

MY THIEU NHI STORY



Thieu Nhi has always been the biggest part of my life. It molded me into the person that you see standing here today. I have been in Thieu Nhi for 11 years; this is going to be my 12th year. As I look back and see, we had a lot of ups and downs for our Doan Le Bao Tinh, but the interesting and best thing is that as Doan Le Bao Tinh TNTT, we have always stuck together through hard times and *amazing* times. I remember my days as an Au, Thieu and Nghia it brings back a lot of great memories. I came into Thieu Nhi as a very shy and timid person. I didn't even want to be a part of Thieu Nhi Thanh The, but the Huynh Truong's are what made me want to be a part of something special; they showed a certain passion, love for Thieu Nhi Thanh The, there was a lot more to it than lining up and listening to them. They showed character, they showed care, they showed a willingness to serve, not only for the kids, but for God. That made me really get into the Vietnamese Eucharistic Ministry, Thieu Nhi Thanh The. As they showed energy, friendliness and outgoingness, it rubbed off on me, and I became that person. Not only did I feel like Thieu Nhi Huynh Truong and members are my friends, they are my family. To this day, I always look forward going to Thieu Nhi on Sundays, it is an opportunity to get away from everything that has bothered me in the world, the opportunity to relieve the stressors I have been having that day, that week, that month. To some kids it's hanging out with friends, some kids is studying and reading books, some kids is sitting at the computer, some kids it's even sleeping to get that relief or sense

of happiness, but to me, Thieu Nhi has always been my outlet, my friends, my books, my computer, my bed. I look forward to coming to see my "family" every single week to share the laughter, the knowledge, the lessons, the care and the love for one another. To see the smile that you give to the children that you look after, as a Huynh Truong, there is nothing more rewarding than that. Being a part of Thieu Nhi has changed and bettered my life.

By Tr Brandon Dang

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CATHY

My dad started TNTT at Saddleback Valley VN Community of St. Nicholas church in the late 80's and he was the first Doan Truong. So, this marked the beginning of my long TNTT history. As far as I could remember I joined TNTT at the age of 11 and was in Nghanh Thieu (honestly, it was so long ago no one knows) and worked my way up to be a leader. I looked forward to coming to TNTT every Sunday just so I could see my friends. My Thieu Nhi friends became my closest group of friends when I was younger. Church and TNTT became my only interaction with Vietnamese people.

TNTT is a close knit "family", it has taught me about being teamwork, spirit, togetherness, being spiritual and creating a bond. I think that being involved in TNTT has made me the well rounded individual that I am today. I became a HT so that

I could continue what was set forth before me. My dad soon left after I became a HT and I felt a sense of responsibility to continue the legacy (for the lack of a better word) so that the young generation had something positive in their life.

I believed that this youth group needs to exist so that kids have a place to come and build bonds with their peers. I especially believe that TNTT is important for our teenagers - there needs to be a constant positive influence in their lives. Whether it is from the bonds they build through the years with the other members or from the mentors they look up. My parents made certain sacrifices in order to make sure that my siblings and I had a good life. I believe that TNTT gave me a strong foundation to be a better person and to maintain positive influence in my life.

Of course, TNTT isn't for everyone. It takes a certain discipline to give TNTT a chance. Some kids give it a chance and love it. Some refuse to give it a chance at all. And some quit and end up coming back later. As a leader I strive to make every member that joins become part of this family. We as a group enjoy every member that walks through; regret every member that departs, and welcomes back anyone who would like to give us a second chance. I myself have given TNTT a second chance.

A few years ago I quit TNTT. Yes, I will admit it I was a quitter. But I felt that at that time I gave all that I could have given. I left for personal reasons but I will admit I missed seeing all my friends and all the kids every Sunday. I eventually attended a different mass so that my quitting would be easier. And I was very adamant about not coming back – like many of the HTs are. I will admit, in the very very very back of my head I kinda wanted to come back it just hadn't caught up with my heart yet.

Yes, it takes a BIG heart to be a leader. It has to be about the kids, it has to be about wanting to make a difference and making the sacrifices necessary to accomplish that goal. Last year, Truong Tai approached me to come back to help rebuild the Doan. I just laughed at him. He explained to me that TNTT was on verge of being

cancelled and was in badly need of help. I tried to say no again but something made me say yes. It must have been the thought of TNTT being completely over. Done. No more. I thought to myself, “where would the kids go? What would the kids do without TNTT?”

