News
Ministry



Mary Queen of Peace Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Bich offers candy to a grandchild of Mary Ly at her dilapidated house in the Vietnam Central Highlands. The Se Dang ethnic woman, 65, has 12 children who grow rice and coffee for a living. (Joachim Pham)

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Four Mary Queen of Peace sisters travel daily by motorbike to visit and console thousands of ethnic villagers at Kon H'ring Parish in Vietnam's Dak Lak province, home to various ethnic groups.

The nuns also provide basic food, medicine, clothes, soap, seedlings and poultry, among other things, for these villagers in the Vietnam Central Highlands, who live in extreme poverty and have little education. They also teach them personal hygiene and how to keep their houses clean, and they comfort patients and those whose relatives have died.

Local families have anywhere from four to 12 children each, and the parents struggle to buy medicine for those who regularly cough, have runny noses, and suffer malnutrition.



Mary Queen of Peace Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Bich consoles No Rek, age 40 with six children in Dak Lak province, Vietnam. One of her children has hydrocephalus and is bedridden, and her husband died of septicemia last October. She is a member of a lay association that Bich leads. (Joachim Pham)



Mary Queen of Peace Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Bich visits Ay Phuong, an Ede villager who owns a traditional wooden house in Buon Drang, Vietnam. He has a grandson with hydrocephalus, and the nuns encourage his family to care for the boy patiently. (Joachim Pham)



Mary Queen of Peace Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Bich, who's in her 70s, meets Sara, an Ede mother who has three children in Dak Lak province in Vietnam. She and her husband have no land and collect other people's peppercorns in the neighboring province of Dak Nong to put food on the table. Without money to send their kids to school, they let their children play under trees while they work. (Joachim Pham)



Locals use motor vehicles to carry people, fertilizers and agricultural tools to their farms in the Vietnam Central Highlands. Others who can't afford a vehicle walk to their farms. (Joachim Pham)

Because of a lack of water in the dry season, baths are irregular, and children wear shabby and soiled clothes, walk barefoot and play outside without a hat.

The sisters hold courses in basic catechism and marital preparation for young people, as many get married around the ages of 15 or 16 and already have one to three children; many are illiterate and have no jobs.

Mary Queen of Peace Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Bich said many young couples have a few farms to cultivate coffee, pepper, rice and corn but still have to look for manual work in other places. They lack food multiple months out of the year and regularly eat rice with salt and instant noodles.



Sister Therese (who preferred to omit her last name) visits a Se Dang family that dries black peppercorns in front of their house in Dak Lak province, Vietnam. Locals live in small houses and have to stay under trees to avoid the hot sun in the dry season. (Joachim Pham)



Mary Queen of Peace Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Bich talks with Mary Te at her house in Dak Lak province, Vietnam. Bich plans to help her repair the bare floor. Te, whose husband died years ago, said she has six children and a lot of grandchildren. Their main food includes rice and salt. (Joachim Pham)



In Buon Jok, Vietnam, Mary Queen of Peace Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Bich and Sister Therese visit Ya Ren (second from right), an Ede ethnic woman in her 80s who is interested in Catholicism. Ren said loan sharks confiscated her family's farms and try to force them to leave their house to repay their debts by loading large heaps of rocks in front of the house. "We have no place to move to," Ren said. (Joachim Pham)

Bich said men abuse alcohol and fight with their families, ultimately suffering road accidents, mental disorders and occasionally death by the drink.

The nuns, who started to work in the parish in 2021, invite local people to visit their home and the local church as a way to introduce them to Catholicism. They also call on their friends, former students and seminarians to make donations to support the ethnic groups.

"We find joy in living among the poor and easing their sorrows and sufferings," Bich said. "They never complain about their difficult situations but are absolutely honest with one another and true to their faith."

Thanks to the nuns' efforts, around 150 people were baptized last year.

Kon H'ring Parish was founded in 2015 and serves approximately 4,000 Catholics from Se Dang, Ede, Nung and Tay ethnic groups. Se Dang villagers from Kon Tum province moved to Dak Lak province in 1972 to avoid the Vietnam War, and in 1988, they settled in this area dominated by Ede people. Their ancestors embraced Catholicism from French missionaries in the late 19th century.



Mary Queen of Peace Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Bich and another sister (in black) join Ede ethnic family members in praying at their house while visiting them in Dak Lak province in Vietnam. The nuns encourage them to work hard to support themselves

and invite their neighbors to visit the church as a way to introduce them to Catholicism. (Joachim Pham)



Mary Queen of Peace Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Bich talks excitedly with Anna H'roi, who is in poor health and is looked after by her children in Dak Lak province, Vietnam. One of her nine children is a priest who serves Ban Me Thuot Diocese. (Joachim Pham)



Mary Queen of Peace Sr. Teresa Nguyen Thi Bich talks with Se Dang ethnic Teresa Mam, who's in her 80s and wears three rosaries around her neck, a common practice among ethnic villagers in the Vietnam Central Highlands as a way to protect themselves from evil. (Joachim Pham)



Two sisters travel by motorbike on a narrow path through coffee farms to visit ethnic villagers in Kon H'ring Parish in Cu M'gar district of Dak Lak province in Vietnam. (Joachim Pham)