



# MANDALAY NOTES

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## First Vows of La Salette Sisters

For the first time in the history of the La Salette Sisters (SNDS) two Sisters: Sr. Rosa and Sr. Cecilia took their first vows at Tatkone in Myitkyina, Myanmar. Frs. Marcel and Jerome came in from France to attend the ceremonies. Many priests from the Diocese were there together with two Bishops: Bishop Francis (Myitkyina) and Bishop Raymond (Bhamo). It was a solemn affair and relatives and friends came in force.

There are two more novices and three postulants. At the moment there are seven aspirants. The people were fed right after the mass but the priests (with the Bishops) and Religious were invited to the houses of formation of the Sisters. A big meal awaited them made to order especially from Myitkyina. After looking around the town the La Salette Fathers joined the Sisters and those in formation for a fraternal dinner. Everyone was happy and Fr. Bernie recalled how the La Salettes started all the way from France, then to the US and then to Burma and then back to the Philippines and finally back to Burma (now Myanmar). Congratulations Sisters!

See more pictures at: <http://frbernie.multiply.com/photos> (1st row from left to right) At the entrance of the Church; Basket offering received by Fr. Bernie; Gift from Sr. Theresa to Fr. Marcel; Children enjoying the meal after the mass. (2nd row) Group picture after the mass with La Salette Srs.; Sr. Rosa & Sr. Cecilia; Vows; With candidates before the mass. (3rd row) Relatives of Sr. Rosa; The Group Picture of the La Salette Community in Myitkyina with La Salette Visitors: Frs. Marcel, Bernard & Jerome.



# La Salette Myanmar



The Myanmar district was privileged to have the famous Fr. Marcel Schlewer, MS in the community for a few days. He was supposed to come last October for the 70th anniversary of the arrival of the La Salette Missionaries in Burma but due to demonstrations the ceremonies were cancelled. He was accompanied by Fr. Jerome Eiphan, MS who is with the International team on the Holy Mountain. They visited all the parishes and even went up to see the Salesian Missionaries in Anisakhan for the feast of Don Bosco. While up there in the area, they visited the Kandawgyi gardens and the miniature Myanmar where you see the famous tourist spots. It was a very quick tour of the whole country in an hour (or half-hour if you take the golf cart). Even though it does not compare with the original you can have a better idea of what the country is like. All the 7 states and 7 divisions were represented. You can see the famous Shwe Dagon pagoda, Mount Popa, snow capped kachin mountains, Mandalay moat and Palace, some of the famous pagodas, caves and even the famous railway bridge going to Lashio. Merci beaucoup Chèr Père.



Catholic Religious Conference of Myanmar (CRCM) took place in Yangon from Jan. 8 to 10, 2008. It is a meeting of all the Religious Superiors in the country held twice a year. It usually coincides with the meeting of the CBCM (Catholic Bishops Conference of Myanmar). The Apostolic Delegate usually visits every time they meet. He would say a mass and would give a talk after. This time was no exception. This time he brought in the subsidies for the novices. No wonder the conference postponed the meeting for one day to meet with the Apostolic Delegate. Fr. Bernie was the facilitator. He will be taking charge of the formation program of the conference and will have one year to go around and organize the Initial Formation Programs in the country. Many of the Diocesan Congregations are having a hard time with their programs. This is an effort to get together and pool the resources.

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# Silver Jubilee celebrations of Fr. John Aye Kyaw

Fr. Aye Kyaw has been planning for this celebration for over a year. He had been talking about it and inviting people especially his classmates and the people important in his life. Even though it was far and the road was bad going to his parish in Chaung Yoe, many people came. The clergy of Mandalay just finished their annual retreat and so many did not go home after the retreat. The procurator hired a bus and it was quite a trip. Frs. Bernie, Philip and Thomas of the La Salette Missionaries joined them. Ninety priests concelebrated with the celebrant and the Local Ordinary was there. The celebrant shared his life story during the mass. It was not long according to the local standard (44 minutes 40 seconds). There was also a long line of those bringing in the gifts at the offertory even though there is another ceremony later in the afternoon for the people to give their offerings to the celebrant.

It was also the patronal fiesta of the parish. The meeting of the ex-seminarians of the Diocese also took place and the ceremonies started with a football match between the Priests and the ex-seminarians. Luckily it was a draw (3:3) and everybody was happy. It was a big celebration. Six cows were butchered with a lot of pigs and chickens to feed the big crowd. It was an expensive affair but the priests did not mind as he gave a stipend of 40000 kyats each. The La Salette Missionaries were very happy because they were able to buy 20 copies of the Liturgy of the Office in Myanmar plus some extra for the groceries.

Many did not stay for the show in the evening. Fr. Aye Kyaw got a permission to have professionals come and perform. Congratulations Fr. Aye Kyaw!



# Directed Retreat for Priests, Religious and Lay

Rev. Fr. Eamonn O'Brien a Columban Missionary assigned in Beijing has been training some priests and Sisters to become spiritual directors in a directed retreat for some time here in Myanmar. Even though our facilities are limited he chose Chanthagone as the site and had two sessions this end of January and the beginning of February. Many are not used to having Sisters as guides in the spiritual journey. A bishop candidate did not help. But Fr. O'Brien is quite satisfied with what went on. There were two sessions and the first session served 22 candidates. But there was confusion as to the dates of the second session and so only eight candidates joined. Many pilgrims are going to the fiesta of Our Lady of Lourdes in Nyaunglebin and passed by the shrine. This did not help in keeping the atmosphere of silence in the area. Mary's prayers will surely help in the success of the retreat.



Fr. O'Brien with Bishop Philip of Lashio at his right and a lay candidate

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# Repent and Believe in the Gospel

Feb. 6 is Ash Wednesday. It is the beginning of lent. We need to do more than fast and penance. We need to show our love for others especially our less fortunate brothers and sisters..



## Annual Retreat

The priests of the Archdiocese of Mandalay had their annual retreat in January as usual. This time we had a Franciscan from Vietnam. He had to work as an official worker in the farms. His presentation was very

down to earth and without much embellishments and theological and philosophical jargons. His topic was repentance in preparation for the Lenten Season.

All in all, there were 48 priests and 3 of them were La Salettes. After the retreat, there was the annual offering to the priests and religious after a special mass joined by the people on the 20th of January. Each diocesan priest had to draw lots and was given the "tree" on which were presents and money. The religious and other institutions were given rice, oil, etc. This was organized by the people in the diocese finance council. This serves as the Christmas program for the religious and the priests also. May God reward them for their generosity.

