

EDITORIAL

La Salette

VISION & MISSION



By Fr. Thomas Vellappallil, ms

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Dear Co-missioners,

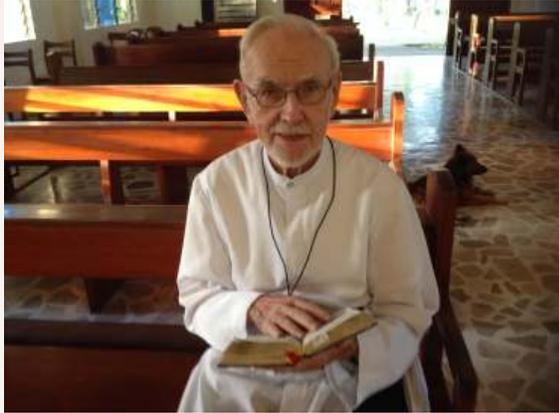
The Philippines is a sovereign island country in Southeast Asia situated in the western Pacific Ocean. It consists of about 7,641 islands. With a population of more than 100 million people, the Philippines is the seventh-most populated country in Asia and the tenth most populated country in the world. The Philippines is an officially secular state, although Christianity is the dominant faith. Catholic Church data from 2015 found that about 82.9% of the population professed Catholicism. Around 37% regularly attend Mass. Protestants are estimated to be more than 10% of the population. Islam is the second largest religion. More than 11% of the Filipinos are Muslims.

I had the privilege to live in the Philippines for 11 years from 1987 through 1998 as both a seminarian in formation and as a priest. Last year I visited our missions in the Philippines with the goal of reaching out to our men, Missionaries of La Salette, in their places of ministry from the middle of November through the first part of December. I was very impressed and overjoyed seeing the development that has taken place over the years. La Salette of the Philippines has come a long way since its establishment about sixty eight years ago.



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Bro. Armand Fredette is known as the *living history* of Ina Ng Pag-asa (Mother of Hope) Province of the Missionaries of Our Lady of La Salette in the Philippines. He was born 83 years ago the youngest of 8 children to a carpenter's family that was well known in their town of Fitchburg, MA. St. Joseph Parish in Fitchburg was the first La Salette parish in the United States. The name of his parish accounts for his special devotion to St. Joseph. He attributes his vocation to the Sisters from the Community of Faithful Companions of Jesus who served at St. Joseph's. He always knew

he wanted to be a Brother, not a priest. He knew only La Salette Missionaries and as a child thought that they were the Catholic Church.

Brother Armand was only fourteen years old when he entered the La Salette seminary in Enfield, NH. He says he was very timid and bashful and felt he did not have special gifts to offer to God's service. Happy to be accepted to the formation years of postulancy and novitiate, he took his first vows when he was eighteen. Before taking his final vows he was sent to the Philippines. His parents did not want him to go but he said that no one can oppose God's plan. He professed Final Vows in July of 1953 in Santiago, Isabela. Now sixty-five years professed, Brother Armand believes that whether you feel skilled or not it is amazing what God can make of you.

His first assignment was to St. Matthew parish in San Mateo, Isabela. Not only was he to work as a carpenter but as a gardener and plumber. Brother Armand says he became very ill and questioned why he was there. With a smile he now says that he did not understand that God was using him. Later he became Mission Procurator and eventually the Regional Treasurer.



In 1962 Brother Armand was asked to move to Silang, Cavite, about 30 miles from Manila. There was a dream to build a shrine there dedicated to Our Lady of La Salette. Work began when Fr.

Fred Julien arrived in 1965 and became a quick reality with the help of many friends. With great satisfaction Brother Armand says that there were only fifteen people who attended the first Mass in Silang under a mango tree and today there are over 2,000 people who come to the Shrine for Mass every weekend. There are hundreds of children and young people. There is no need for a cry room to isolate the babies. They come as a family and everyone is welcomed.

There is a great sense of family and community.



Young La Salettes
Christmas party 2015

Tears form in Brother Armand's eyes when he relates the story of how the Marian Retreat Center was built. There was no money in the bank. It was projected that it would take seven years to complete this project. But it took only eighteen months. Catholic Relief Services offered support and most of the material came from Clark American military base. Later a Youth Center was built with facilities for 450 guests. On the same property the La Salette Missionaries have a seminary with room for their novices, postulants and philosophy students.. There is also a house for the La Salette Sisters, a religious article store and a retirement home for the La Salette Missionaries.

Brother Armand doesn't take any credit for the growth of La Salette in the Philippines by only says God built this place. The most powerful way to evangelize is to give witness by the way you live, by doing God's will always. Brother Armand says that when you do your own will you tend to fail to do God's will. The joy of religious life for Brother Armand came from La Salette. He quotes from the inscription on the coffin of Fr. Blanchet, "Because you are, we are". Asked about the happiest day of his life he points to the La Salettes who are buried in the community cemetery and says "The happiest day will be when God calls me and I am blessed to see Him face to face."



The Beautiful Philippines

The province of Our Lady of La Salette in the Philippines is known as “Ina ng Pag-asa” which means “Mother of Hope”. The La Salette Missionaries are a community of men who have consecrated themselves through the religious vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to be reconciled and reconcilers as reminded by the apparition of our Blessed Mother at La Salette. There are 79 active members in Ina ng Pag-asa Province; 61 priests, 4 brothers, 1 deacon and 13 others are temporarily professed. There are many young people



interested in religious life and priesthood. There are around 40 La Salette seminarians in various levels of formation. The College Seminary, Postulancy, Novitiate and the Philosophy Department in Silang, Cavite welcomes students from other Religious Communities in the area. The 13 students in theology attend class in Manila and live at the La Salette Seminary in Cubao, Quezon City. Fr. Job Callarackal, the Vicar Provincial, serves as the Director of this scholasticate seminary.

The missionaries are involved in various ministries. A national shrine is dedicated to Our Lady of La Salette in Silang, Cavite, about 35 miles south of Manila. Under the directorship of my classmate, Fr. Ronald Guzman, the shrine welcomes thousands of visitors and pilgrims each year. They also have a retreat center and a counseling center that visited by various groups for retreats, days of recollections and renewal programs. There are 8 high schools and an elementary school run by the La Salettes in the province of Isabela. There is also a La Salette University in Santiago City, Isabela operated by the La Salette community. Although these educational institutions have hundreds of students at present, I have been told that the enrollment has been declining. The eight high schools mentioned above were parochial schools. Those parishes were under the care of La Salette Missionaries for over 40 years and about 10 years ago were returned to the care of the Diocese by the request of the Bishop of Illagan, Isabela. The La Salettes continue to manage the schools. The La Salette Missionaries have one parish in the province of Pangasinan and two others in the Diocese of Novaliches in Metro Manila. There is a strong emphasis on peace and social justice ministry. Some Pilipino La Salette Community members serve in the U.S.A. , Australia, France and Italy.



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.