News



Daughters of Our Lady of the Visitation Sr. Mary Truong Thi Danh (left), a teacher and children pose for a photo at Phu Vang convent on Dec. 9 in Thua Thien Hue province. (Joachim Pham)

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Sisters from four congregations in northern and central Vietnam teach Hmong Catholics to build nativities, sing carols, decorate churches and offer food to people in need to celebrate Christmas.

Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hung Hoa Sr. Mary Hoang Thi Phuong, who has worked with local people for decades, said Hmong villagers use bamboo, leaves and straw to make nativities like the huts on their farms where they live in poverty.

Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hung Hoa Sr. Teresa Vu Thi Anh Tuyet said she and another nun are assigned to serve Hoang Lien Son Mission Station with 50 Hmong villagers in Lao Cai province for the first time to make crèches and hold Christmas celebrations. They will work there for three months.

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The sisters also make nativities from used items to sell and sing folk songs to raise money and offer food to people in need.

Christmas is not a public holiday in the communist-ruled country.



Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hung Hoa Sr. Mary Hoang Thi Phuong wears a hat and mask to avoid toxic fumes from plastic bags on Dec. 13. The bags are heated to use them to decorate nativity scenes at Lao Chai Church in Lao Cai province. Hmong people who live in poverty make nativities like the huts on their farms. (Joachim Pham)



Hmong Catholics clear a site and use bamboo, leaves and straw to build a crèche in front of Lao Chai Church on Dec. 15. (Joachim Pham)



Hmong women from Ban Phung Subparish in Lao Cai province repair their chapel to celebrate Christmas on Dec. 16. Priests from other places provide weekly pastoral care for the community of about 260 Hmong people. (Joachim Pham)



Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hung Hoa Sr. Mary Hoang Thi Phuong offers money as a Christmas gift to 90-year-old Maria Giang Thi Xay, whose house was a chapel for Hmong Catholics from Ban Phung Subparish in Lao Cai province. Her husband, who had evangelized local people, died in November. (Joachim Pham)



Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hung Hoa Sr. Mary Hoang Thi Phuong rides a scooter on narrow, windy and rough paths to offer pastoral care to Hmong villagers at subparishes in Lao Cai province. (Joachim Pham)



Tourists and locals gather at night to admire Sa Pa Church, decorated with colorful lights, Christmas trees and nativities. The stone church is a famous tourist destination in Sa Pa town. (Joachim Pham)



St. Paul de Chartres Sr. Maria Nguyen Thi Su teaches Hmong students from a church-run hostel to practice nativity plays at night at Sa Pa Church. They plan to perform the plays and sing carols at Christmas Eve celebrations. (Joachim Pham)



St. Paul de Chartres Sr. Maria Nguyen Thi Su and others decorate Sa Pa Church to celebrate Christmas. "We try our best to bring the Christmas spirit of love to all people, regardless of their backgrounds," Su said. (Joachim Pham)



On a cold day, Hmong students clean and decorate the compound of Sa Pa Church as a way to celebrate Christmas. (Joachim Pham)



Hmong women in traditional clothes visit a nativity in Pho Lu Parish in Lao Cai province on Dec. 17. They are from Nam Xe village, 30 kilometers (19 miles) from the parish. (Joachim Pham)



Hmong Teresa Ly Thi Xua, 40, prays before a Christmas nativity made with leaves, bamboo, paper and flowers in the compound of Pho Lu Church in Lao Cai province. Her village has no chapel, and local people do not make crèches. (Joachim Pham)



Daughters of Our Lady of the Visitation Sr. Mary Agnes Truong Thi Phuc (in white) and two other sisters make crèches from items at their convent in Thua Thien Hue province on Dec. 5 to sell and offer food to people in need. (Joachim Pham)