

EDITORIAL

La Salette

VISION & MISSION



By Fr. Thomas Vellappallil, ms

Vol 15-2012# 6

Dear Co-missioners,

The saying is true that it is not the look but the content that matters most. Nevertheless I had the desire and I have been dreaming to get this newsletter printed in color. The FIRST IMPRESSION PRINTING COMPANY in Stoughton, MA has offered to do the job for a reasonable price. Meantime, I also thought of giving a new look to the newsletter by changing the design. Mr. Joseph Francis, a friend of mine has helped me to materialize this change. I hope you will welcome the new format. Thank you.

Two months ago, I published the history of La Salette Mission in Burma, which was a report prepared by Fr. Bernie Taylor, MS. Fr. Philip Naw Aung, MS was recently elected as the new director of the La Salette Community in Burma (Myanmar). I knew Fr. Philip from way back when we lived in the La Salette complex in Silang, Cavite in the Philippines. He has visited the United States in the past and just recently he was here to attend the General Chapter of the La Salette International which was held in Willamantic, Connecticut from April 15 through May 5. Upon my request, Fr. Philip sent me information on his La Salette journey and his dreams and hopes for the La Salette Mission in Burma. The pictures are taken on the occasion of the feast day of La Salette.



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Fr. Philip Naw Aung, MS.

I was born on Decemeber 11, 1973 in Kachin State located in the northern part of Burma near China-Burma Border. Among the five siblings I am the fourth child. Both my parents were teachers by profession. When I was baptized, I was named after St. Philip, the Apostle.

It was in 1991, a few months after I passed high school, a diocesan priest who was very enthusiastic of Religious life took notice of me and came to my family. He made the necessary arrangement and I was sent to Prome Diocese which was founded by the American La Salette Fathers. Eventually I arrived at the La Salette seminary in the Philippines in 1993.

I went through Philosophy and Theology as well as other religious formations in the Philippines. I finished my Philosophy in 1998 followed by a year of Postulancy and Novitiate respectively. Then I made my first religious profession on May 1, 2000 followed by Perpetual Profession in 2003. I was ordained a priest (together with six other La Salettes) on May 4, 2004. Then in October of 2005, we (five Mynamar La Salette Priests) went back to Burma to re-establish the mission in Myanmar.

I worked as an Assistant Director and Treasure of the District when we started the mission. I worked in the Shrine in Mandalay for a year. Then I joined the mission preaching team in 2007. From 2008 to 2010, I took up “Formative Spirituality Course” in Bangalore, India. After returning from India, upon the request of Bp. Francis Daw Tang of Myitkyina Diocese, I was assigned in St. Patrick’s Intermediate Seminary in Myitkyina for a year and currently working as the director of St. Luke’s Catechist School for a year and half now.

At present, we are doing ministries in two dioceses, Mandalay and Myitkyina. Though initially we started in Mandalay diocese, two years ago we expanded the mission in Myitkyina diocese upon the invitation of the local ordinary. There has been an invitation from the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Myanmar to work in the national commission of Justice and Peace. Though each member is being assigned to a particular ministry, everyone works together preaching retreats, conducting seminars and workshops when there is an invitation. In fact, retreat preaching has been a very vital part of our mission since day one.

In Mandalay diocese a Marian Shrine and five parishes are entrusted to the care of the La Salette Missionaries. The Shrine of Our Lady of Holy Rosary in Chantargone, Mandalay has served as the

Center for the works of the La Salette Missionaries and it is fast developing. With the effort of the La Salettes, the generous contributions of the benefactors and the people's love for Mother Mary, the shrine is fast growing. Pilgrims flock to the shrine during the feasts of the Holy Rosary and Lourdes. Pilgrims gather here on a daily basis. The shrine accommodates retreats, seminars and different kinds of gatherings.

The La Salette Missionaries have been trying hard to develop faith communities in their respective parishes. Aside from the regular faith enrichment programs, church construction, road and bridge building, organizing people to get electricity to the villages and other development programs are being conducted.



For two years, the La Salette were able to help out in the Diocesan Intermediate Seminary taking the post of Spiritual Director. At present, Fr. Lucas, MS is working in St. Aloysius Minor Seminary of Mandalay Diocese as the Spiritual Director.

In Myitkyina Diocese, the La Salette have responded to the invitation of Bishop Francis and two priests were assigned there for the past two years. Initially they were assigned in the formation of the seminarians in St. Patrick's Intermediate Seminary. Eventually, the Bishop requested Fr. Philip, MS to take care of the Catechist Formation Program conducting Two Month Renewal Course offered to 700 catechists working in two dioceses. Fr. Jerome, MS has

been tasked to oversee the development of Holy Cross Shrine as Spirituality Center and a place of Pilgrimage in Myitkyina Diocese.



There are two members doing ministry abroad. Fr. Valentine, MS has been a part of the team working at the Shine on the Holy Mountain, in France. He has been there for the past two years. Fr. Nico, MS joined

International Community at the Attleboro Shrine about a year ago. Fr. Bernard Taylor, MS has been very active in the relief program for the storm (Nargis) victims. Recently he is into helping the farmers in the affected areas to have high yielding crops.

Since Burma is opening up and has shown some signs of progress and growth in many



areas, the Catholic Church Mission too has been expanding. There are many opportunities for mission works. The humble dream of the district is to become an effective Myanmar La Salette Community and make a unique contribution to the Myanmar Church. Establishing a La Salette Shrine and bringing La Salette Spirituality and the message of Our Lady of La Salette to the people of Burma would be a unique contribution to the Church of Myanmar while doing faithfully whatever ministries are entrusted to the mission.

The Church of Myanmar is still blessed with abundant vocations at this moment. A lot of young men are being attracted to the La Salette

way of life and their ministries. In fact the seminarians who are college graduates have come to La Salette without any vocation recruitment. We believe that the stability and effectiveness of the mission work and its expansion are very much determined by our vocation and the formation given to each of us. Therefore, the formation of young candidates and the ongoing formation of each member is a crucial and vital part of the mission of the District.

When the first missionaries went to Burma seventy five years ago, there were a lot of challenges and difficulties. With their firm spiritual life and zeal for the mission they were able to establish a faith community in Prome Diocese. They were instrumental in the formation of the many priests and bishops working in that Diocese. Because of their effort, the love of Our Lady of La Salette has been deeply implanted in the hearts of the many faithful, priests and bishops. The seemingly impossible dream of La Salettes returning to Burma has been made possible with the efforts of some dedicated La Salette missionaries trusting in Divine Providence and the prayer of Our Lady who wished to spread her message of reconciliation to all nations. We can only appreciate their hard work and enthusiasm. May the Good Lord continue to shower abundant blessings upon all the people who have been part and parcel of the mission in Myanmar. We gratefully remember the founding fathers as we prepare to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the presence of La Salette in Burma this coming November.



You could continue your support of our Missions by including them in your will.

Should you wish to do so, our legal title is:

North American La Salette Mission Center, Inc.