

MANDALAY NOTES

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Come Closer, My Children Do not be Afraid

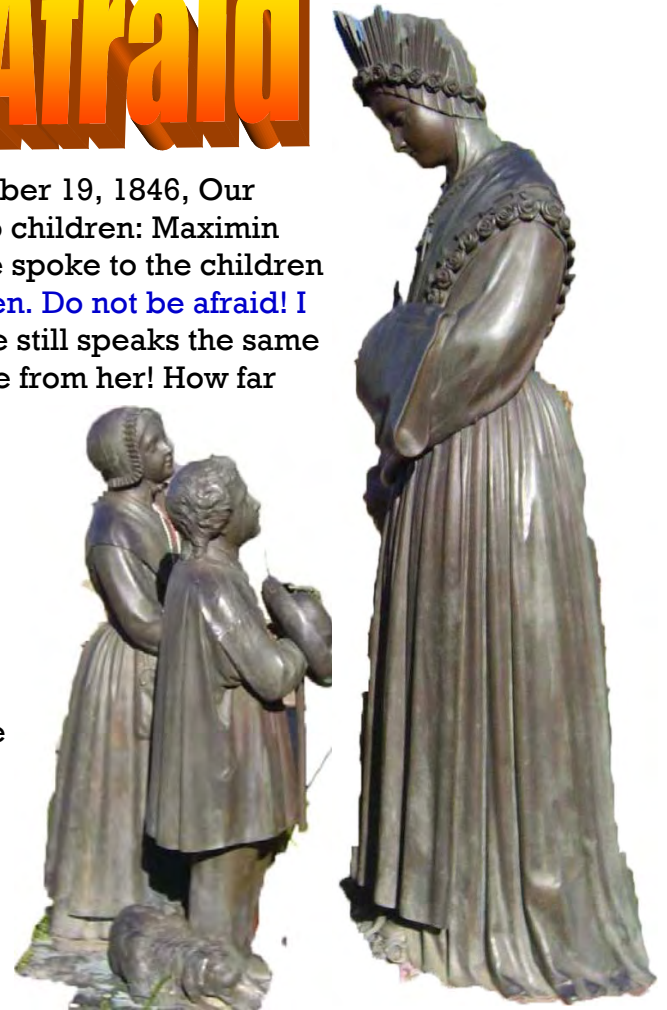
On a beautiful Saturday, September 19, 1846, Our Blessed Mother appeared to two children: Maximin and Melanie. The first words she spoke to the children were: **“Come closer, my Children. Do not be afraid! I have great news to tell you!”** She still speaks the same words to us, now! How far we are from her! How far we are from God! How far we are from one another! We need to come closer before we can face our fears.

We are afraid of so many things!
We are afraid of so many people!

These are frightful times! How many children are dying of diseases, of hunger, of neglect, of abuses! How many countries are in war! How many people have lost their jobs! How many people have been killed for no reasons at all! How many people have lost their hope! The economic crisis has touched not only the poor but even the rich. The political crisis has spread all over the world! The crisis in the family has put many people apart! We need a message of “great news”! That is what our Blessed Mother has promised the two children: **“I have great news to tell you!”**

Yet she warns us: **“If my people refuse to submit, I will be forced to let go the arm of my Son... If I want my Son not to abandon you, I am obliged to plead within constantly. And as for you, you pay no heed! However much you pray, however much you do, you will never be able to recompense the pains I have taken for you.”**

How blessed we are! Our Mother continually intercedes for us in spite of our infidelities and our ingratitude! She will withhold the arm of her son, even though it is becoming heavier. With all our problems, she will continue to help us get rid of our fears. She will make it possible for us to get closer to her and her Son. She will make it possible for us to get closer to one another! We can heed her call: **“Make this known to all my People!”** Happy La Salette feast day to all our friends, relatives and benefactors! May we not be afraid to come closer!



