

Celebrating Our
Saint Nicholas Parish **50th** **1965 - 2015**
ANNIVERSARY

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The Vietnamese Catholic Community at Saint Nicholas Parish

May 1975

My baby girl had been sick since we came here at Camp Pendleton. We lived in a tent and it was so cold at night. Upon arriving at the camp, each person was given a military jacket which barely kept us warm. But on that beautiful day my baby felt better so I carried her out for a walk. The warm sunshine and the yellow mustard flowers on the hills lifted up my spirit and filled my heart with hope.

I came across a priest and greeted him:

- “Hello Father! It’s so nice to see a priest here. Whom did you come to visit?”
- “My parish has sponsored a few Vietnamese families here.” He replied.
- “Oh, would you please sponsor my family too?” I asked.
- “My parish has already sponsored 6 families.” He said.

I raised the baby carrier up and begged: “Father, please look at this baby girl. She was born in Viet Nam but hasn’t been baptized yet. It was such a chaos in my country during the last week before the fall of Saigon. Please, Father, please?”

He looked at the baby again, smiled and asked: “What’s her name?”

- “Her name is Minh Đức”.
- “It’s a nice name.”
- “Father, you’ll like the name more if you know its meaning.”
- “What does it mean?”

I told him the story: When my baby was born I wanted to give her a name appropriate for a cute little girl such as Thủy Trúc (water bamboo), but my father said if he had the honor to give her a name, he would call her “Minh Đức.” I responded: “Dad, that name sounds more like a boy than a girl.” But he explained: “**Minh** means **shining** and **Đức** means **virtue**; we can lose our country, our home to the Communists, but nobody can take away our virtue. Let your virtue shine and you’ll find happiness in your heart no matter where you are.”

The father said: “Let me see what I can do. I’ll come back next week.”

Thus, my family of eight was the last of the seven Vietnamese families sponsored by Father Sporrer and St. Nicholas Parish. Father Cogan came to take us out of Camp Pendleton in early June. We were now actually in America, how wonderful! We were in “America the Beautiful”! We stopped by St. Nicholas Church to give thanks to God before arriving at a condo in New World, off Moulton Parkway near the church. It was such a delight to see the condo already furnished with tables and chairs, children clothes in

the closet and pots and pans in the kitchen. Shortly after that, my baby girl was baptized during the 9:00 a.m. Sunday Mass. It was such a glorious event, a memory that lasts for a life time.

We are very grateful to the parishioners who helped us out. They brought us used furniture and clothes, drove us to church and supermarkets, showed us how to bake cookies and cakes, helped us apply for jobs, taught us to drive, etc. To God, Father Sporrer and St. Nicholas Parishioners, we are grateful forever.

Gradually we met other Vietnamese settled in Laguna Hills, Dana Point, San Clemente, Mission Viejo, etc. who shared the same experience about being unable to understand the English language. Luckily, Father Tran Đức Tien, an old Vietnamese priest, was among us. He celebrated Sunday Mass in Vietnamese for us at the Old Mission Church in Dana Point. At the same time a few Vietnamese Redemptorist Priests took turns to celebrate the First Friday Mass at St. Kilian Church in Mission Viejo. These priests also celebrated mass on the 13th each month in our private homes to pray Our Lady of Fatima for our country and for the whole world. Our religious life continued that way for many years.

1984 – 1986: Preparation Period

Our wish was to have a Vietnamese Catholic Community right here in Laguna Hills acknowledged by the Bishop of Orange County Diocese. In pursuit of that goal, many men and women formed Revival Groups to bring Vietnamese people together in prayer. They took turns to host these Revival Groups in their private homes to pray together and share experiences. They elected a temporary Executive Committee to administer the activities of the community and worked relentlessly to petition for a Vietnamese priest as our spiritual director.

In 1984, Father Đỗ Thanh Hà became our Director and with Father Sporrer's permission, he



**Minh Đức's First Communion
with msgr Sporrer**

celebrated mass in Vietnamese at St. Nicholas Church on Sundays. Members of religious groups such as Legio Mariae and Ignatian Spiritual Exercises began to meet together like they used to in Vietnam. The Christmas Masses with the choir singing Christmas songs that we used to sing in Vietnam really lifted our spirit and brought warmth and peace to our hearts. We thanked God for all his blessings. And New Year celebrations were joyful events with every family trying to prepare traditional foods. Although small, our Saddleback Vietnamese community was very active in promoting piety, unity, love and peace.

By 1986 we already had a very strong Executive Committee and our community was officially

approved as the 9th Vietnamese Catholic Community of Orange County Diocese.

1986 – 1988: Development Period

Many Vietnamese Catholic Action Lay Societies began to flourish during this period. The Ignatian Spiritual Exercises group met on a regular basis and brought about good results for the youth in our community.

Vietnamese Language Center began to operate in 1987 with almost 100 students. At the same time, the Religious Education Program sponsored by the Lovers of the Cross nuns prepared our children for the First Communion.

The Vietnamese Catholic Mothers Group began with 14 women and attracted more members quickly. They met monthly to help one another in learning to be good wives and to educate their children. Their uniform of white áo dài (Vietnamese long dress) and pants added a graceful touch to the festivity of the holidays such as the Feast Day of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Christmas and Vietnamese New Year. They also provided great support to the Vietnamese Language and Religious Education classes.