So I agreed to come back and help for ONE year. My return was based on one condition – that we must change how we operate. I wasn't coming back to become another body I was coming back because I wanted to save TNTT from being cancelled. I wanted to make a difference and not only talk about change but to execute change. I decided that I wanted to be on a mission. Little did I know that Tai would end up leaving me hanging and quit. I felt like I was tricked. But once I made that agreement with him regardless of the obstacles that came my way I couldn't quit now. Even though I wanted to I knew I couldn't. I rallied up the 5 HTs that were left and recruited an old friend that I had met in TNTT over 10 years ago. We enrolled 55 kids my first year back.

We wanted change and we worked hard to achieve it. We strived to make sure that we did not over promise and under delivered. We made sure that we came through on every promise we made to the kids. We promised to do what leaders were meant to do - lead by example and be strong mentors for the kids. We all have an equal amount of hours in the day. No one has any less or any more time to spare than the person next to them. We should all learn to make a little extra time to make a difference.

I believe this - my return was probably at an untimely moment, but in the end every positive thing that has resulted from my return could have not been any better. Because of the sacrifices I have made God has returned to me little blessing along the way. I cannot promise that I will stay forever but I will promise to each and every one of the kids that as long as I am here I promise to work hard to make every Sunday worth it. And all I ask in return is that you give TNTT a chance.

I want to say thank you to all the parents as well as the members of the church for supporting us this past year. I would like to also thank all the

leaders: Jessica, Josh, Brandon, Tuan, Nick, and Jimmy for their hard work and dedication. And thank you to all the kids that worked together with us to bring LBT back. And to those that are giving LBT a 2nd chance we welcome you back and we look forward to the changes that we make not only in our own personal lives but in the lives of the kids we teach.

P.S. This year we have enrolled a total of 75 kids in Thieu Nhi.

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My Thieu Nhi Experience

By Tr. Jessica Nguyen

I joined Thieu Nhi Thanh The when I was 6 years old at Westminster church. In 2000, my family moved to Lake Forest where my parents enrolled my brother, 3 sisters, and I into Thieu Nhi at Saddleback. For the most part, I like most of the kids that joined but I later quit because I no longer liked being in TNTT. A few years later many of friends joined Thieu Nhi so I decided to come back and give it a second chance. This time around, it wasn't so bad. We would play games, learning a lot of different things, have fundraisers, and do community service. The most enjoyable and memorable event in TNTT was the camping trips. I think that being Thieu Nhi is my way to give back to my community; as well as helping myself. I've been in Thieu Nhi for about 6 years, and Thieu Nhi has taught me a lot. It has helped me build character, become more responsible, and become a better

Catholic. Many of my TN friends have come and gone, but I'll never forget the memories that we shared. Thieu Nhi isn't just another youth group; it is a place where you can create a bond with your peers. They are almost like your second family. I like being in Thieu Nhi because I can teach our younger generations to be good people and to do good things all while creating a fun atmosphere. You don't have to be perfect to be in Thieu Nhi. You just have to have a big heart and an open mind! (:

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How it all started

By Tr. Jimmy Lam-My

I joined Thieu Nhi at the age of 16, and it was not a moment too soon. As cliché as it may sound, joining Thieu Nhi was one of the best things I did in life. In retrospect, I did join for the wrong reasons, but in the end I am glad I did.

Growing up my family did not have a lot of money so my dad worked all the time. I would see him for a second in the morning, then a few hours after he comes home from work, and then before he goes to bed. During the weekend he is busy running errands with my mom and my grandma so I did not see him much then either. My mom, knowing the importance of staying home with her children, took a stay at home job even though it meant earning a fraction of what she would if she actually worked a "normal" job. So if anything I would like to think that I am one of the luckiest people alive to have such wonderful and loving parents such as mine. Like any other teenagers, I was somewhat rebellious and curious with many things in life at the age of 15. Despite my father's great example and my mom's nurture I began to spend more time with people who were deemed "cool" in school. I thought that by not going to class and hanging out at my friend's house was cool. I was never peer pressured into doing bad things but my friends kept me from going to school. The summer after my High School year marked the beginning of my downward spiral. I began to ditch classes more often and made a few bad judgments that would have lead me to be in big

trouble. In fact, I actually failed one of my classes, something I would never do.

After the first semester of my Junior year I started to get bored with the people that I hung out with and started to become friends with the other crowd of kids. One of them told me about Thieu Nhi and how much fun he was having going to camps and meeting new people.

