News

Sr. Scholastica Tran Thanh Thuy (first from left) and other sisters lead a prayer session attended by couples on July 26. Thuy worries that many young people delay or avoid marriage altogether. (Joachim Pham)

by Joachim Pham

Correspondent

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Hue, Vietnam — September 15, 2025

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

Anthony Le Hoang Quan previously thought marriage was nothing but a burden. A mining worker from Quy Nhon, Quan spent his free time gambling, convinced that tying himself down to a family would only limit his freedom.

But Quan lost his job due to the COVID-19 outbreak in 2021. To survive, he began transporting goods from markets to customers in Hue, including to some communities of the Daughters of Our Lady of the Visitation.

He joined a volunteer group led by the sisters, distributing free food to patients and families during lockdowns.

When he contracted COVID-19, fellow volunteers — especially one young woman — cared for him.

"She helped me change my lifestyle and quit gambling," said Quan, now 30. "Through our work, we understood each other better, and our love grew. We decided to get married."

With encouragement from the sisters, he took a four-month marriage catechism course, converted to Catholicism and wed in June.

"We are grateful to the sisters for giving us opportunities to feel real love and helping us realize that Catholic marriage means fidelity, mutual respect, mutual care, welcoming children and passing on the faith to them," Quan told Global Sisters Report.

He works as a house builder while his wife serves as a nurse. The couple, expecting their first child, has purchased land with the support of their families and is preparing to build their home.

Daughters of Our Lady of the Visitation Sr. Scholastica Tran Thanh Thuy said Quan's story is rare. According to government statistics, Vietnamese people are marrying at later ages and the birth rate has declined.

"They think marriage is a burden that prevents them from advancing in their careers," said Thuy, who specializes in marriage and family ministry. "They pursue pleasure and freedom, and far from home, they lose the sense of family affection."

Some, she said, are too self-centered, demanding a "perfect" partner and grow old without marrying. Others, particularly migrants and low-wage workers, fear that

poverty makes family life impossible.

A young couple who completed a marriage catechism course with the St. Paul de Chartres sisters celebrate their wedding at Thanh Da Church in Hue on Aug. 21. (Joachim Pham)

A 2025 national survey of nearly 3,000 workers by the Vietnam General Confederation of Labor found that 73% of single people delayed marriage due to low pay, and three-fourths of married respondents said income affected their decisions on having or raising children.

For Thuy and her community, their mission is not only to materially assist migrants but also to nurture hope among young people to start families.

"We teach young couples that God creates men and women to support one another in a lasting love according to his will," she said. "Marriage is the foundation for a Catholic family, an environment of love, forgiveness, sacrifice, service and fidelity. Children are God's gift."

She said that to help young migrants meet and form relationships, together with lay volunteers, they organize camps, catechism courses and social gatherings. They also provide financial support to struggling workers and even serve as matchmakers.

Daughters of Mary of the Immaculate Conception Sr. Mary Tran Thi Quyen from the Vinh An community said that the sisters teach three marriage catechism courses with about 90 participants, ages 18 to 42, of whom one-third are converts.

Quyen said many arrive uncertain or afraid but leave with a deeper sense of vocation.

"The trend of delaying or refusing marriage will also affect the church and society as a whole," she told GSR.

Fewer marriages, she said, mean fewer children, a shrinking labor force, fewer vocations to religious life, and greater risks of isolation, stress, addiction and abortion.

For example, the Archdiocese of Hue has seen the number of novices in five congregations of women religious drop from 262 in 2020 to just 150 in 2024.

The sisters' ministry also touches the lives of those who once considered marriage impossible.

Simon Nguyen An Hieu, an HIV patient, said, "I didn't dare to dream of a family."

Hieu recalled that the St. Paul de Chartres sisters accompanied him through treatment, offered financial aid and invited him to join a support group for people living with HIV/AIDS.

There, he met the woman who would become his wife. Both converted to Catholicism and married in 2019.

Today, they earn a modest living from fishing and small trade and are raising their 3-year-old child.

"We are very happy because God has blessed us," Hieu, 33, said. "We try to live well with others and be witnesses to the Gospel."

Advertisement

St. Paul de Chartres Sr. Anna Dang Thi Hoan, who oversees ministries to about 500 migrants in Hue, says such testimonies are vital in a society increasingly hesitant to form families.

"Some 25 couples in their 30s and 40s get married per year, usually with just one or two children," she said. "Many still wait for stable jobs before starting families."

Yet even with challenges, Hoan sees hope. "When young people experience true love, care and faith, they gain [the] courage to marry. And when they do, they become a witness of life and joy for others."

For Quan, marriage has become not a burden but a special gift.

"Family is the ideal environment for people to learn to love, dialogue, forgive and grow," he said.

"I hope our marriage can encourage others to be brave enough to start a family. When we give ourselves in love, we find true happiness."