News



A screenshot from a video shows religious brothers and sisters in protective gear praying for deceased COVID-19 patients at a field hospital in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. They begin with the prayer before volunteering to assist medical staff in taking care of COVID-19 patients. (CNS/VOV YouTube)

by Catholic News Service

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At 7:30 a.m. at field hospital No. 16, religious brothers and sisters began their shift with prayers for patients who had just died of COVID-19.

The front-line workers are members of different congregations in the southern city who volunteer to assist medical staff in taking care of patients with the coronavirus as well as carry out logistical work, reported ucanews.com.

In July, the standing committee of the Fatherland Front of Vietnam called for the volunteers in Ho Chi Minh City to help contain the contagion. Soon after, about 700 volunteers from religious organizations joined in at field hospitals, ucanews.com reported.

Besides taking care of the sick and logistics, they also perform a special task: praying in front of the cold room of those who died of COVID-19 each day.

"All medical staff and volunteers are aware of their role as the patient's family member, because the patients came here alone. If the patient dies, even the family cannot be present. Therefore, I always want to do something for them. We also pray for all the patients here," said Sister Thuy Linh, a member of the Sisters of St. Paul of Chartres.

She compared this pandemic to a war that no one had imagined: "This is indeed a very fierce battle. Realizing such fierceness, we have a duty to join hands with doctors and nurses. We came here to assist and work with medical staff."

Brother Quang Phung, a Redemptorist seminarian, explained what the volunteers actually do in the field hospital: "Taking care of patients is a general term. In particular, we change diapers, change beds, take food for patients to eat, visit and encourage them. If the patient needs anything, we will go get it for them."

Sister Thuy Linh said this is not an easy job, especially as she has to wear a disposable medical protection suit.

"I never have any thought of giving up," she said. "I'm surrounded by people who need a breath. While I can still breathe, I need to help them."

Redemptorist Fr. Alphonsus Tran Ngoc Huong felt touched by a video of the volunteers and wrote: "I saw the religious brothers and sisters standing in front of the containers, praying for those who had passed away due to COVID-19 so that

their souls may be at peace and they may gently and peacefully depart. I also saw the sign of the cross being raised. My heart feels truly touched. I ask myself: Every day, how many times do I make a sign as a habit, and how many times I do with a sense of conviction as those volunteers?"

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