

## ***Remembering Fr. Ragheed Ganna***

Fr. Ragheed Ganna, an Iraqi Christian of the Chaldean Catholic Church, who often came to the Lay Centre and celebrated the Thursday morning Mass for the Vincent Pallotti Institute while he was a student in Rome, was brutally murdered in Mosul on 3 June 2007. After celebrating the Sunday Eucharist in the morning, Ragheed and three subdeacons were shot as they were driving away from the parish church. Their car was booby trapped and so their bodies could not be recovered until later in the evening when the police came to detonate the bombs.



*Fr. Ragheed Ganna pauses for a moment of silent prayer while presiding at a Celebration of the Eucharist in the Chapel of the Lay Centre in the Spring of 2003.*

Ragheed was studying in Rome in 2003 when the war started in Iraq. On the morning that the first bombs hit Baghdad, he was scheduled to celebrate Mass at the Lay Centre. The chapel was packed. Many of the participants were from the United States, some were diplomats. What could one say on such an occasion? All we could do was to pray for peace. And so the sacrifice of the Mass was offered. Fr. Ragheed came back the next week and the week after until he left Rome. Before departing, he acknowledged that it was dangerous to go back to Iraq, but what could he do? He was a priest. The Chaldean people needed him. He went freely.

A martyr has celebrated Mass in the Lay Centre Chapel. If the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church, one can only hope and pray that the sacrifice of his life and that of so many others will bring renewed life to a new Iraq.