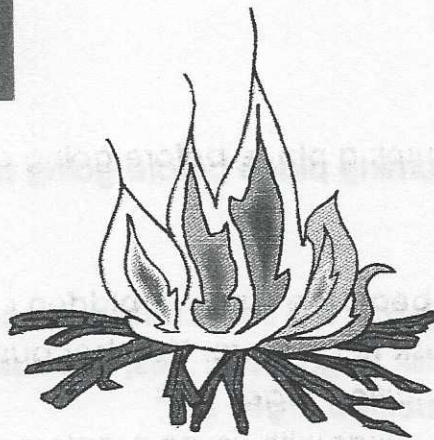




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MY SECOND VISIT TO VIỆT NAM APRIL 30- MAY 29-2004

It was intentionally a "Family Visit" but it has turned out into a "Missionary one!" Why? Because

" The Charity of Jesus Crucified presses us!" (2 Cor.5:13-14)

Thanks be to God and to Friends' prayer, we had a very nice flight of 18 hours in the air and 6 hours of waiting at San Francisco Airport and Taipei's for the Transfer. We flew with China Airlines this time.

OUR STOPS:

1) BANMÊTHUÔT:

Highland area where the Montagnards' Strikes and the fighting of the Communist Government happened a couple week ago! It was forbidden to Strangers' visit at that time. The roads from Saigon to Banmêthuôt were equipped with groups of Communist Police at certain places. The public transportation has been stopped and checked up, but since we had our *home car driven by my nephew*, and with the conviction of my Sister and nephew that we will be safe, we did take the risk. Thanks be to God, we were out of danger and arrived at my Sister's home safely at 6pm, on the 30th of April, the Big Day of Celebration by the Communists : the Day that We lost our Country , but They had the Victory! *Sad* day for us, but *Glorious* Day for them: April 30/1975!

On the second night, I got very sick: *Vomiting- Diarrhea*. My nephew and nieces gave me the best cares they could. It was very touching to experience such love, such tender cares from the family. The day after I got better . Thanks be to God. Good visit with my Sister and her 12 children with their own family, the great-grand nephews and nieces!

Banmêthuôt is the returning place before going anywhere else! It's our home!

2) KONTUM.

Highland area which bears the same forbidden conditions like Banmêthuôt.

We still took another risk to go there: Yes, because the

"Charity of Jesus Crucified urges us!"

Again God's protection was with us: no problems on the roads.

a) VINHSON I ORPHANAGE.

Sisters and children were waiting for us since early morning, we arrived around 10:30am. Great joy with huggings, kissings .

There are 215 orphans there from 0-to 18 years old.

Right away I began to work: meeting with the Sisters, listening to their problems, their needs and desires, visiting *Kon Rôbang*, a montagnard village at 5 kms. from the Orphanage, with *Mr. Anh*, the representant of *Mr. Hung* from *"The Care to Help Project" for Water Wells.*

He came from Dalat to meet with me that day.

Father Chương, the Pastor of the Church showed us all the beautiful pictures, artistic paintings which decorate the Church and the environments, made by his own Montagnard people, the Montagnard Music instruments made by people and played by them: It was fantastic . After talking about the Water Wells, the *"Pros & Cons" for Drilling Wells/Digging Wells*, we got an idea, then I went with *Mr. Anh* visiting the villages where Sisters and people have difficulties to draw water everyday, from a very far natural Spring, walking through steep, rocky ways, muddy when it rains, to get their water!

The day ended with the *Big Party for Vinhson I* great meal with 2 roasted porks and other special foods for the feast! After dinner, the children gave us a joyful entertainment with folklor chants and dances prepared by themselves. Everybody was happy and enjoyed the evening. We ended it with Prayer for the Benefactors , and photo Souvenir. Thanks be to God!

That night we could not sleep: our friends, the *Mosquitoes* like us a lot, follow us everywhere and stick to us! And the *sticky heat* helps

them to hinder our sleeping! Anyway, we still survive!

Thanks be to God!

TOWARDS THE MOUNTAINS-VISITING THE FIELDS.

We spent the 2nd day in Kontum to visit the *Vinhson I's Fields*.

With the generous donations of certain benefactors, the Sisters bought some parts of the Mountains to make their fields to plant Bananas, Beans, Manioc, Fruit trees, Vegetables etc , to help to feed the children.

