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Coronavirus



Sr. Mary John Théophan Vénard Doan Thi Chuyen, far left, and another sister in medical gear serve a meal to two nuns with COVID-19 at Ho Ngoc Can Clinic in Xuan Truong district, Nam Dinh province, Vietnam. (Courtesy of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Bui Chu)

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Editor's note: *Global Sisters Report is taking a look at how the COVID-19 pandemic continues to affect women religious worldwide. In addition to a bird's eye view of the current state of the pandemic and vaccination rates, GSR is also zooming in to see how the pandemic recently affected one religious community in Vietnam.*

Most of the sisters, novices and postulants from all convents and communities of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Bui Chu have been infected with COVID-19 since the prolonged pandemic hit their motherhouse in January, Sr. Mary John Théophan Vénard Doan Thi Chuyen said.

Chuyen serves as general manager of the 76-year-old congregation and works at the motherhouse in Xuan Truong District of Nam Dinh province, northern Vietnam. The congregation has 400 nuns and 142 novices and postulants.

She said some of the nuns first caught COVID-19 from the students at their day care center and then passed it to other sisters.

"Some 30 women have been undergoing medical treatment for the contagion at our Ho Ngoc Can Clinic," she said. "No sisters have died of the COVID-19 pandemic so far, thank God."

Most patients get better in seven to 10 days and are treated by other sisters who are doctors and nurses. All of the nuns have received two or three doses of the COVID-19 vaccine.



Daughters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Bui Chu who have minor COVID-19 symptoms receive coconut juice in one of the classrooms at the motherhouse in Xuan Truong district, Nam Dinh province, Vietnam. (Courtesy of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary of Bui Chu)

"I work all day, visiting and comforting patients at the clinic, offering them food and medicine, and encouraging them to be optimistic about life and trust in health care providers," Chuyen said.

Chuyen, one of a few nuns who has not yet caught the coronavirus, said the community lost its income because they had to close their day care center and health care clinic. Because of the government's movement restrictions, fewer people are buying incense, flowers, candles and statues from the nuns' store.

They had to buy COVID-19 test kits and medicine, both of which cost 120 million dong (about $5,248), to treat the sick nuns.

Chuyen said the sisters usually grow rice and other crops and raise fish, poultry and pigs for a living. However, their adult female pigs died after harsh weather, and their chickens were stolen.

"We are seriously concerned about daily food and reduce daily expenses to a minimum," she said.

She said they reopened the clinic last month to serve other patients and earn income to cover their daily expenses.

"We encourage one another to trust in divine providence and hope that benefactors will come to our aid so that we can overcome the hard time," she said.

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