

# MANDALAY NOTES

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## Myanmar La Salettes' Assembly

For the first time in history, Myanmar La Salettes were able to meet as a community. For four days the Missionaries were able to celebrate community and recommit themselves to make the Message of Our Lady of La Salette known. Gathering together at the splendid center run by the Salesians of Don Bosco in Anisakhan, the Missionaries were able to share their aspirations and frustrations and come up with a common vision: We, Myanmar La Salettes, envision ourselves to be living signs of Reconciliation.

Starting with the Eucharistic celebration, the leader washes the feet of the membership. With Easter celebrations still fresh in their minds, prayer, penance and zeal was stressed and with the cool atmosphere and good food (and drinks) the La Salettes re-commit themselves to a life of reconciliation. The lone Myanmar Missionary working at the Holy Mountain in France, was able to be present and so were the student-priests who came in from India and the Philippines. A few weeks before that, the three deacons were able to join the group after finishing off their academic requirements at the Loyola School of Theology in Diliman, Quezon City. Even after a frustrated year of academics at St. Joseph Major Seminary in Yangon, Bro. Nicholas was also able to take a few days off to be with the community.

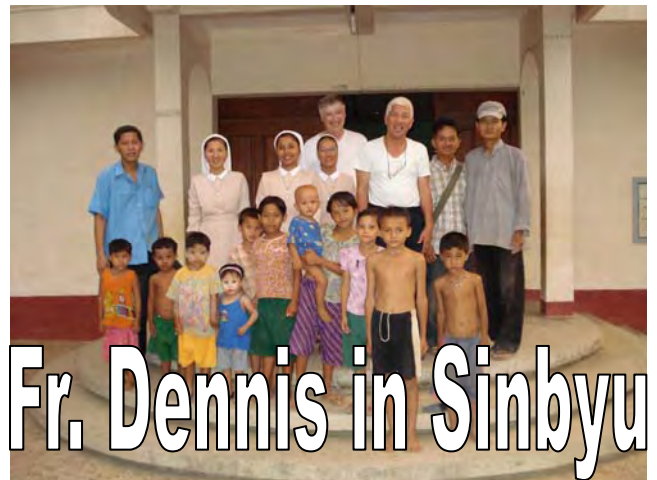
Everyone renewed their commitment both publicly by renewing their vows and privately by prayer and conversation with the comrades. In spite of some difficulties everybody was able to agree to coming together once a month as a community and once a week as a cluster. With two more parishes (Sinbyu and Zawgyi) added to the responsibilities of the missionaries, there is a need to divide the group into two and form clusters. The three parishes in the south are together as the first cluster. The three deacons, Fr. Nicodemus and Fr. Thomas make up the second cluster. A budget is requested of each house and more formalization of the Religious Life is in place. Future projects are agreed upon and with weekly and monthly meetings, communication among the members should improve tremendously. The missionaries thank everyone who prayed for them before, during and after the assembly. Happy Easter to one and all!



# New Parish Priests



Two parishes have been added to the responsibilities of the La Salette Missionaries. With Easter, the new assignments in the Archdiocese of Mandalay are being considered. The La Salette Missionaries have been taking care of three small villages since they re-established themselves in the diocese. From time to time the neighboring village of Zaw Gyi has been under the care of the missionaries. One of the priests from the South Western diocese of Pathein has the care of another small village of Sinbyu and he has gone back to his home diocese after helping out for six years. The bishop has asked the missionaries to take care of these two villages. So officially the District Superior and his council have made the specific assignments. Fr. Patrick Kyaw Lin, MS will become the parish priest of Chanthagone, including a few more villages near by. Fr. Thomas Htang Shan Mong, MS will be the parish priest of Myauk Kine and Myit Nge. Fr. Lucas Suan Za Lian MS has been appointed as the parish priest of Zaw Gyi, the mother parish of all these five villages. Fr. Valentine San Tun MS will take over the parish of Sinbyu. Fr. Nicodemus Aung Than Aye, MS will continue to serve as the Spiritual Director at the Intermediate Seminary of St. Thomas in Mandalay, preparing candidates to go to Philosophy. Bro. Nicholas MS will serve as the property custodian at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary, in Chanthagone. Fr. Saw Jerome Eiphan MS will continue his ministry with the international team on the Holy Mountain of La Salette. Fr. Philip Naw Aung, MS and Fr. David Kyaw Kyaw Lwin, MS will go back to their studies. The three deacons: Rev. William Phyo Wai, MS, Rev. Robert Zaw Lwin, MS and Rev. David Kyaw Zwa Latt, MS will undergo a pastoral orientation program spearheaded by Fr. Mya Thein, MS with the help of Fr. Dominic Dyotu the rector of St. Thomas Seminary and Fr. George Khin Mg Htwe, the rector of the Cathedral. Congratula-



## Fr. Dennis in Sinbyu



## Sinbyu Church Zaw Gyi Church & Grotto

# BAGAN TRIP

During the Myanmar La Salette's Assembly, Fr. David Kyaw Kyaw Lwin, MS, initiated to have a trip to Pagan. The District Superior in his kindness has granted the request so as for the la salette to see and know the Burmese historical places, its literature and culture.