Those fields were savage mountains with trees and thorns. The Sisters worked hard with the children to make their small way to walk in, and slowly to use the Honda, and even now the car as means of transportation. The fields are very far from the Orphanage: Sisters and children have to stay overnight at times to guard their fields from the thieves, to water, to take care of their plantations. No words to explain worthily the hard works, the courage of the Sisters and children: They try to help themselves, to survive! The donations of the Benefactors help them, for sure, but it doesn't come in a daily basis: so they have to "*Help themselves and God will help them*" through You, their Friends and Benefactors. The above proverb comes from French: "*Aide-toi et le Ciel t'aidera!*" And they are doing it. I gave them the sum needed to renew all their fields tools, to buy more fruit trees, some more cash to feed the children , clothe them and buy medicines.

B- VINHSON II -ORPHANAGE

Located in a former Montagnard village, a mile from Vinhson I, also held by the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal (Montagnard Sisters like in Vinhson I) They also have 215 orphans. They are more organized, have more help from other benefactors. The sisters there know how to contact people, they also have a Vietnamese woman who works for them.

They too, do need help. I gave them a Big Party too : 2 Roasted Porks and some cash. They will celebrate the Party at the end of May.

C- SISTERS OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL CONVENT:

(The Red House across the Church). They have 80 Sisters, 17 Novices, and 70 Aspirantes. They work for their livelihood, in the fields, at home, weaving bags, blankets etc , planting vegetables, etc .. They form sisters to send to the orphanages, to the far away villages to evangelize, to serve the Poor. For the formation of those young women to become a "Nun" and to be sent to serve in the villages, orphanages,

they are right now in need of financial help for their education: Learning music, Catechesis, Theology, Liturgy, Computer (they need some computers), etc .. The Priests require them to know those things, but they have no support from the Diocese, they only, work and work and rely on the generosity of benefactors.

I think that those sisters deserve a party too: so we did: they had roasted pork and celebrated a delicious meal.

In the evening we visited the Bishop and the Daughters of Charity.

Before leaving Kontum, we visited the *Leprosery Daktia* where 2 DC's are working to help the sick and the children there, a Montagnard Nun has been there since the invasion of the Communists, I admire her courage and heroism!

Well, my visit to Kontum has been shortened but I accomplished what I have planned to do. Thanks be to God!

D- NHATRANG , MY HOMETOWN.

Besides the family visit in *Chợ Mới*, we went to *Phù-Sa* where a few of my Mother's relatives are still surviving. Well, people there live in a crucial poverty: working in the rice-paddy fields, and plantation of vegetables. They are poor but happy , because they are not covetous, they accept their condition. I feel that they are so close to God, and ready anytime He calls them. We visited the pastor, the church then took off, the heart heavy seeing the poverty of those people and their hard lives.

F- DALAT: DOMAINE DE MARIE(ĐÔI MAI ANH)

Our Main Provincial House before April 1975. Now it becomes a Sisters' House , with the Seminary , , also a Public Touristic Place! Our Chapel becomes the Parish now. The yard is covered with multicolor flowers, of different kinds and many beautiful orchids. It was so good to relive my Religious Birth place! I grew up there since I was 15 years old.. . Lots of souvenirs came to my mind and heart. We visited the tombs of our deceased Sisters, including my Aunt Sister Leonide Đỗ. We prayed for their eternal repose. On Sunday, we had the opportunity to assist to the ceremony of May Crowning, Flower offering and dancing by the young Aspirantes, before the Mass, it was so beautiful! Thanks be to God!

Well, nothing lasts eternally on this earth, so we have to say "Good bye" to Domaine de Marie and continue our Missionary Journey towards

G- KADƠN- MONTAGNARD VILLAGE, 2 HOURS FROM ĐALAT

Kadơn Parish has 4,000 parishioners ($\frac{3}{4}$ Montagnards, $\frac{1}{4}$ Vietnamese).

Father Alexis Hậu, CM., the Former Superior of the CMs.' Vietnamese Province, and Former Provincial Director of the DCs, is now Pastor of this poor parish *Kadơn*, his Associate Pastor who is also his 'Confrère', is Father Ngọc, CM. Both belong to the Congregation of the Mission.

Father Hậu came to Đalat to accompany us to his Parish. During these two hours of driving. He explained to us on the way everything, specially, the attention and care we have to take for our safety while we are there.

Because it's a Montagnard area, we cannot take pictures, cannot walk into people's houses, he only pointed to us the villages where the montagnards live with their poor shelters.

