

EDITORIAL

# La Salette

VISION & MISSION



By Fr. Thomas Vellappallil, ms

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*Dear Co-missioners,*

Al and Maureen Daniels have been long time parishioners at the Immaculate Conception parish in Maplewood, MO, where the La Salette missionaries served for several years. There they met many La Salettes like Frs. Jeremy, Jack Nuelle, Joe Shea and many Malagasy priests, who came to the US to learn English. This goes back more than 20 years. They also welcomed to their home Hortense who graduated from nursing, from whom they learned about the severe needs of people for health care. Maureen felt like God was calling her to take the Parish Nursing Program there. Since 2004, Maureen and Al have been in Madagascar 7 times. They had already gone on a pilgrimage to the Apparition site in the French Alps in France with the late Fr. Pete Kohler in 2001. Today they belong to the group called “The La Salette Lay Associates”, who love the charism of La Salette and share in our mission. They feel like they are part of an extended family whether they are home in St. Louis or on a visit in Madagascar. They speak with passion and love and with gratitude for the opportunity and support they receive from the La Salette missionaries in this special journey of their life.



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## Report on a Madagascar Mission Trip: by Maureen and Al Daniels

My husband Al and I have returned from our seventh trip to Madagascar. While we were there Hortense Rabetsara, the Parish Nurse Coordinator, graduated from the Adventist University Zurcher as a nurse midwife. I was able to put her nursing cap on her during her graduation. (On the picture, Maureen helps “cap” Hortense Rabetsara at her nursing graduation).



In Antsirabe I talked with parish nurses about their gifts and where God was calling them in ministry. One nurse reported feeling a new passion to care for the sick and to be attentive to them. Another nurse uses the spiritual care she had learned in the Foundation’s courses with her pregnant patients and finds prayer meaningful in healing. Several nurses make home visits and use their parish nurse

training to offer spiritual care. The people need someone to listen to and care for them, to provide food and primary health care. Some don’t see the value of nurses and have a fear of doctors so they wait to seek medical care until they are severely ill. Parish nurses teach the importance of regular health care.

I spoke with the nurses about the call to Parish Nursing in Scripture; how Parish Nurses work in faith communities, and their use of prayer. We discussed dealing with suffering, pain and loss. After visiting the handicapped center in Antsirabe, Fr. Honore took us to visit the children at a center that the Sisters of St. Vincent de Paul run for those who have had or are awaiting surgery. Despite their disabilities, they were eager to greet us.

In Morondava the Parish Nurses have advocated for the poor to have reduced rates for hospital care, or be given charity care. They teach spiritual care in the Catholic University nursing program. We discussed asking people what they want to change to improve their health and talked about how to pray out loud with their clients. They want to train more volunteers to help in the church and form an association for parish nurses.



Nurses Noro, Leonie & Pacombe with Maureen



Fr. Jeremy with Kids

We visited a Kimony, a small fishing village that until now has never had a permanent Christian church presence. They identify Fr. Jeremy as “their priest”. Boys ring bells as they go around the village to announce Mass. The older women direct the children’s behavior during the service. A new catechist will help them learn about the faith. Fr Jeremy spreads a plastic sheet under the kely tree where the children gather. Then benches and a table for the altar are set up. They all sing God’s praises so beautifully. Fr. Jeremy says that this St. Paul-like missionary community has enriched his priestly ministry

Fr. Jeremy’s church was in its final stages. Recently good news arrived from Fr. Jeremy as he writes; “The construction of St. Regionald in Kimony, Madagascar, is now complete. It was completed and dedicated on Oct. 4th, 2015. Thanks to many generous contributions that made it possible. The whole Cathedral Parish from Namahora, the parent church, came to Kimony for the dedication. The mass at the Cathedral was cancelled in order for everyone to be present as a gesture of solidarity and as a symbol that this chapel in Kimony is a child of the Mother Church, the Cathedral of Mary Queen of Morondava”. The chapel of course could not accommodate all those who came. After the mass and dedication an ox was killed and a beautiful meal was shared. From the people of Kimony, thanks to all of you, who contributed for this beautiful chapel, a dream that has come true”.

We visited the prison where Fr. Jeremy ministers often to over 200 prisoners. Before Mass the men all sit under the one area of shelter and a few come for confession. The men are quiet and watch; some who are Catholics, recite the prayers. Fr Jeremy introduced us, and it felt a bit awkward having 200 pairs of eyes on us, but not in a threatening way. After Mass a representative of the men thanked us and asked for a gift of a soccer ball. We gladly agreed to get one for them, as it was so sad to see that they have nothing to do all day but sit in this not-so-large compound. They do not have stoves to cook their food, and the priests have worked over many years to get rice donated for their meals. Otherwise they would have only cassava root, the source of tapioca.



We realized our blessings, hopefully shared our faith, and were an encouragement to the priests, children, Parish Nurses and people of Madagascar. We pray for all of them.

Bishop Donald Pelletier , the Bishop Emeritus of Morondava gives us some insights about Kimony in the following words: “ Kimony is a small village two miles north of Morondava and is set on sand dunes overlooking the Mozambique Channel. The main, if not exclusive activity remains traditional fishing. There is no running water or electricity but there is a government school. There are over one thousand people in the three sectors of Kimony. The chapel Fr. Jeremy has built is in the most populous area in the center . If it were not for a spacious ocean inlet Kimony could be reached by walking the beach from Morondava. As the beach is pristine and the water is very clear investors are trying to make Kimony a resort area. A Pentecostal group built a chapel in Kimony in 1995 and tried for eight years to establish a charismatic community but finally abandoned their efforts. Only Kimony’s traditional religion remained and the people were not anxious to accept evangelization. Inspired by Pope Francis, Jeremy, with his parish council and catechists, decided to reach out to the people of Kimony as it is only three miles from the Cathedral parish.



Al and Maureen with Kimony Kids

Sunday after Sunday, month after month a group of parishioners would go to Kimony to teach singing and have a prayer meeting. Children came but there were no adults. A few women would come more out of curiosity than conviction. Fr. Jeremy was determined to plant the seed of Christianity. Though there are no baptized Catholics in the village, he built a chapel and confided its pastoral care to a group of lay people led by Edmond, a transitional deacon. Edmond and his team visited every single hut in the village and in only one instance, the village sorcerer were they rejected. Actually the village sorcerer was quite violent for fear of his income diminishing. It is a new experience and we shall see how many years it takes to establish a Christian community. Edmond visits there three times a week. About fifty children are receiving instruction, learning hymns and are happy to pray on Sunday. Some parents have asked to have their children baptized and are following a long preparation. Sponsors will have to come from the Cathedral parish. Hopefully the presence of a chapel and the constant and generous efforts of Edmond and his team will eventually bear fruit and there will be a vibrant Christian community in Kimony. After almost 90 years of La Salette presence in Morondava we still have to reach out to villages that are totally pagan. Father Jeremy carries on the mission of our La Salette Fathers who arrived there in 1928. The Mission goes on”!



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Should you wish to do so, our legal title is:  
**North American La Salette Mission Center, Inc.**