

Dear confrères

It is a time for weeping, as desolation is everywhere, and the Montfort Missionaries have not been spared (nor La Sagesse, especially at Mariani).

Father Laurent has come back from La Plaine with Fathers Jackson, Wilner, Rams and Coppée. The scholasticate in La Plaine did not suffer damage; so they left Father Olivier there - he wanted to stay at the scholasticate with the young men; the scholasticate which is grieving over the deaths of 9 seminarians (the 8 theologians and Father Richard France who recently returned from Peru and who was taking part with them in a conference at CIFOR). The building collapsed on top of the minibus which they were in at the moment they were about to leave the place; they were crushed under the concrete beams, and it is impossible to get to them. The other scholastics are well. The tenth victim is Father Jean-Baptiste who does not reply to calls: he also was probably crushed under the beams of the collapsed floors of the Retreat House in Baussan, the wing which is to the right of the old house, a more recent construction which collapsed onto the ground-floor car park just as Jean-Baptiste was trying to leave the building quickly. I am attaching some photos of the places, even though they are unbearable to see, but they show our current reality and our present suffering.

You will recognise the CIFOR and the beam which fell on our young brothers (the photo marked "CIFOR"), and you will recognise Baussan. and the church of the Sacred Heart and that of St Louis of France. The last photo is of SODEC, whose floors are piled up like the pages of a book. The whole population is in mourning and its calvary may well last a long time. The smell of decomposing corpses is beginning to be everywhere present; those corpses which have been recovered are put down along the streets; those that are buried under the ruins, thousands of them, will not be recovered for many days, weeks or even months, such is the difficult task ahead and such are the numbers of them!

Thank you to all our confreres and friends for sharing our tears and our prayers!

Fr Maurice Piquard, smm







