Voices of Sisters
Horizons
Ministry



Sr. Trần Thu Hà and Sr. Nguyễn Thị Hường, of the Lovers of the Holy Cross of Dalat greet people as they line up for hot meals at the Kitchen of Love in Bao Loc, Lam Dong, Vietnam, on May 5, 2023. (Sr. Nguyễn Hồng Ân)



by Sr. Hoa Nguyen

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Six years after the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, we can sadly recall the sense of fear, loss, grief, uncertainty, illness and death we felt. Beyond the medical crises, economic upheaval was severe — jobs vanished, people were laid off overnight, businesses folded, and consequently, food insecurity became a stark reality for many.

In response to this collective vulnerability in 2020, the Sisters of the Lovers of the Holy Cross of Dalat, Vietnam, launched an effort to provide free meals to neighbors in need. The project began with the concept of creating a "Kitchen of Love," but we faced numerous concerns and uncertainty. We faced many questions: Where to start? What to do? Who would help? Why do this? How do we begin and continue? How could the kitchen be more than a distribution point and be a warm place of welcome?

We started out small in a simple kitchen, in a corner of the convent. There, we kept our stoves lit to prepare free, fresh and hot meals for the poor, homeless and outcast around Bao Loc city, Lam Dong, Vietnam. The kitchen was "on fire" with the heartfelt energy of the sisters and volunteers, eager to offer a warm welcome to those in need.

Facing the fear and anxiety as COVID-19 swept through the community was challenging. Sourcing food, ensuring proper hygiene, and maintaining safety required constant efforts to keep the kitchen "on fire." Each challenge was met with renewed energy, and we were honored to see the impact on those who came to us. For us, it was not just food: We wanted to welcome people with open arms.



Sr. Trương Mỹ Lộc, of the Lovers of the Holy Cross of Dalat, talks to people to foster community and connection at the Kitchen of Love in Bao Loc, Lam Dong, Vietnam, on May 5, 2023. (Sr. Nguyễn Hồng Ân)

In November 2023, we expanded and updated the kitchen, officially naming it "*The Kitchen of Love*." It is located in one of our local communities in Dalat, Vietnam, and remains open Monday to Saturday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Consistency builds trust and a sense of community among those who come. We and our volunteers keep the Kitchen of Love running reliably day after day, week after week. Our presence and consistency show our commitment, communicating a welcoming warmth in people's hearts. Nearly 300 free hot meals are served each day, and countless laughs are shared. We have diligently built this kitchen as a place filled with community, sharing, and welcome for those who need food, love, and dignity.

The stoves in the kitchen are always operating at full capacity to promptly prepare hot meals for those in need. The Kitchen of Love is "on fire" because the sisters and volunteers generously give their time, labor, and resources to replenish the kitchen with both food and love for people. The sisters and volunteers understand that the people who come here are seeking more than daily sustenance, they want to be acknowledged, seen and valued as human beings. The gift of hope given to the people becomes evident as their hungers are satisfied and their hearts are warmed.

Many volunteers come on different days to work together in the kitchen. They include doctors, engineers, students, farmers, mothers, grandmothers, grandfathers and retired people. They share their hearts and join hands to keep the kitchen ablaze with love.

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The Kitchen of Love has been open for six years and continues to go beyond its mission to fill empty stomachs. Fresh and hot meals were only the entry point. The mission also highlights the profound need for human connection, which is as important as the need for sustenance. The Kitchen of Love offers the ministry of presence — a lived reality of meeting human needs and responding to suffering with practical support. It fosters a sense of connection and community that offers a refreshing source of hope.

The Kitchen of Love has taught us a valuable lesson: While the COVID-19 pandemic exposed human fragility and suffering, it has also revealed an immense human capacity for love, empathy and compassion. This connects the work of the sisters with the ministry of making God's love visible in the world. The hearts of our sisters and this joyful kitchen remain "on fire" to serve hot meals and bring genuine hope to people facing uncertainty and challenges in their daily lives.

Although the Jubilee Year 2025 officially concluded with Pope Leo XIV's closing of the last Holy Door at the Mass of the feast of the Epiphany on Jan. 6, 2026, I continue to reflect on the theme of hope that "does not disappoint" (Romans 5:5). As a sister from the Lovers of the Holy Cross of Dalat, I am inspired by my sisters' ministry, which echoes the Pauline theology that hope flourishes, never disappoints, when we give with love. In our kitchen, love is still poured in — one bowl, one smile, and one heart at a time. I believe this is a collective hope for our fragile world.