Kadơn also has a Daughters of Charity Annex with four DCs. We passed our 2 nights there (200ms walking from the church).

WHAT DID WE LEARN AT KADƠN?

1. *The Vincentian Poverty and Simplicity*: Father Hậu and Father Ngọc keep the very old house built by the First French Missionaries, for their living and Rectory, and the old wooden church with benches for the parishioners , no pews: every material speaks of simplicity and poverty.

2. *The Prayerful spirit of the parishioners*, specially the eagerness of the children, their openness, the joy which reflects from their bright eyes.

In this place we can see that '**GOD IS FIRST, AND EVERYTHING ELSE FOLLOWS**' The parishioners live at 1 to 5, 6 miles from the church.

Every Evening at 6:30 pm, when the bell rings, they walk in the dark as well as under the rain to the church for the *Common Prayer*: Every single evening of the week: From Sunday through Saturday included. Prayer and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament: Children, adults alike with their Priests pray together, sing together. They are so fervent! Also every morning they come to the Holy Mass at 5:00 am! The majority of them, (95%) receive the Holy Communion! The children direct the choir, play organ in the church during Mass and prayer, Montagnards as well as Vietnamese, no difference, no discrimination, they pray together, sing together, attend the

Catechesis together, no discrimination: Once the Sisters asked the Montagnards if they wanted to have their Catechesis apart? Their answer was: "No". We want to be together, we love each other! What an example of unity! What a practical charity and love!

3. Their Politeness-Respect.

Adults, children, all bow their head and greet you every time they see you passing by. Father Hâu said it happened to him sometimes, boys or girls who saw him from far away, he didn't even know from where they came, they run to him and greeted him.

Good habit, good education! It's so true that the Real Poor are humble, polite and Grateful. Thanks be to God!

HOW and WHAT DO THE PRIESTS DO TO HELP THOSE POOR PEOPLE MATERIALLY AND SPIRITUALLY?

- A. They live their Faith and Trust in God's Providence, through prayer, sacrifices, poverty accepted and lived, etc
- B. They work hard with people, and help them to work for themselves. Here are some Projects already begun:
 - 1) Project of raising a Baby Cow: It began with a benefactor from Australia who gave \$800.00 u.s. to raise 4 Baby Cows: Each baby Cow costs \$200.00 us. The Priests give to 4 poor family to raise the Baby Cow and after she grows up and gives birth to the first baby Cow, they agree with each other, that in the *spirit of sharing*, this family gives the first baby Cow to another Poor family, and keeps the cow for their use and so on. This Project is so good and in the Vincentian spirit, so I gave my part of \$200.00 for the fifth Baby Cow for the 5th poor family. *I hope that this project will inspire you to spare some money for other Baby Cows, won't you? The Poor are waiting for your generosity!*
 - 2) Project of Planting Fruit Trees: The priests plant certain fruit-trees at the parish to get experience to know which trees can product better and will be more useful for the poor families. So they buy those fruit trees and give to each family some to plant at their place for their food or if they have more to sell in exchange of rice or salt, or dried fish, etc, .. I do like this project and gave \$100.00 u.s. for it.

I like these projects because they *help the Poor to work, giving them the means to help themselves.*

3) *The Cowboys: Guardians of Cows..*

The Priests discover that certain boys from 10 to 15, 16 years old miss the church's services. One day, by walking along the village path, they observed that certain boys were guarding flocks of cows because their families are so poor, cannot feed them, cannot put them to school. "*The Charity of Jesus Crucified urges*" the Priests to do something for those cowboys! So they gather them in the evening, when the day is done, at the parish, in a small hut next to the Rectory to teach them *How to read and to Write*, give them the opportunity to participate in the Evening prayer with the Parish, then after class, fortify them with a dessert or some extra food before going to sleep, in the same hut (illegally: they are not registered according to the Communists' law, but they are safe until now!) There are more than 40 of them! In the morning they assist the Mass and then go to guard their flock of Cows. What a great idea, inspired by love, and charity!

Priests and Sisters go to the villages walking or riding bicycles, Hondas when it's possible to assist the infirms, sick and handicapped.

The Sisters gather certain illiterate adults at their place to instruct them, and teach them how to read and to write as well.