Along with the Vietnamese Catholic Mothers, the Vietnamese Devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus Association was also established for men. These two groups strengthened the families in our community and organized the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Society at St. Nicholas Parish. The church premises became livelier on Sunday afternoons with boys and girls attending Vietnamese Language and Religious Education classes, Eucharistic Youth activities, and participating in the mass with their families in the church. We lifted them up to God and prayed that He protects and guides them always.

Along with the above groups, the Little Souls Legion, Cursillo Movement and Vocational Development Association at St. Nicholas Church were the driving force behind our efforts to serve the parish, the Church and society.



Joseph Tran's Family

St. Nicholas Parish also became more enriched with Vietnamese cultural activities such as fund-raising dinners in the large hall on Sunday evenings, annual picnic, specially Christmas and New Year celebrations. These activities provided opportunities for community members to better know one another and bond together.

The community spirit was expressed in “Tin Yêu” (Faith & Love) Bulletin published every year during Christmas Season. It reported community activities and future projects and reinforced the community mission statement: Hold on to God with one hand (Faith) and hold on to your brothers and sisters in Christ with the other hand (Love).

1986 Forward

Although many families of our community have moved away to be closer to their jobs, St. Nicholas Church is always our home church. We always feel grateful to the parish that has taken us in, loved and supported us during the first few years when our hearts were torn and our mind was confused about the uncertainty of the future.

We show our attitude by “paying forward.” We have made contributions to the construction of the large

hall, annual PSA, Christ Cathedral and helped the sick and the poor who are close to home as well as far away. And we will continue to support St. Nicholas Parish by prayers, by living our faith and setting good examples for the future generation at the parish.

Today, the Vietnamese Catholic Community at St. Nicholas Parish is still a very strong and active community with members engaged in all the activities of the parish as well as of Orange County Diocese.

With much gratitude to the late Monsignor Sporrer and the St. Nicholas parishioners who have brought us in the early days, and their continued support throughout the years. Without such helping hands we would not be where we are today. In one faith, with much love, gratitude, and a continued support to the parish. UNITED, WE CELEBRATE!



Sợ Vợ

Tina Lương sưu tầm

Sợ vợ, đôi chữ nghe thanh
Thời nay sợ vợ, nổi danh... anh hùng
Người ta cứ bảo tui khùng
Đường đường quân tử, nhưng chùn hông nhan
Thời nay sợ vợ mới sang
Chớ không sợ vợ, có màn ra hiên.
Ngồi buồn kiếm chuyện nói chơi,
Nhất vợ nhì trời là chuyện tự nhiên.
Đàn ông sợ vợ thì sang,
Đàn ông đánh vợ tan hoang cửa nhà.
Đàn ông không biết thờ "bà"
Cuộc đời lận đận kể là vút đi.
Đàn ông sợ vợ ai khi,
Vợ mình, mình sợ sá gì thế gian!
Đàn ông khi phách ngang tàng,
Nghe lời vợ dạy là hàng "trượng phu."
Đàn ông đánh vợ là ngu,

Tổn tiền cơm nước, ở tù như chơi.
Lấy nàng từ thuở mười năm,
Đến khi mười chín tôi đã năm con.
Nàng thì trông hây còn son,
Tôi thì dính óc, bù lon rã rời.
Nắng mưa là chuyện của trời,
Tê gia nội trợ có tôi bao sầu.
Suốt ngày cày cấy như trâu,
Chiều về rửa chén cũng "ngầu" như ai.
Nấu cơm, đi chợ hàng ngày,
Bồng con, thay tã tôi đây vẹn toàn.
Lau nhà, lau cửa chẳng màng,
Ôi thời oanh liệt ngang tàng còn đâu.
Nhiều khi muốn học xì dầu,
Xỉn nàng nghỉ phép, nàng chau đôi mày.
Nàng đòi thi đấu võ đài,
Tưng ra một chưởng, chén bay ào ào.
Nhớ xưa mình mới quen nhau,
Em ăn, em nói ngọt ngào dễ thương.
Cho nên tôi mới bị lường,
Mang thân ngà ngọc cây nường nơi nàng.
Than ôi thực tế phũ phàng,
Mày râu một kiếp thôi đành đi doang.
Một lòng thờ vợ sắt son,
Còn non còn nước thì tôi còn... thờ.
Đàn ông nể vợ là sang,
Ngồi nghe vợ dạy là hàng trượng phu.
Đàn ông đánh vợ là ngu,
Vừa mất tiền thuốc vừa tù chung thân.
Tôi đây thích sợ vợ nhà
Thì đâu có sợ người ta chê cười.
Vợ tôi, tôi sợ kệ tôi
Miễn tôi không sợ vợ người thì thôi.
Người xưa thường bảo với tôi
Vợ mày mày sợ thế là người khôn
Chớ không mày đã không còn
Công ơn vợ dưỡng nên chồng hôm nay.
Là người phải biết nghĩ dài
Mai sau già yếu ngày ngày vợ nuôi.

