

# March Mission Intention

We pray that the Holy Spirit may give light and strength to Christian communities and the faithful who are persecuted or discriminated against because of the Gospel.



## Suffering for faith in Jesus Christ...

### Country Focus: Vietnam: New hope for a persecuted Church



This year, the country of Vietnam is celebrating 350 years of Catholic Christianity in their land. Those years have been filled with many episodes of Christians suffering for their faith.

In 1954, Vietnam gained independence from France and was divided between the North and South. As a result of the Vietnam war, in 1976 the Communist-ruled North Vietnam defeated the South and reunited the country. Vietnam restricts the freedom of worship. Religious groups not following government rules can face imprisonment, torture and death. Christian churches are frequently destroyed but despite the persecution, the Church is growing.

Today, the Church in Vietnam has nearly 8 million members. The persecution of Vietnamese Christians has only spurred the Church on to missionary activity to bring Good News of Christ to their neighbors.

Pope Benedict said, "At present, Christians are the religious group which suffers most from persecution for its faith."



### God's Word for Mission

*Promoting Knowledge of Faith*

On the road to Damascus, Saul heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He said, "who are you sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:4-5).

The duty of Christians is to take part in the life of the Church impels them to act as witnesses of the Gospel and of the obligations that flow from it. This witness is a transmission of faith in words and deeds. (#2472 Catechism).

### Saints for Mission-St. Andrew Dung Lac and Companions *Community Life*

St. Andrew was one of 117 people martyred in Vietnam between 1820 and 1862. Severe persecutions were launched three times in the 19th century. During this century, between 100,000 and 300,000 Catholics were killed or subjected to great hardship. Those who were martyred included missionary priests from France and Spain. St. Andrew was one of many native clergy who were tortured and killed. There were also lay people, including children, who died for their faith.



Letters of this persecution were written by Fr. Theophane Vennard, a missionary from Paris, France. His letters and example inspired the Church in France to become more engaged in missionary activity around the world, including a young Carmelite sister, named Theresa of Lisieux, known today as St. Therese, the Little Flower.

St. Andrew Dung Lac and his Companions were beatified in 1900 and St. Theophane Venard was beatified in 1909. They were then canonized, with the 115 martyrs, in 1988 by Pope John Paul II. They are known as: *The Martyrs of Vietnam*.



CENTER for MISSION  
Serving the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

### Global Solidarity

Jesus' message of loving our neighbors as ourselves has a global dimension to it for Catholics. The call to Global Solidarity teaches that we are our brothers' and sisters' keepers, wherever they live. We are one human family that reaches to the ends of the earth. We cannot limit our concern only to our own family and nation or be indifferent to the needs of those beyond borders. Individually and together we join in solidarity.



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## Living Mission

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*Moral Formation*

Sr. Rose Vu is a member of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd. She came to the U.S. in the 1970's as one of the many refugees who fled Vietnam after the war to escape religious persecution for being a Christian.

Sr. Rose came to the Twin Cities to help the many refugees (also known as "boat people") resettle their families in this new land.

In recent years, she has been able to return to Vietnam to help the Church



grow and to offer her support for new schools and facilities that assist the poor; especially women and children.

Sr. Rose gathers spiritual and material support from Catholics of the Twin Cities to help her bring resources to assist young women raise their families in dignity by finding homes, education and jobs. Her ministry supports the growing Vietnamese Church serve the people and witness to Christ among all the people.

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## Petitions for Mission

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*Liturgical Education*

- ✚ Let us pray for Christians around the world who suffer persecution for their faith in Jesus Christ. May their witness bear fruit among their neighbors and bring lasting peace.
- ✚ Let us pray for those who live as minorities because of their race, religion or social status. May their human rights be protected and they be afforded the same freedoms as the majority.
- ✚ Let us pray in gratitude for the gift of faith that has been handed down to us by our ancestors in faith. May we not take for granted our ancestors' sacrifices so that we may freely practice our faith.
- ✚ Let us pray that we can stand in solidarity with our brothers and sisters around the world.

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## Prayer for Mission

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*Missionary Initiative*

Dear Jesus, we believe that you are present in the faces of those who suffer because of their faith in you. Help us to love our neighbors around the world as you love us. Amen.