4) *What do you need the most?* (My question to the Priests)

The answer was and is: *Financial help for the Tuitions and Uniforms at school.* Each year during *Summer time*, the Priests worry about *September*, because they want to put the many children possible to school, but their families are so poor, cannot provide any money for the Tuitions and Uniforms at school, so the Priests, pray hard, write letters to ask for help from their own family or friends .. Last year they could help 190 children to attend school. This year, they don't know yet. That's their biggest worry of the year!

Can you help them in this project? Annually if possible?

I really like this Mission! It's exactly what Jesus did on this earth!

Hope that by reading these pages you will be inspired and touched by any of these projects and *act* on them by helping either the

1) The *Orphans* in *Kontum*, or

2) The Baby-Cows ,or the Fruit- trees, or the School Tuitions and Uniforms, or the Cowboys' plan in *Kadon*.

**Informations and addresses will be given to those who are interested in these projects. Be assured that your money will reach people for the intended goals!*

H- SAIGON : Capital of ViệtNam!

Our last station before regaining USA is Saigon: very hot as you know. That's the sign of the spiritual heat which the Holy Spirit inflames in the hearts of the Sisters and young girls in formation : Our Sisters work very hard there, and pray hard too. There are sisters who take care of the streets boys and girls , gather them in a shelter, teach, educate them, save them from drugs and other bad habits, help them to learn a profession, to work, to build up a better life, etc .. They bear the name of " *School of Love*". These sisters do need financial help for this purpose.

Another project was built up years ago is to help the *country girls*, very poor, to go to school: giving each of them \$40.00 a year , to begin with, and then they continue their classes. By doing that the sisters got 900 girls graduated in Bacchalaureat, after many years of school. I think that this project is worth to be helped. Wouldn't you have a thought of it then help them? *Informations will be provided to those interested in.*

Vũng Tàu: *one day at the beach Cap St. Jacques to visit the shrine of Our Blessed Mother, the Sisters'House and the Monastery of Cloistered Monks. There we prayed in thanksgiving for all God's Blessings and protection and for all of you in a special way.*

Thank you for your continued support and prayer and the support you will give to the Poor.

Remember that " The hands of the Poor are the Bank of Jesus Christ." God bless you all.

Thank you again for your continued prayer and support!

We had a very nice flight back home, without any problems at the customs. Thanks be to God!

THE CARE TO HELP PROJECT: WATER WELLS FOR THE POOR.

During my visit to ViệtNam in May, I was visiting , observing the needs of poor people for Water. Most of them need water badly, specially the Montagnards who live in the remotest mountains, far from the natural springs. People and Nuns walk for miles on steep, rocky, crooked, muddy small ways to look for water! They don't have electricity in their village So they cannot have *Drilling Wells* as the "Plans of the Projects are".

Consequently, the Priests as well as, the Nuns and people in the villages *ask that you will be flexible to meet their needs* instead of keeping doing exactly to fulfill your Projects.

Here are some suggestions, if you really want to help the poor:

- 1) ***DRILLING WELLS:*** In certain places,
- 2) ***DIGGING WELLS*** (with cement Cylinders)? for most of other places.
- 3) ***EMPLOYEES FOR THE LABOR.*** Local people . No need of permission from the Government. Persons responsables for the labor and the salary of the employees: Priests- Nuns or others assigned by Priests/Nuns. They already have had certain experiences in the past and they know people who can do it. They can hire them easily.
- 4) ***INSPECTION:*** After the Wells are done, you are very welcome to send your people for a visit and to inspect the work.
- 5) **HERE ARE SOME ADDRESSES :**

A-KONTUM.

1)**The Convent of the Miraculous Medal*, 14 Nguyễn Huệ Kontum, needs a *Drilling Well*.

Contact person: Sister Michelle Y-Ngêt,

2)**Dak Rôwa: needs 4 Digging Wells:* 1 for Sr Marie, 1 for Sr. Xavier (orphanage Field), 1 for Ablit, 1 for Achanh.

Contact person: Sr. Xavier/Sr. Marie

3)* *Dak Tôrei needs 2 Digging Wells:* 1 for Sr. Imelda, 1 for Huym-Biư.

Contact person: Sr. Imelda/Hyum

4)**Kon Rôbang needs 4 Digging Wells:*

1 for Sr. Marie-Jean, 1 for Hinh, 1 for Y phach, 1 for Ykanh

Contact person: Sr. Marie-Jean

5)**Dak Bla 1 Digging Well* for Bil. Contact person: Bil.