Columns
Spirituality



Sisters Kimberly and Thérèse from the Lovers of the Holy Cross in Los Angeles take a group photo with various members of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement at the national convention in High Springs, Florida, in August. (VEYM Photography Team via Facebook)



by Mary Augustine Pham

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Hundreds of youth leaders trickled off shuttle buses from the Orlando and Jacksonville airports to arrive in High Springs, Florida, for the Coming to the Promised Land, the seventh national convention of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement, known as VEYM. The VEYM national executive committee and event organizers had extensively planned for this historic event since the sixth convention in 2016.

Their efforts came to fruition in the Aug. 9-12 gathering of more than 1,000 attendees from more than 120 chapters across the United States. All participants united in the spirit of praise and thanksgiving under the theme "Though Many, Are One Body" (1 Corinthians 12:12), as VEYM celebrated its 40th anniversary in the United States.

VEYM traces its origins to the Apostleship of Prayer, established in 1844 as a union of Catholic faithful who unite themselves by their daily offering with the eucharistic sacrifice. In 2015, the Apostleship of Prayer was renamed the Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network, as it had long been entrusted with praying for the pope's intentions over the course of its history.

The youth branch of the Apostleship of Prayer was the Eucharistic Crusade, established shortly after Pope Pius IX's 1865 call for children to support the pope through prayers, sacrifice and communion. The Eucharistic Crusade was later renamed the Eucharistic Youth Movement in 1962.

As the Eucharistic Youth Movement spread internationally, French missionaries brought it to Vietnam. However, with the rise of communism in Vietnam and the fall of Saigon in 1975, the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement found its way to the United States and was established as VEYM-USA in 1984.

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The national convention this year was blessed to have the presence of four bishops: Archbishop Timothy Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and archbishop of the Archdiocese for the Military Services; San Diego Auxiliary Bishop Michael Pham; Atlanta Auxiliary Bishop John Nhan Tran; and the local ordinary, Bishop Erik Pohlmeier of the St. Augustine Diocese.

Additionally, about 50 priests, 40 deacons and another 50 consecrated men and women brought a significant religious presence at the convention. The event bore witness to a diversity of religious institutes as each had their own vocation booth in the main meeting hall, highlighting their distinct charisms. The joy of consecrated life radiated throughout the four days of the convention, as priests and religious participated in spirit rallies, sport competitions, and dance performances such as Salesian Sr. Elfie Del Rosario's "Thank You God" rap.

VEYM-USA was also joined by priests and youth leaders from sister branches in Vietnam, France and Canada, offering members the opportunity to dialogue and retrace the roots of the movement.

The convention began with a grand opening ceremony that celebrated the witness and sacrifice of the Vietnamese martyrs and the growth of VEYM-USA over four decades. The program was filled with a range of activities, including daily Mass and eucharistic adoration, inspiring keynote presentations and breakout sessions, a eucharistic procession, sports competitions between regional league chapters, and evening concerts and cultural performances.

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Sisters Rose Martin, Mary Augustine, Paulina Thérèse and Catherine Teresa from the Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate Province participate in the eucharistic procession. (VEYM Photography Team via Facebook)

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Sisters from the Daughters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary and the Congregation of Mary Queen participate in the eucharistic procession. (VEYM Photography Team via Facebook)

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Dominican Sr. Maria Nguyen poses for a photo with her Atlanta parish's VEYM chapter, Đoàn Tôma Thiện. (VEYM Photography Team via Facebook)

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The Salesian Sisters of St. John Bosco and the Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate Province joined together to promote awareness of religious vocations at the booths around the main hall. (Catherine Teresa Bui)

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Salesian Sr. Elfie DelRosario hypes up the audience with her "Thank You, God" rap at the VEYM Convention. (VEYM Photography Team via Facebook)

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Sisters of Congregation of Mary Queen don on traditional Vietnamese attire during the convention's Cultural Night. (VEYM Photography Team via Facebook)

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Sisters Rose Martin and Catherine Teresa, both Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate Province, join in the festivities with youth leaders during Cultural Night. (VEYM Photography Team via Facebook)

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Sisters participate in a breakout session for VEYM Chaplaincy members. (Catherine Teresa Bui)

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Dominican Sisters of Mary Immaculate Province, Daughters of Our Lady of the Holy Rosary and Sisters of Congregation of Mary Queen pose for a photo with a local VEYM chapter. (VEYM Photography Team via Facebook)

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VỀ ĐẤT MẸ
USA
VIETNAM
FRANCE
CANADA

Sisters from various communities join with clergy and the VEYM Spirit Team in the "Hãy Theo Thầy" song and dance before a keynote session. (Catherine Teresa Bui)

I was a youth leader prior to entering religious life, and this event allowed me to reconnect with friends and fellow youth leaders and recall past experiences. I had the blessing to speak with youth leaders from my former chapter in Aloha, Oregon. I was delighted to see former students from over a decade ago who are now youth leaders themselves.

Witnessing their fervor and dedication to the chapter, the movement and the church fills me with pride and hope for the future of VEYM and the church.

One particularly memorable moment during the convention was the eucharistic procession on Sunday. Each member held a votive candle as we processed around the grounds in song and prayer, all hearts and souls directed toward the Blessed Sacrament. It felt like a continuation, a "sending-forth," of the eucharistic processions that led to the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis, which took place less than a month before the VEYM convention.

The procession concluded in the main meeting hall with adoration, where a single spotlight in the dark hall focused all eyes on our eucharistic Lord in a custom-made monstrance featuring the red VEYM cross logo. Christ is at the heart of the Vietnamese Eucharistic Youth Movement; he is the source of its incredible life and growth over the past 40 years. Our response is to keep our gaze fixed upon him, professing a eucharistic faith and living eucharistic days filled with love.

This gathering of more than a thousand youth leaders from different chapters, ages, experiences, states of life, and even citizenships exemplified the convention theme: "Though Many, Are One Body." As the convention concluded, we were reminded to continue to be united in prayer, eucharistic communion, sacrificial acts and apostolic works. May the Lord continue to bless VEYM and all its members in the years to come.