by the loudspeaker attached to the church of the Mother of Guimarães and the Guarapiranga Theater maintained by the Catholic Church, specifically by the Canadian missionaries fulfilled the function of teaching the Catholic faith according to the principles that guided the antecedents of the Second Vatican Council.

Most of the socio-educational actions were developed by the Professional School of Vila Gem, which was a professional institution founded by the Canadian religious of Nicollet in 1963. This institution served young people and adolescents of the popular class and students of high school education who, faced with economic difficulties, needed a mechanical or technical craft of agricultural practical arts for the boys. In this space, professionalization practices were mixed with Bible readings, and the activities were preceded by prayers and observations by the instructors (PESSOA, 2012). In addition, "[...] the students were checked for their clothes and nails, whether they were clean and clean, about the care of the body, the physical and mental aspect" (NICOLLET'S MISSION REPORT, 1963).

According to Pessoa (2012) this establishment guaranteed its inmates food, constant attention to health, in addition to providing the sustenance of those with greater difficulty in

maintaining themselves. It was administered by Father Marcel Peppin, who managed its material and pedagogical resources.

This institution was supported by donations from Italy, Canada and France, and that paid for the workshops and their instructors (PESSOA, 2012). This also demonstrates the existence of hygienist practices that leave reminiscences in Brazilian education for many decades (ROMANELLI apud PESSOA, 2010).

These practices would be aimed at the dissemination and strengthening of the Catholic Church, which sought, through socio-educational actions articulated to religious practices, a positive representation through their action with the Vimarensense society.

Final remarks

This research is an excerpt from our Master's thesis in Education and intended to discuss the implications of the presence of Nicoletano missionaries in the reality of Guimarães - MA in the period from 1955 to 1965, a period that is characterized as the arrival and return of these religious to their country of origin, specifically Canada.

We attest that the coming of these religious is related to the antecedents of the Second Vatican Council and the desire of the Catholic Church to popularize its dogmas through welfare and socio-educational practices aimed at the dissemination of its religious ideals.

These practices would be strategies for dissemination and strengthening of the Catholic Church, which builds this positive representation through its action, mainly with the rural communities of Guimarães, and women and men obeyed the social roles necessary for such maintenance.

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