I came to one of the events and all the Huynh Truong welcomed me with open arms. They took me in knowing that I was not a Catholic, and it was then that I saw the difference between apathy and the pursuit of excellence. I noticed that each person in TN wanted nothing more than to be the best at what they do. Everyone worked together as a family and promoted positive attitudes through competition and education. My first camping trip to Dai Hoi Nguon Song was a larger eye opener. I met many different people with similar beliefs and values that made me think about my previous life. It may seem strange that a teenager would use previous life as a reference, but that's what it felt like for me. I looked back and thought about all the things I used to do, which was a lot of nothing, and the things that I get to participate in once I joined TN. The difference was indeed night and day. Also, this was how I met Cathy, the current Doan Truong for Saddleback. We met briefly at my second DHNS and became friends afterwards. We kept in touch off and on over the years. Last summer I learned of the shortage of Huynh Truong at Saddleback and came to help her for one year. Well, it has been one year and I am still here for years to come.

Some people ask me why I spend so much time and drive so far just to do something that I do not get paid for. Little do they know that I am not helping TN, but in fact TN is helping me. I strongly believe that being in the presence of positive energy made a difference in who I was and who I am today. I want to be able to give back to the organization that gave me a new outlook in life, and I want to be able to make a positive difference in a young person's life. It's important to be surrounded by those who care, because my parents try to raise me correctly in every possible way, but I still made bad decisions. It was the influence of my HT's that guided me during my time of need. Being in TN make me want to be a good person so that the younger generations will see that there are still those who cares about others. I am very thankful to the TN organization and to my parents, because

without them and TN I would be just another lost soul.

My Thieu Nhi Story

By Tr. Joshua Nguyen



My Thieu Nhi story all began when I was 10 years old. I joined TNTT at Saddleback church when my family relocated from Garden Grove to Aliso Viejo. My 2 other brothers joined Nghanh Thieu while I was stuck in Au Nhi. As the years past I learned how to be a great Au Nhi. I quickly climbed the “corporate ladder” of the TNTT organization. Going from having no strip on my khan (doi vien), to having one strip (doi pho), and even 2 strips (doi trung); sometimes you have to start somewhere and work your way up! I quickly learned the motto of LBT - quick quiet and organized. I would hear it emphasized every week. We would learned morse code, semaphore, scriptures from the bible, and did arts and crafts. But my favorite thing about TNTT was the “big game” also known as Tro Troi Lon? at camp. It is something everyone looked forward to at camp. The Huynh Truong would organize an elaborate “game” or scavenger hunt for us that took place at nighttime. We had clues that would lead us to different stations where we would have to pass challenges to move on. We were often tested on our knowledge of materials taught during TNTT. We had to decode secret messages and figure out clues. During my time in TNTT I have attended a lot of camps; such as Nghia Si, Thieu Nhi, Doi Truong/Doi Pho, LDNS, and Doan camps. And as I got older I became a leader and attended Du Bi and Huynh Truong Camp 1. But my



favorite would have to be DOAN camp, where all the nganh get together and we have all kinds of activities. But lately, our doan camps have been so amazing. We are so involved with our students; we also want them to have a fun time but also learn new things. We get so much life experience from being a part of TNTT. These past years have been a wild ride for our me as long as our doan. We are so short handed but I have faith that if anyone can bring back TNTT it is our doan. So after my many years of being in Thieu Nhi, what have I learned? It is that I don't go to church every Sunday for some sort of reward but I go because I enjoy seeing my students succeed. And I want them to succeed at LDNS camp - on the final day of testing when they know every answer on that test that's what makes me come back every year. Thieu Nhi is more than just a boy scout/girl scout type of group. Not only do we learn about survival skills, it teaches you to become a better person and a better catholic. Most of the older kids in Nghia Si often quit TN after they finish Confirmation class and we often never see them again. They don't even attend church --- but those who continue to stay in TN make it worth coming back year after year.

My TNTT Story

By Tr. Tuan Nguyen

I joined Thieu Nhi Thanh The when I was 7 years old. As I recall my experiences in Thieu Nhi were amazing and memorable. The Huynh Truongs have taught me stories in the Bible and helped me to become a better

person. Through their teachings and inspiration, not only have I become a better person but also a better Catholic. Their teachings really helped me strengthening my faith in the Catholic Church. I really learned a lot of new things as I transition from Nganh Au to Nganh Thieu and to Nganh Nghia. And as I got older, I realize that the Huynh Truongs have really inspired and motivated me to keep on learning and to continue to become a better person. Today I am a Huynh Truong and take care of Nganh Thieu. I have learned a lot over the years and I want to give back to the kids. And help inspire the younger kids to learn what I have been taught and to help them strengthening their faith in the Catholic Church. Encourage them to become better people and to influence those around. Every since I joined TNTT when I was 7 years old every moment has been amazing. Thieu Nhi has really made me a better person spiritually. In conclusion, I recommend Thieu Nhi to young children out there who wish to strengthen their faith in the Catholic Church and want to become a better person. END