

EDITORIAL

La Salette

VISION & MISSION



By Fr. Thomas Velloppallil, ms

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Dear Co-missioners,

Through the grace of our baptism we have received the Holy Spirit to continue the same mission Jesus left to his Church: Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Mt 28: 19-20). Every faith-filled person is a member of the missionary Church charged with preaching the good news of salvation. Our missionaries, who indeed left their homeland to venture forth in proclaiming that faith, will be the first to acknowledge that they are not alone in striving to fulfill that mission. Yes, Jesus is with them always and so are you who sustain them in their efforts. With that Spirit to strengthen and guide us, we work together to renew the face of the earth.

We give thanks each day at mass here at the Mission Center for all the help we receive for our missions through the generosity of so many people like you. We are enabled to support the many missionary activities such as education of so many poor children, meeting their basic needs such as food and clothing, formation of seminarians and catechists in mission countries, to assist needy families, to give aid to disaster stricken villages and towns, to sponsor programs for Catholic youth, to build schools and churches. May God bless you for your love and support for our missions.



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In the La Salette parish in Las Termas, Argentina, a similar program helps the diocesan Saint Vincent de Paul service fulfill its mission to help the poor. Such collaboration is a sign of a church aware of the obligation to work together for the sake of the kingdom. Las Termas has its share of the problems of addiction and violence affecting most corners of the globe. A parish program provides out-patient treatment and counselling. The parish office of Human Rights address instances of family violence detected through Our Lady of La Salette Parish school. The forms of violence vary from

physical to the prostitution of children. Attempts are made to direct people to services appropriate to their problems. A psychologist, an educator and a social worker provide individual and group assistance for those needing psychological aid. This care is directed toward children with problems, which of course winds up addressing problems in the family. The parish hostel is a residence for teens from the “campo” where there is no high school. The teens stay at the hostel during the week so they can study in the city. They return to their families on weekends. Though in need of urgent repairs, the building also serves as a place for meetings, soup kitchen, catechesis, etc.



In the parish center at Our Lady of La Salette Parish in Cordoba, Argentina, psychological assistance for individuals and families is available. Children, adolescents, young adults, married couples and others take advantage of this service. The program is more than counseling. It involves educational support and literacy classes (primarily for Bolivian women immigrants). Last year the project helped to organize a small library in the rural center in Villa Esquiú. There is collaboration with other institutions helping to better relationships in the school environment and in youth groups. This aspect of reconciliation directly expresses the charism of the La Salette Missionaries. Project “Thirty Families” was originally suggested and encouraged by Fr Dennis Loomis, MS. It works very simply: thirty needy families receive the equivalent of \$25 a month. Three women of the parish who have themselves experienced poverty are responsible for determining the recipients and distributing the funds. Fr Dennis said “you can’t help everyone all the time, but you can help some people some of the time”. Those who receive aid are asked to pray for vocations.

An update of our presence in Argentina and Bolivia - Fr. Norman Butler, M.S.

In the La Salette Missionaries Region of Argentina/Bolivia a wide variety of services are available to those in need. What they have in common is compassion. Every activity tries to be faithful to the gospel by concrete service: feeding the hungry, consoling the sad and disoriented, responding to the drug program and so on. Each program tries to be Jesus present, offering hope and healing.

One of the most costly projects is in the parish in Cochabamba, Bolivia. A soup kitchen for children in the area serves about 180 children Monday through Friday. A school support program offered through the archdiocese of Cochabamba functions in coordination with the soup kitchen. New last year in Our Lady of La Salette Parish hall was a “school” of Art and Culture. It was so successful that this year it hopes to include instruction in painting and music.

Fr. David Cardozo, MS, the pastor of the Cochabamba parish speaks about their program to help empower women. “This project is designed for women from poor neighborhoods, on the fringes of our parish. We try to provide an opportunity to learn how to paint on cloth, knitting, jewelry making and a variety of practical skills. This past year we added a workshop on cake-making. In addition the project creates bonds between people, friendships crop up creating the human space where the women feel free to talk about their life experiences. This in turn creates the opportunity for evangelization which the women receive as truly Good News.” At Christmas time a four day mission brings the real meaning of Christmas to many homes and to many children of the many neighborhoods in the parish. The mission concludes with a party in the parish center featuring puppets, presents (very plain and simple to be sure), snacks and general rejoicing. For two weeks in the summer sports and recreation combine with social and spiritual education. There is a great emphasis on ecology and ways to help conserve water and create a cleaner environment.



Father Alfredo Daniel Velarde, priest and Missionary of Our Lady of La Salette, was born on October 22, 1953 in the province of Tucuman, Argentina, to a very religious family and so from childhood his faith was nurtured. When the moment came to decide on his future, he felt the calling from Jesus to be a “fisher of men” and searched until he found in Mary of La Salette what he wanted to be: a disciple at the service of the People of God, carrying, proclaiming and announcing the Good News “making it known to all people”. Setting his course he made his first profession of vows on February 29, 1976. He continued his preparation and was ordained priest on Sept 15, 1981 in the parish of Our Lady of Perpetual help in the city of Las Termas de Rio Hondo, in the province of Santiago del Estero. From that time he always demonstrated his commitment to his ministry which was evident in his pastoral activity. As a young priest he was concerned to gather together the youth that they might take up the Cross and the Gospel in order that with their lives they might transform society. His efforts were many including: The Christian Music festival, gathering youth to express their faith in song; the formation of the youth group “Juan Bradford” where he animated the youth in mission, evangelization and commitment to others. In the context of the youth group he accompanied young people exploring the consecration of their lives to the Lord.



He was a priest committed to Social Justice. For him it was important that all be one in love. He collaborated in the development of local artisans, promoting their work continuing his support for the National Basket Festival. It was a way to promote and dignify the artisanal labor of rural people. This he carried out through Catholic Charities in the parish. He experienced loneliness, persecution and imprisonment. During the military dictatorship (in Argentina 1976-1983) he had to stand firm with his voice and his action forming in the parish an Office Of Human Rights where together with religious men and women, laity (professionals and non) he raised his voice and action in favor of Peace and Justice. His great desire and preoccupation was to establish firmly in each individual who labored along with him Gospel values and for that reason with great courage he founded Our Lady of La Salette School in 2006. Today it contains every educational level making up the Argentine Educational Formation. In spite of failing health on April 22, 2017 he made reality the dreams of youth and adults establishing the Institute for teachers formation In English. It would take many pages to list all his life's works, big and small. Nevertheless all that he taught remains in the hearts of those who journeyed with him. He was passionate in “carrying the cross, announcing the gospel and denouncing injustice”. His much beloved people, especially the children and youth of La Salette School, with hearts still heavy because of his physical absence, remember him in each activity and through his words, actions and above all his “great love for others”. Fr Alfredo passed away just recently while serving as the director of the La Salette Region of Argentina and Bolivia. By Maria Paula Rojas (Director of Our Lady of La Salette School, Termas de Rio Hondo and translated by Rev. John Higgins, MS).



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