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Ministry



Parents and their children enjoy traditional food, buy vegetables, play folk games and watch a cultural performance by Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hung Hoa nuns on Jan. 29 at a day care center in Yen Bai City, Vietnam. (Joachim Pham)

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Thua Thien Hue, Vietnam — February 14, 2024
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Sisters from six congregations in the provinces of Thua Thien Hue and Yen Bai in Vietnam offered food to victims of natural disasters and to manual workers to celebrate the Lunar New Year, or Tet festival.

They also made traditional food — *banh chung* (square glutinous rice with pork cake) and *banh tet* (round glutinous rice with pork cake) — to supply lottery ticket sellers, used item collectors and farmers.

Some sisters held a fete for children and their relatives to enjoy various foods and buy vegetables grown by the nuns.

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It was reported that the Ministry of Finance decided to provide 12,736 tons of rice for 849,127 people to celebrate the Tet festival.

Tet, also known as Tet Nguyen Dan, is Vietnam's biggest and most important festival. It marks the beginning of the lunar calendar. The Tet festival carries love and hope, signifies family and friend kinship, and promises a better year ahead.

This year is the Year of the Dragon. The dragon is the fifth sign in the Vietnamese zodiac, taking the place of the rabbit in the Chinese zodiac.



A dragon stands in a park in Hue, Vietnam, to welcome the Lunar New Year. (Joachim Pham)

The traditional festival lasts Feb. 8-14 this year, peaking Feb. 10-12, the three first days of the first lunar month.

In celebration of the festival, people get new clothes, decorate their houses with colorful flowers and lanterns, and make *banh chung*, *banh tet* and other traditional food. They offer incense and food to thank heaven and earth and visit their ancestors' tombs to show gratitude.

Family members and relatives are closely reunited with one another, giving best wishes and gifts to one another as a way to express their gratitude and treat one another well.



Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hung Hoa sisters serve food to visitors at the Tet fete. Sr. Mary Nguyen Thi Thu (wearing an apron) said, "We sell quality food at very low prices so that all people can enjoy the Tet festivities." (Joachim Pham)



Four sisters and laywomen make *banh chung* at the Missionaries of Charity convent on Feb. 1 in Quang Tri province. Sr. Mary Francesca Truong Thi Hanh said they provide 70 *banh chung* to flood victims, scrap collectors and others in need to celebrate the festival. (Joachim Pham)



Tran Thi Lan, 82, who lives alone on a small boat in a river in Thua Thien Hue province, "buys" basic food at a zero-dong shop run by St. Paul de Chartres sisters. Sr. Mary Tran Thi Hoan said Lan is among 100 elderly people, scrap collectors, street vendors, porters, motorbike taxi drivers and lottery ticket sellers who are given tokens, 500,000 dong (US$21) each, to "buy" rice, fish sauce, milk, instant noodles, cakes, sweets, tea, cooking oil and other items. (Joachim Pham)



Daughters of Our Lady of the Visitation Sr. Do Thi Thien dresses a woman in ao dai, or Vietnamese traditional dress, to celebrate the Tet festival. Thien said the nuns make tens of sets of ao dai to give to lay volunteers who cooperate with them by providing basic education for children and caring for patients. (Joachim Pham)



Daughters of Mary of the Immaculate Srs. Mary Rose of Lima Cao Thi Bich (left, in black) and Anne Truong Thi Mai Khoi (right, in black) perform calligraphy and give to single mothers and their children at Anh Bang convent in Thua Thien Hue province on Jan. 31. (Joachim Pham)



Lovers of the Holy Cross of Hue Sr. Maria Huynh Thi Dieu gives pork and rice to a farmer in Thua Thien Hue province on Feb. 3. Dieu said the nuns provide food to 50 families who had their crops and poultry washed away by floods last November. (Joachim Pham)