Pagan, dated to the 11 century ago, is one of the oldest cities that get the attention of the historians, the attraction to tourists and the pilgrimage of Buddhists. It is almost 100 miles away from Chanthagon, where the La Salette missionaries are at present.

Hoping to escape the summer heat, the group headed by Fr. David, MS and Fr. Philip, MS left early 4:30am and arrived there before lunch time. They had enjoyed very much the scenarios and the famous pagan sunset. After a night, they also traveled to Popa, 30 miles away from Pagan. Even the distance and summer heat could not stop their desire to see those two important places though a minor car breakdown occurred on their way back. It gave them a lot of time to form community



## Archbishop Paul Confirms the Appointments

Archbishop Paul Grawng, DD of Mandalay at a meeting with the La Salette Missionaries confirmed the appointments of the four new Parish Priests. After the celebration of the Feast of St. Joseph in Myitnge and confirming some of the children, the archbishop joined the Missionaries back to the Shrine in Chanthagone and had a meeting. At the meeting the District Director presented the decisions made previously at the community meeting.

Bishop Paul apologized for not having regular meetings and suggested to have regular dialogue with everyone concerned. He emphasized the gift of council as he reflected on the Confirmation ceremonies that took place in Myitnge an



hour or so before. He also recalled Fr. George Khin Maung Htwe's homily there. Like St. Joseph everyone is called to be faithful to the duties after discerning the will of God. To be responsible like St. Joseph is the call of all Christians. Even though he may have other personal plans, when he was sure of what God is calling him to do, St. Joseph did everything right away. A few more details were discussed and everyone enjoyed a glass of yoghurt after that. Not knowing that some fresh milk was to be added to dilute it, the poor archbishop had to keep adding sugar before he could take some. Knowing that he very seldom complained, when he said it was too sour, it really was quite strong!

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# Children's Water Festival

Over 300 children (ages 8 to 14) gathered at the Shrine of Our Lady of the Rosary in Chanthagone during the annual celebrations of the Thingyan. Thingyan is the most solemn celebration in the Myanmar culture wherein the elders are honored. As it is the hottest month of the year, they pour scented water on them to cool them off and shampoo their hair. The celebration ends with the New Year. The girls danced and there is a lot of food and pastries to go around. Mandalay is getting more and more famous as celebrities come and join in the water festival. All the buses are packed.

The celebration has degenerated as time moves on. The girls are teased and they throw water by force. Many get drunk and accidents cause a lot of deaths each year. This is a season the parents fear most as the children want to go out and play with water. The parents want their children in a safe place.

Youth programs have been organized during these days and at one time there were 700 young people from the Archdiocese of Mandalay gathered at Chanthagone. Many were very happy with the program and usually something or other is organized for the youth during these Thingyan holidays. But this year they only took two leaders from each parish and held it at the Seminary in Mandalay.

Since the La Salette Missionaries are taking over some parishes, the children (ages 8 - 14) from these five villages were invited to an all round training program for six days. When the other Religious Sisters found out about it they asked if they could join. So it was made open to all the parishes in the diocese. It would give Fr. Mya Thein a chance to organize the Missionary Childhood association as well. With the aim of making the children to practice their missionary vocation they received in baptism, emphasis was given to overcome selfishness, to become aware of their duties and responsibilities of a child of God and to become trustworthy. By the use of workshops and seminars, the children were introduced to community living, solidarity, crafts and arts, civics and hygiene.

All businesses are closed during these ten days of celebrations. It was not easy to feed and take care of these some 300 children. The first night they did not sleep till about two in the morning and by three some have already taken a bath and were shouting and screaming. So the next day they were given activities all throughout the whole day and by night everybody slept. In stead of having everybody to attend the seminars and workshops, they were divided into ten groups and the facilitators repeated what they give ten times throughout the day. Then they were paired off to pray at least an "Our Father" and a "Hail Mary" each day for one another. The day starts with some calisthenics and "Shibashi" praying with their bodies and were introduced into some basic meditation techniques. After the mass, they were given breakfast and the activities continued throughout the day. After dinner, they presented what they practiced during the day. It was a relief when the whole thing was over. The children were happy and they were already looking forward to coming again the next year. The Sisters are not too sure if they can survive another ordeal of having ten sessions a day for five full days.

