News
Spirituality



Mary Nguyen Thi Thu Huong (center) said three sisters were helping them to perform *dang hoa* on the evenings of Wednesdays and Saturdays in October at Yen Bai Church in the Diocese of Hung Hoa, Vietnam. "*Dang hoa* aims at encouraging local people to recite the rosary regularly and to pray for the evangelization work in the diocese," said the 35-year-old mother of two, who has joined the troupes for six years. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)

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Yen Bai City, Vietnam — November 1, 2023

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Sisters from the Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hung Hoa held *dang hoa*, or ceremonial offerings of flowers to Mother Mary, at parishes in the Hung Hoa Diocese in October to foster Marian devotion among local people.

The sisters help hundreds of Catholic women, including ethnic Hmong, who perform traditional dances and offer beautiful flowers to Mother Mary during the month of the rosary. They teach them to dance to hymns and use incense, candles, fans, rosaries and colorful flowers to show their devotion to Mary.

Dance troupes dressed in traditional costumes perform at churches on weekend evenings. Their performances attract hundreds of attendees, who join processions carrying Marian statues around churches for 45 minutes to one hour.



Eighteen Hmong dancers, ages 20-40, perform a traditional dance with colorful fans on Oct. 7 at Sung Do Church in Vietnam. They do five dances with rosaries, flowers, candles, incense and fans, lasting 45 minutes before Mass is celebrated. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)



Hmong people play the drums, starting the performance at Sung Do Church in Vietnam on Oct. 7. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)



Eighteen Hmong women in costumes dance with candles in front of a Marian statue decorated with flowers at Sung Do Church in Vietnam Oct. 7. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)



Hmong women dance with rosaries to a Marian hymn in front of a Marian statue in Sung Do Church in Vietnam on Oct. 7. Sung Do Parish was established in 2019 and is served by Hmong Fr. Joseph Ma A Ca. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)

Female dancers have practice sessions on weekday evenings and pay for their costumes as a way to make sacrifices for Mother Mary.

Hmong villagers from parishes in remote areas pick wildflowers to offer to Mother Mary, since they do not have money to buy flowers from local markets. They wear rosaries around their necks, believing Mother Mary brings them peace and good luck.

Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hung Hoa Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Xuan said about 200 sisters from her congregation are sent to teach dances to people during the month

at parishes, subparishes and mission stations in the Hung Hoa Diocese. One or two sisters work at each place.



Hmong Maria Giang Thi Bla (second from left) and other dancers do an ethnic dance with candles at Sung Do Church in Vietnam on Oct. 7. "Although we are poor, we try to buy costumes for 2 million dong ($83) for our performance as a way to show our devotion to Mary," the 35-year-old mother of four said. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)

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Lovers of the Holy Cross Sr. Mary Nguyen Thi Xuan (center) and Hmong Maria Sung Thi Senh (left) sing hymns for troupes to dance to at Sung Do Church in Vietnam on Oct. 7. The 40-year-old nun from Vinh Quang Convent, 20 kilometers away, teaches Hmong women how to arrange flowers, sing hymns, and dance. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)



Hmong people attend Mass after a ceremonial dance at Sung Do Church in Vietnam on Oct. 7. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)

Xuan, 40, said the congregation with 500 nuns does not have enough staff to serve Vietnam's largest diocese. It covers part of Hanoi City and nine provinces, which are home to 264,000 Catholics, including 20,000 Hmong people at 150 parishes and some 500 subparishes and mission stations.

Xuan, from the Vinh Quang Convent with six nuns based in the Van Chan district of the mountainous province of Yen Bai, works at Sung Do Parish, serving 1,000 Hmong villagers.

Two other sisters, Mary Dao Thi Lan, 35, and Catherine Nguyen Thi Hai, 38, from Vinh Quang Convent, hold a ceremonial dance at the parishes of Vinh Quang and Vang Cai, respectively. Vinh Quang Parish has 1,700 members, including Hmong villagers, and Vang Cai Parish serves some 1,000 Catholics, one-third of them from the Tay ethnic people.



Seventy women in ao dai, or Vietnamese dress, march in a long ceremonial procession carrying a Marian statue around Vinh Quang Church in the Van Chan district, Vietnam, on Oct. 8. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)



Dancers perform with flowers in front of a Marian statue at Vinh Quang Church in Vietnam's Van Chan district on Oct. 8. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)



Fifty altar boys join a Marian procession around Vinh Quang Church in Van Chan district, Vietnam, on Oct. 8. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)

Xuan said the nuns also offer flowers to Mother Mary in May, regarded as the month of flowers in Vietnam, dedicating it to the Blessed Virgin Mary.

Some nuns also help troupes hold *dang hoa* ceremonies at Yen Bai Parish.

Dang hoa ceremonies in October have become increasingly popular at local parishes and subparishes since 2017, when they marked the 100th anniversary of the apparitions of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Fátima, Portugal.

October is designated by the Catholic Church as the month of the rosary because the church celebrates the Marian advocation of "Our Lady of the Rosary" on Oct. 7.



Women arrange flowers and decorate a Marian statue in Yen Bai Church in Vietnam on Oct. 21. They said they use their own money to buy roses for their performances on the evenings of Wednesdays and Saturdays. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)



Sr. Mary Kieu Thi Anh Xuan plays the organ, and Sr. Mary Nguyen Thi Anh Tuyet (center) and Maria Pham Thi Thuy, a laywoman, sing hymns for dancers to perform in Yen Bai Church in Vietnam on Oct. 21. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)



Twenty-eight women in white ao dai dance and form a heart of colorful fans in Yen Bai Church in Vietnam on Oct. 14. (GSR photo/Joachim Pham)