

EDITORIAL

# La Salette

VISION & MISSION



By Fr. Thomas Vellappallil, ms

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*Dear Co-missioners,*

“Love is our mission” is a theme and phrase I often hear. “To offer one’s life in mission is possible only if we are able to leave ourselves behind.” said Pope Francis at the World Day of Prayer for Vocations in April of this year. Fr. Al Benedick who is the Vocation Director for the La Salettes in the Philippines presents his struggle in promoting vocations to religious life and priesthood in the modern world where young people are afraid to make commitments for life. Fr. Philip, who is the Superior for the La Salettes in Myanmar brings out in his article the reality and difficulty of reaching out to people in love and service when they lack in basic needs like clean water, electricity, food, clothing and means of education for their children who are less fortunate especially in the third-world countries. My inspiration comes from the thoughts and feelings of John Milton, an English Poet, who lost his eyesight when he reached the age of twenty three. At first he argued with God, then he blamed God but he felt sorry later and writes in one of his poems, “They also serve God who only stand and wait.” Therefore let us love and serve the way we are, because remember we are always somebody in the eyes of God.



**NORTH AMERICAN  
LA SALETTE  
MISSION CENTER**

4650 South Broadway  
Saint Louis, MO 63111-1398  
(314) 352-0064  
Fax (314) 352-3737  
e-mail: [lsmc2@charter.net](mailto:lsmc2@charter.net)  
Web site: [www.lsmc.org](http://www.lsmc.org)

# Water Purifying Facilities Project at Holy Rosary Shrine, Mandalay, Myanmar

By Fr. Philip Naw Aung, MS

## Introduction to the place:

Holy Rosary Shrine at Chanthagone Village is a diocesan shrine and a pilgrimage center for upper Myanmar. Though everyday people come to the shrine, in October thousands gather here to celebrate the feast day of our Lady of the Holy Rosary. The shrine, located in the heart of the country, offers spiritual renewal programs, retreats, days of recollection, seminars and workshops. The shrine can provide simple accommodations for about three hundred people. This shrine also serves as a parish church for about one hundred families living in nearby villages.



Fr. Philip Naw Aung

## Confronting Issue:

One of the issues these villagers face is the water situation that poses health hazards both in their homes and at the shrine. Though water is abundant, it has heavy lime content and therefore is not portable. Hospitalization due to kidney stone problems is very common. Most people do not have the income to afford medical treatment. To meet medical expenses many must sell the land they live on and their belongings. The water is about fifteen feet below ground and some have tried to dig deeper in hopes of finding better water, but the lime content remains almost the same. Buying purified water for drinking means less money to spend on other basic needs like food, clothing etc. It is also not affordable to buy purified water for cooking.



## Proposed Project:

There is a critical need for building water treatment facilities. Clean water will give these families freedom from water related diseases and better health will result in greater ability to provide and meet the basic needs of their families. Good water also will benefit the thousands of pilgrims who come to the shrine each year. The cost of this project is estimated about \$10,000.00 for purchasing the needed equipment and for installation. The local people are more than willing to offer free labor hoping to get their dream come true some day.

# Feeding the Hungry Children in Bolivia

By Fr. Thomas Vellappallil, MS.

The Catholic Church in Bolivia is the most credible institution in the country. The Church has many social services in defense of children. La Salette Parish in Cochabamba is the one and only parish and ministry the La Salettes have in Bolivia. Fr. David Cardozo is the pastor. Next to the rectory is a building that serves as “Comedor” or soup kitchen. It is a great ministry helping families who are extremely poor. There is a second one started by late Fr. Jim Weeks in response to a request from a poor school in the neighborhood, situated on the mountain in a barrio called Urkupinia. There are others operated by different churches in the area. Sr. Zelinda from the sisters of St. Joseph is a member of a Brazilian community that coordinates all the dining halls.



There are anywhere from 200 to 230 kids each in every comedor that benefit from this ministry every year. The philosophy behind it is that not everything is free. Parents, neighborhood associations and others are expected to coordinate well. The parents or family members have to help out in the kitchen. The parents are charged one Boliviano (15 cents) per day per child. Those who can pay, they pay, but those who cannot are taken care of. There is no compensation for coordinators or volunteers. The parents also have to do other works like cleaning the church and surroundings. Noon meal is provided from Monday through Friday for 10 months.



The coordinator brings in speakers to talk to the children and parents on topics like hygiene, addictions to alcohol and drugs, unity in the family as part of their formation. Finances are not always adequate although help comes from La Salette and another foundation. Budget has become very tight in some years. The government puts strict demands on the Church. They have the right and obligation to see that the kids are well-treated. The Church is expected to meet certain standards by keeping the building in good shape, address sanitation concerns and keeping the kitchen clean. Thanks to Fr. David for his great leadership as pastor.





Fr. Al B. Taguinod

*Vocation promotion, with respect to other ministries in the Christian community, is the most difficult and most delicate.* From the document of the congress on Vocations to the Priesthood and Consecrated Life. In response to my question regarding the present situation of vocations in the Philippines, Fr. Al Benedick wrote: I have been working in vocation ministry for three years and find it is truly a challenge to invite people to consider religious life. It is like an advertiser selling a product to woo young people to consider religious life as one of God's callings. Successful vocation ministry requires God's grace and the effort of the whole community. At all times a vocation director relies on the virtue of hope.

Beyond the challenge of encouraging vocations lies joy and a sense of fulfillment. The encounter with young people, talking with them about God and God's call for each of us, has made a lot of difference in my life and ministry. I have observed that young people grapple with the understanding of "service" and "sacrifice". Without this understanding it is a challenge for them to understand priesthood and religious life. Sometimes sharing about living a life of mission interests them and they want to learn more about living a life for others as Jesus did. I can see signs of hope as they reflect on what God wants of them instead of what they want to be. The various programs of the Vocation Office help young people to encounter Jesus as on the road to Emmaus. We visit schools in the Philippine archipelago, support a La Salette Vocation Club and publish a quarterly newsletter. Yearly we hold a Vocation Youth Camp and gather young people together for the World Day of Prayer for Vocations every 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter. When prayer becomes a spring board for vocation promotion it creates an attitude of hope. Pope Francis reminds us that

*"Vocations are born in prayer and from prayer; and only through prayer can they persevere and bear fruit".*



In the Philippine province this year there are 70 men in formation; 3 Novices, 5 Postulants, 18 in Theology, and 44 in Philosophy. With this there is reason for hope. We will reap a good harvest of vocations if we, as a community, can show with our lives that to serve God is beautiful and fulfilling, and that in Him, the Living One, is hidden the identity of every living person. We entrust all our efforts and works to the loving hand of God. We believe that it is only through his grace that what we sow and cultivate will reap a plentiful harvest. Let us continue to pray for vocations.



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.**