



The Holy See

**MESSAGE OF HIS HOLINESS BENEDICT XVI
TO BISHOP PIERRE NGUYỄN VĂN NHON,
PRESIDENT OF THE VIETNAMESE BISHOPS' CONFERENCE**

To Bishop

Pierre Nguyễn Văn Nhơn

of Đá Lat

President of the Bishops' Conference of Vietnam

At the beginning of the Jubilee Celebrations for the 350th anniversary of the erection of the Vicariates Apostolic of Tonkin and Cochinchine and the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Catholic Hierarchy in Vietnam, I join with all my heart in the joy and thanksgiving of your country's Bishops, whom I had the pleasure of meeting last June, and of all the members of their dioceses.

You wanted the beginning of this celebration to coincide with the Feast of the 117 glorious martyrs of your country. The memory of their noble witness will help the People of God in Vietnam as a whole to put their charity into practice, to increase their hope and to consolidate their faith that is sometimes sorely tried by daily life. The unique figure of André Dung-Lac stands out among these martyrs. His priestly virtues are a luminous model for priests and seminarians, both secular and religious, in your country. In this Year for Priests, may they draw from his example and from that of his companions a renewed spiritual energy that will help them to live their priesthood in greater fidelity to their vocation, in fraternal communion, in the dignified celebration of the Church's sacraments, and in a dynamic and intense apostolate.

For the inauguration of your celebration you have chosen So-Kien, in the Archdiocese of Hanoi, an emblematic place that speaks particularly to your hearts.

It was the headquarters of the first Vicariate Apostolic in Vietnam and still preserves the precious remains of your holy martyrs, as well as their noble relics.

In this Jubilee Year, may this place that is so dear to you be at the heart of a deepened evangelization that will bring to the whole of Vietnamese society the Gospel values of charity, truth, justice and rectitude. These values, lived in the following of Christ, acquire a new dimension that surpasses their traditional moral meaning when they are anchored in God who desires the good and happiness of every person.

The Jubilee Year is a time of grace favourable for reconciliation with God and with one's neighbour. To this end, it is right to recognize the shortcomings of the past and present that were committed against brothers and sisters in the faith and fellow compatriots and to ask forgiveness for them. At the same time, it is also right to decide to deepen and enrich ecclesial communion and to build a just, supportive and equitable society through authentic dialogue, mutual respect and healthy collaboration. The Jubilee is also a special season, offered for renewing the proclamation of the Gospel to one's fellow citizens and for becoming increasingly a Church that is communion and mission.

The whole of the Church in Vietnam has prepared herself for the celebration of the Jubilee with a novena of prayer so that this exceptional event may find grace in God's sight, contribute to the spiritual progress of all the faithful and consolidate the Church's mission. My thoughts turn quite naturally to the men and women religious, who are prepared to bear witness with their lives to the radicalism of the Gospel through the charism of their respective Founders.

May they continue to develop in God through the deepening of their spiritual life in fidelity to their vocation and through a fruitful apostolate in the following of Christ. My fatherly affection also goes to the Vietnamese lay faithful as a whole. They are present in my mind and in my daily prayers. May they be more profoundly and actively committed to the life and mission of the Church.

Dear Brothers in the Episcopate, I ask God to enlighten and guide you so that, after the example of Our Lord and Teacher, you may be good Pastors (cf. Jn 10: 11-16) who are devoted to tending their sheep, encouraging them and caring for them when necessary, and Bishops who witness with courage and perseverance to God's greatness and the beauty of life in Christ.

May Our Lady of La Vang, dear to the Christians of your nation, accompany you with her motherly tenderness throughout this year. Your Excellency, I impart to you my affectionate Apostolic Blessing, which I gladly extend to the Bishops, priests and seminarians, to the men and women religious as well as to all the faithful of Vietnam and all those, near and far, who join in the joy of your celebrations.

From the Vatican, 17 November 2009

BENEDICT PP. XVI

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