

EXCERPTS FROM THE LIFE OF A
Wandering Jesuit

Dear Gerry:

I returned here from Myanmar (Burma) last Wednesday, 8 July, and wanted to give you an update of my latest wanderings.

Fr. General asked me to go to Myanmar to help re-establish the Society there. I returned to Kathmandu on 8 June from the States, after meeting with Fr. Zuloaga, President of the East Asian Jesuit Conference, in Manila and Fr. Hardaputranta, the Region Superior of Thailand, in Singapore regarding my new mission—Myanmar. They suggested that I go to Taunggyi, Myanmar, to meet the Bishop and Fr. Clay Pareira, SJ, to discuss getting a visa and what work I would be doing, and to give some support and company to Clay. I left for Bangkok on 15 June and early the next morning I was in Yangon. The following day, 17 June, I went up to Taunggyi.

Bishop Matthias has lent us a house, 3 miles from Taunggyi town, at a place called Paya Phyu. It was the house built for the priest who was to reside at the center that the Charity Sisters (Mariz Bambino) run for orphans, handicapped, sick, destitute, dying and the like. . . . Fr. Clay, a young Indonesian Jesuit, and two candidates had to work for about two weeks to get the house cleaned up. Since there was no priest staying there, the sisters had severely handicapped people living there. The set up is very simple, but adequate for us . . . big enough for a small chapel, living/dining room, four private rooms, and an attached kitchen.

The Bishop, the priests, and the sisters have all given us a very warm welcome. The climate is wonderful for me. Taunggyi is about 4500 to 5000 ft above sea level, not overly populated nor polluted. Most of the inhabitants are simple, tribal people. The major religion is Burmese Buddhism. Thus there are plenty of pagodas. . . . They also have fields for rice, potatoes, etc. Fr. Clay can pass for a Burmese, but I stand out like the proverbial sore thumb. The army asked Sr. Immaculata who the white man was. Not to cause unnecessary trouble, I will probably live at the minor seminary which is closer to the Bishop's House and not so exposed. I'll teach some courses there and from time to time go up to our Jesuit house.



Fr. Leo Cachat, SJ,
in Kathmandu, Nepal.

It is an extraordinary occasion that we are blessed enough to experience the full magnitude of the Society's commitment to the Service of Faith and Promotion of Justice.

Fr. Leo Cachat, SJ, in Kathmandu, Nepal, in this letter to his good friend, Fr. Gerry Grace, SJ, regional director of JIM, reveals Ignatian philosophy in action.

Godspeed, Leo.

I hope to be back in Yangon (Rangoon) the end of this month or the beginning of August. I will stay in Yangon, the capital, for a couple of weeks until I have my visa for a longer stay of six months to a year. I hope to be up in Taunggyi by 20 August. The diocese will be raised to an archdiocese on 30 August and the Bishop will then become Archbishop Matthias. Please pray that I can get a residential visa. I am already scheduled to give a retreat to the major seminarians in September and to the priests of Loikew Diocese almost immediately after that. In January, if I have a visa, I have been asked to give a retreat to the priests of the Chin hills.

Since I will be working in Myanmar, benefactors will start ear-marking gifts for the Society there. Donations ear-marked for our work in the Nepal region continue to go to the Nepal Region. I have also asked some friends to give for a worthwhile project in the southern Philippines.

There is nothing more on the murder of Tom Gafney. Bill Robins has all Tom's work moving right along. I will be meeting Tom's right hand man, Rachin, tomorrow morning. He was kept in jail and severely beaten. He is working at the Freedom Center . . .

Please thank all in the Province for their hospitality when I was there. If you have any questions, please let me know. Communications in Myanmar are not all that great, but I will be sending you addresses, telephone, and fax numbers that have a good chance of reaching me.

How have you been Gerry? I visited Bill Schock when I was in Manila. He is better than when I was with him in July last year, but he is pretty much bed-ridden and weak. He is stronger in the morning and sometimes is strong enough to even type a letter on his computer. He is very well taken care of in the infirmary at the Jesuit Residence. He certainly is mentally very alert and still has great fondness for the NBA finals, baseball, and football. I certainly admire his patience.

United in prayer I remain, Leo

(We are grateful to Fr. Grace for sharing these excerpts.)

