

October 14, 2018



MARIANIST WORLD DAY OF PRAYER



Our Lady of La Vang

QUANG TRI, VIET NAM



Conseil Mondial de la Famille Marianiste – World Council of Marianist Family

Consejo Mundial de la Familia Marianista

1. The beginning stage of Catholic Faith in Vietnam



Catholicism came to Vietnam from European missionaries during the sixteenth century. According to The Royal Vietnamese Annals, in the year of Nguyễn Hòa (1533), under the reign of King Lê Trang Tông, there was a decree that banned Christianity. The decree mentioned the name of a European individual, Ignatio, who by sea had landed and preached the religion at Ninh Cường and Quỳnh Anh Villages, district Nam Chân (present Nam Định). The document did not mention his congregation, but Ignatio probably belonged to a religious order.

Based on the above decree, one can presume that the Gospel had been preached in Vietnam before the year of 1533. The missionaries had traveled all over the country. They came from different European countries via neighboring countries such as the Philippine Islands, Malacca, Macao, Japan... They were accompanied by European merchants and belonged to a variety of congregations: Society of Jesus (SJ), Dominican Fathers (OP), Order of Friars Minor of St. Francis (Franciscans, OFM) and the Foreign Mission of Paris (MEP).

2. The Challenging Persecution Period

The seed of the Gospel was sowed in Vietnam with the new waves of commercial ventures of Europeans. In the beginning, there was a tranquil acceptance, and sometimes curiosity, of Western culture and religion. But then, because of misunderstanding that those who followed Western Religion would deny their traditional customs and not be loyal to the Royal Court, persecutions broke out with innumerable arrests, imprisonments and killings throughout four centuries, under three dynasties. 130,000 Vietnamese Catholics shed their blood to defend their faith, braving all kinds of tortures and sufferings.

But the saying of Tertullian that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of Christianity” proved once more to be true in the Vietnamese situation. The number of Vietnamese Catholics increased more and more. The first seminary in Vietnam was established in 1665 and from there the first Vietnamese priests were ordained: Father Joseph Trang (March 1668), and Fathers John Huệ and Benedict Hiền (August 1668). Thanks to the zeal of these Vietnamese priests and European missionaries, the seeds of the Gospel were sown day and night into the field of Vietnamese society, and their plants have born a lot of grains.

In the first years of the 19th century, the Vietnamese Church was composed of 320,000 believers, 119 Vietnamese priests, 15 missionary priests and 3 foreign bishops. The constant increase of followers, as well as wide developments in evangelization, led to the consecration of the first Vietnamese bishop, Most

Reverend John Baptist Nguyễn Bá Tòng, on June 11, 1933 at St. Peter' Basilica by Pope Pius XI who installed him as the coadjutor bishop of Phát Diệm with the right of succession.

3. Our Lady of La Vang

The fact that the Blessed Virgin visited a small group of Catholics in the little jungle village of Lavang, in Viet Nam, in 1798, is not surprising to anyone who knows the ways of the Mother of God. She has always been faithful to her children by grace.

It was a result of one period of persecution that a number of Vietnamese Catholics found refuge in 1785 in a jungle that hardy foresters hesitated to penetrate. Here they stayed hidden, suffering privations, dangers and illnesses, in order to practice their religion. One of the few comforts they had was reciting the rosary every day at dusk.

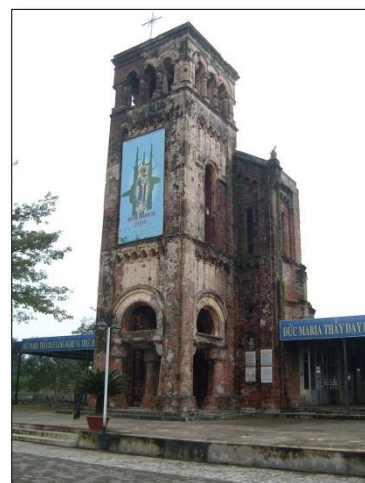


On one such evening, they were frightened and then enchanted to behold a Woman and Child standing nearby in a mysterious glow of light. Simple as these people were, some among them recognized the Virgin Mother and Her Child. All listened, entranced, while Mary told them softly that she was fully aware of their hardships and of their chronic sickness due to contaminated water. She told them to gather certain leaves that grew nearby and make a strong tea of them; this would keep them healthy. Solemnly she added, "From this day on, prayers said on this spot will be heard – and answered." The year was 1798.

Not long after the Virgin's visit, the people heard that the persecution they escaped had ended. Most went back to their original homes; they could talk about little but the apparition they had seen, and word of this miracle spread.

By 1820, even the Buddhists believed in Our Lady's promise and built the first little shrine, a pagoda, on the spot where Mary had been seen. Within a short time these Buddhists became Christians; and their small shrine became the first Church of Our Lady of Lavang. The faithful found solace and courage in this devotion during times of oppression and misery that have come again and again to the Vietnamese.