Study Days in Silang, Philippines



After the Provincial Chapter of the Ina ng Pag-asa Province, the La Salette Missionaries in the Philippines are trying their best to implement the decisions made there. Provincial Assemblies or Study days are the venues not only to have the on-going formation but also to build community, getting to know more of one another and sharing their hopes and concerns in prayer and discernment. Besides studying the document from the CICLSAL, "Starting Afresh from Christ", the topics: Lay Associates, the La Salette Institute of Reconciliation, Center for Peace, Philippine Mission Bureau, the Retirement Program and the center in the south were discussed. There was plenty of time for small group gathering both for serious discussions and for relaxation. In spite of the land slides on the roads due to typhoons in the north they all tried to come. The next assembly will be for the retreat in November. Congratulations and good luck to all!

Burnt Motorcycle of Fr. Patrick MS



One night, the villagers smelt something burning. When they tried to find the source of the smell they all saw a ball of fire near the rectory of Chanthagone. Luckily the motorcycle was parked on the septic tank made of cement and the walls were made of bricks and so the building was saved. The villagers came quickly and put the fire out. No one was hurt! Thanks be to God!

Study Days in Mandalay, Myanmar



Novena to Our Lady of Velankanni is becoming popular in the Archdiocese of Mandalay. The center of this devotion is at the Parish of St. Francis Xavier. Many try to go to this. Before the start of the novena, a few days of study and recollection had been scheduled. Since it was really hot and there were so many brown-outs the last day of the get-together was held on the mountain resort town of Pyin Oo Lwin. The rains did not help. The sun came out for a while and made it possible to have meditations out in the botanical gardens. As the rains were coming down everybody tried to rush back to their rides and headed towards the buffet lunch at a local restaurant. Strong winds though brought some trees down.

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Preparations for the Fiesta!



Come October 2, 2009 Chanthagone will be receiving a number of pilgrims for its annual feast. Even though it was the most popular Catholic feast in the country before the war, it has played second fiddle to Nyaunglaybin, the national shrine of our Lady of Lourdes about a hundred miles north of Yangon. With the assignment of Fr. Alphonse Ko Lay to the place and after it was raised to the status of a parish and with the help of his friends from abroad, the "Paleik Medaw" (the Lady of Paleik) has become more and more popular. Situated at the center of the country, it is the most accessible shrine to all areas. After fixing the date of the fiesta to coincide with the Buddhist feast of Thadingyut (end of Buddhist lent, the festival of lights) it is becoming more and more known. The statue was re-discovered through the dream of Daw Phan. It is made of cast iron brought in by an Austrian priest from France. Many miracles were attributed to her and it is becoming more and more popular even among the non-Catholics. This year, the old tradition of nine masses said every hour throughout the night, will be re-introduced and all the fifteen dioceses in the country will be remembered at different masses. Bro. Nicholas has been really busy trying to make it possible to accommodate the 5000 expected guests. Unlike Nyaunglaybin, there are no restaurants and hotels for hire. Since many will be coming in from very far places, dormitories, toilets, bathrooms, etc., have to be constructed even if they be for a night. White ants eat up all they can find and anything close to the ground is not going to last long. So places will have to be cemented, or painted. Temporary toilets will have to be constructed as there are no portable toilets for hire. Parking lots will have to be provided for, and many will come on motorcycles. Lights will have to be put up so the pilgrims will not be stepping on each other's toes. Food will have to be arranged. It is the custom not to charge anything to the pilgrims. Arrangements have been made to ask those who provided food in Nyaunglaybin to come and take care of the cooking. The church will be used as a place for Eucharistic adoration. The newly cemented hall will be used for confessions. Temporary shelters will be available. It is still rainy season and so keeping the place dry will be a big challenge. The new center will be used for special guests as the private rooms and the big hall will be reserved for the priests who will be saying mass and hearing confessions throughout the night. The stage will be used only for the masses. The public address system will have to be good or else the beautiful homilies and sermons to be delivered by the priests will not be heard. Even though it is a "once-a-year" affair, many things have to be prepared. May our Blessed Mother continue to watch over her children. Welcome to the Shrine, everyone!