

# SISTERS OF THE MIRACULOUS MEDAL

And

## THE MONTAGNARD ORPHANS

*'O Mary conceived without sin:*

*Pray for us who have recourse to You!"*

After the Downfall of Viet-Nam into the Communists' government, the Daughters of Charity in Kontum fled to Saigon, the Provincial House, the Communists occupied their house, their school and settled their base there as their own property. They chased all the Stranger Missionaries and French Daughters of charity out of Viet-Nam. The Sisters of the Miraculous Medal were left alone by themselves, without any financial help, nor spiritual support. They relied on God's love, and put all their trust in Him and they prayed, prayed especially through the intercession of Our Blessed Mother of the Miraculous Medal, their Mother, and Dear Patron. Yes, Mother has obtained for them as Her Title means: miracles upon miracles !

As Jesus said:

*" Believe me, if you trust and do not falter and you say to this mountain, ' Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' even that will happen. You will receive all that you pray for, provided you have faith." ( Mat.21:21-22 )*

Yes, the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal have a very firm and strong faith in God. They elected one of them to be their Superioress, they respected her and listened to her, together they worked hard for their living, keeping their religious duties and faithfulness to the Church, meanwhile they had to bear with the Communists' oppression on material matters, but especially on spiritual ones: little by little their spiritual apostolate was narrowing or forbidden, though they tried hard to keep up whatever and whenever they could : about teaching catechism, preparing the young for the Sacraments, for marriage, helping the sick, the dying, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked as they used to do before.

*For "The Lord hears the cry of the poor, blessed be the Lord!"*

**WHAT DID THEY DO FOR THEIR LIVING? HOW CAN THEY LIVE WITHOUT ANY INCOME?**

Here is an example of their daily life which I had the opportunity to witness and to taste, when I visited them in 1981 at my Silver Anniversary trip:

Every early morning: Wake up, Community prayer, Mass, then take a bowl of rice gruel, then out to work, there are sisters who take care of the garden, planting vegetables, there are sisters who have to work in the fields for the Communists, there are sisters who work at home weaving bags, blankets etc, a few raise chicken, pigs, another group 15 of them put their dossor ( Bahnar backpack = hokă ) on their back then walked for 15 miles through rocky and muddy paths towards the mountains. When they arrived at the foot of the mountains they stopped at a small hut they had made to store their harvest, two sisters are responsible there to take care of the paddy, corns or pumpkin, gourd, calabash etc, and to cook something for the worker-sisters to eat when they come down from the mountains! I asked as a favor to follow them that day to taste with them all their difficulties and hard work. After 5 minutes of resting at the hut, we began to climb up the mountain: It's a sloppy up small path, we have to climb up along the way, there is no place to repose your feet, if you stop, you fall down, and you have to cling on the branches around you: after one hour of slopping up, we arrived at the first mountain: the Sisters showed me the corn, paddy and vegetables they planted, in the mountain: they began to pick them up and fill up their backpack. They showed me 5 more mountains far away: saying that they did clear up to plant food too. They did not want me to climb higher, I might die on the way through tiredness! When the backpack is full, we began the sloppy down path towards the hut. There we ate a bowl of pumpkin then exchanged the paddy or vegetables: the new should stay there to be dried up, we fill up the ready ones then walked back to the Convent ( 15 miles ). Arrived home, the sisters are tired out! They washed

themselves, made community prayer, then those who wanted to eat, did so with a bowl of rice mixed with corn or manioc with salt, then go to sleep. The next morning, the same scene begins again! That's their way of living under the Communists' government at that time! I was deeply touched by their Faith, their persistence, and their fidelity to the Catholic Church and to their Community life. The little children I had as students from 1957-1972. they got their Bacchalaureats, their French Brevet...

Twelve of them become Nuns, now they become Mother General, General Councillors, and they run their Convent by themselves. Last year they reopened their Noviciat with 12 novices and many young girls desire to give themselves to God in the Religious life, but the sisters help them discretely, for fear of the Communists, they gather together once in a while to have some spiritual feeding, teaching then go back to their village. Now the Bishop requires them to study and have their High school degrees before accepting them into the Aspirancy program. All of them are poor. The Montagnards are the poorest among the poor in Việt-Nam. But those who really feel the Call, will try to make effort, with God's grace and maybe some financial aid from good people who are touched by God's grace to do so.

So miracles upon miracles happen to them, here is another big one:

Last year I heard from the Sisters that since 1992, their maternal love and compassion, guided by their Faith and trust in God, made them receive the montagnard orphans, the abandoned in the streets, the infirms, handicapped, the elderly abandoned by their family, because of poverty, of misery: the sisters took them in, and as they don't have a house for them, they put them in the hut they had, close to the garden and took care of them: their love heals them, gives them hope.. Slowly, to avoid the big flood which happens every ten years, which devastated everything, to avoid that flood and to have more

hygiene for the orphans, they try to crawl from this valley to a place higher: behind the pigsty of the D.C. before, in a small house built for the montagnard workers and guardians of the garden before. The number of the orphans increased day by day, to 100, then 200 and now 245 of them! So the Bishop helped them to have a solide building for the children with more hygiene, this has been made thanks to the generosity of certain visitors too. Thank's be to God!

Yes," *The Lord hears the cry of the poor, blessed be the Lord!*"

Now the Saint Vincent Orphanage has 10 sisters to take care of the children, 245 orphans and handicapped from new-born to high-school age: they go to school according to their age. After school they work at home, around the house, or at the kitchen, or at the garden. Nobody stays idle!

The sisters are thinking, with the help of benefactors, to buy a land to plant sugar-cane so that the sisters can work on and the children too. But right now they don't have the money needed for it. Isn't it a big miracle through prayer, faith and trust?

In another montagnard village, another group of sisters are raising 125 orphans too.

I can say that the Sisters of the Miraculous Medal are doing great work for the poor, and the Church.

Right now 6 American families are adopting 9 of those orphans here in the USA. Those children are loved, well cared of and happy. They want to adopt more, but the Communists wouldn't allow it!

But still:

*" The Lord hears the cry of the Poor! Blessed be the Lord! "*

*Let the lowly hear and be glad:*

*The Lord listens to their pleas;*

*And to hearts broken, God is near,*

*Who will hear the cry of the Poor!"*