In 1885, during a period of rabid anti-Christianity, the Lavang chapel was burned; a priest, Father Philip Minh, now Blessed Philip, was beheaded. There was another lull between attacks and work was begun on a building to replace the burnt chapel.





There were great difficulties in transporting supplies, as well as the lack of adequate funds, but the great church of Our Lady of Lavang somehow evolved and was dedicated in 1901 in the name of the Protecting Mother of the Faithful. A congress of all dioceses of Viet Nam was called and Lavang became a place of pilgrimage for countless devout people of Southeast Asia.

During the Marian Congress of 1961 a new basilica of Our Lady of Lavang was dedicated by Archbishop Peter Ngo-Dinh Thue of Hue. At that time he told Catholics of South

Viet Nam that he still received messages from Catholics in North Communist Viet Nam who say they never fail to believe that the Holy Virgin of Lavang will one day deliver their country from Communist oppressors.

Viet Nam is a land of many martyrs. Across the centuries, devoted religious, scholars, leaders and the poor have paid homage to Mary.

4. Marianist Life and Mission in Vietnam

Since 2005, the Marianist Sisters' Province of Japan has received Vietnamese candidates who have undergone the course of their formation in Japan. Now 12 Vietnamese sisters and 5 novices belong to the Province of Japan.

The Provincial Chapter in 2011 requested that the seeds of the Marianist Charism be sown into new soil. Therefore, the Province of Japan decided to open a new community in Vietnam on occasion of 70th anniversary of the foundation in Japan.

On September 12th 2017, the Feast Day of the Holy Name of Mary, 3 Vietnamese sisters were sent to Vietnam and a new Marianist Community was born.

✦ **The Mission :**

- To live, deepen and spread the Marianist Charism in Viet Nam.
- To make God and Mary known, loved and served by the Spirit of the Founders
- To welcome new candidates and form them to become Mary' missionaries
- To collaborate with the local Church and participate in the charity activities of country as visiting the elderly in nursing homes, as well as orphans.

✦ **The challenges :**

- The in-depth assimilation of the Marianist charism in Viet Nam.
- Learning to transmit the Marianist charism to others.

- The relationship between the various groups of Marianist Family (There is only FMI, my community, in Vietnam)
- Fulfilling Marianist mission popularly (Communist party control Religious activities strictly)

5. Prayer Intentions

- 1. Pray for**
- Church Unity and Ecumenism
 - Reconciliation between religions.

"I pray not only for these but also for those who through their word will believe in me. May they all be one as you Father are in me and I am in you. May they be one in us ; so the world may believe that you have sent me." (John17,20-21)

- 2. Pray for**
- Peace of the world
 - The leaders of countries, that they may know how to care for all people.

"They shall turn their swords into plough-shares, and their spears into sickles. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more" (Isaiah 2:4).

3. Thank God for the Beatification of Mother Adele,

- Prayer for**
- Each member of Marianist family to live with the spirit of our Founders.
 - The missionaries and the vocations to the Marianist Family in the world

"Go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation". (Mark 16,15)

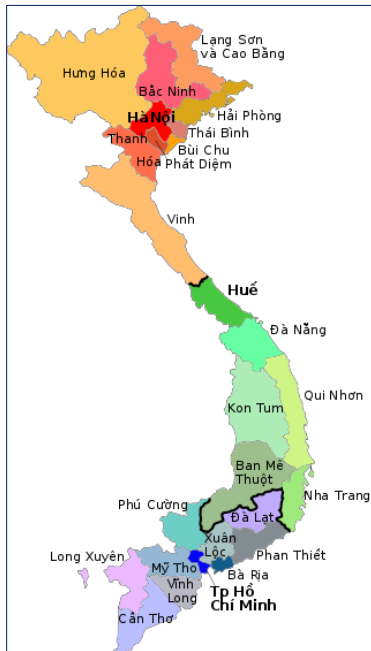
- 4. Pray for**
- The young people, who are the future of the Church and Society, to be generous, sacrificed to serve our brothers and sisters in the Church and in the world
 - All people to love and respect each other in the family life

"Dear young people,

To the young Mary was entrusted an important task, precisely because she was young. You young people have strength as you go through a phase of your lives where energy is not lacking. Make use of this strength and this energy to improve the world, beginning with the realities closest to you. I want important responsibilities to be given to you within the Church; that there may be the courage to make space for you; and that you may be prepared to take on these responsibilities." (Pope Francis' Message for World Youth Day, Feb. 22, 2018)

5. Prayer for the life of Faith of Asian Christians

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." (Jn 13,34-35)



Vietnam Catholic Dioceses Map	
1. Ha Noi :	10 Dioceses
2. Hue :	6 Dioceses
3. Ho Chi Minh :	10 Dioceses