

# "LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF"

(Mark 12:31)



*H' Bang*



Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres

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**H'Bong** is the name of a hamlet in the highlands, located along the national Route 25 toward Ayunpa Township, in the Chu Se District – 60 km from Pleiku City, Gia Lai Province, Vietnam. H'Bong is pronounced according to the local tribal ethnic, comprised Jarai, Banar, Thai, Nung and Tay ethnicities. There's also a small number of Viet (a/k/a Kinh) people settled here to work on farm or merchants.

**H'Bong** is one of the poorest hamlets of the Chu Se District. About a decade ago, Chu Se was the lucrative trading spot of black pepper; many people borrowed money and invested heavily in this commodity due to its high profit margin. Then, suddenly the price for black pepper plummeted dramatically, coupling with bad crops due to harsh weather; people lost everything and became debtors to the banks. Tribal people have no leverage; therefore, they must make loans from the black market, with very high interest rates, consequently, they became debt-ridden.



## **H'Bong's Social Situation**

- People inherit a strong bond with their village; they don't want to sell their ancestral lands, much less leaving their birthplaces. Nevertheless, the young must find works elsewhere to pay debts and support their families;
- The gist of the accentuating problems is their inability to manage their earnings; they spent all their income in wanted items rather than needed products;
- Parents are illiterate and their offspring does not pursue education because they are the important labor force of the family;
- Each tribe has its very own language or dialect. Many adults do not speak or understand Vietnamese and the children are also handicapped in their ability to progress in school.



# **The Presence of the Sisters of Saint Paul in H'Bong**

## ***Answering the Call of Going out to the Periphery***

Upon the beginning years of our foundation, the Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres had willingly responded to the call going out of France to Guyana in Central America to serve in the hospitals, schools and the prisons.

In 2016, the Year of Mercy, Pope Francis earnestly invited religious and lay Catholics to “*Go out! Head for the periphery*”. Upon the request of the H'Bông Parish Priest, the Sisters of Saint Paul of the Province of Danang immediately sent Sisters to H'Bong to serve God's children who are poor and hungry, spiritually and materially. They set up a three-year plan—2016 to 2019:

- To visit the sick, the elders, the homeless, the handicapped and the mental challenged;
- To bring patients to hospital;
- To make soup pot of love for children and the elders;
- To provide free treatments and medications to the sick;
- To be partner with benefactors in bringing basic supplies to the destitute;
- To find jobs for the unemployed and displaced;
- To teach Catechism at Church;
- To provide pastoral services; and
- To spiritually guide the Legion of Mary Association

## **Current Mission**

The Sisters' major concern is to create a good future for the H'Bong's children, who have nothing to lean on, material, physical as well as spiritual supports. They are suffering needlessly and endure unjust hardship to labor at a young age for food and shelter.

With the Holy Spirit's guidance, the Sisters decided to build a shelter for the children for the purposes:

- To shelter Middle and High school students, because the school is close to the Sisters' house but far from their villages;
- To educate children about human development and religious life;
- To help them learn the basic skills of modern life;
- To create an afterschool program so that they can catch up with what they lack at school;
- To help them explore their various skills, talent in music and arts;
- To provide them nutritious meals so they may grow physically strong, mentally competent, intellectually proficiency.

The Sisters are not only concerned for the children's future but also for their parents, and the farmers, who are in debt or people who are overloaded with their works that they have no time to take care of their own children. To address these difficulties, the Sisters help the farmers by setting up a "Fertilizer Loan Project" without interest. The Sisters purchase the fertilizer and lend it to the farmers. The successful Project is the fruits from good hearts and generosity of many friends and benefactors in the country and in the United States. They are the catalysts who contributed generously to the projects and were eagerly collaborating with the Sisters in making this plan possible. At the harvest time, if farmers are able to pay the loan back, they again can borrow another loan to start a new season.

## Open Hearts–Open Hands

*“Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders labor in vain”. (Ps 127)*



Upon arriving to H’Bong, the Sisters of St. Paul wholeheartedly trusted in the divine providence. They started their mission with joy and enthusiasm. Believing that this is God’s work, He will lead them wherever they may be. Indeed, they come with empty hands, nothing to give to the poor but their loving hearts. They let themselves drawn by the prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi: *“Make me a channel of your peace”*.

Little by little, their good works are like fragrance spreading out. God spurred the hearts and minds of many friends who generously assist the Sisters in fulfilling this meaningful mission. Beside the larger grants from overseas led by the Nemetz and friends, there are some charity groups who regularly come to Fatima on special occasions such as Lunar New Year, Easter or Christmas. Their presence along with their gifts bring not only joy to the children but also teaching them to receive with gratitude and reverence.

## Sharing

Together with the Sisters, all friends and benefactors who have made H’Bong a better place for God’s children who desperately need helps; from the boarding houses such as Dakglei-Kontum, Kon’H’Ring-Kontum, Tan Phu-Kontum, PLeichuet-Gialai, Yaly-Gialai, to the poor, the sick and the elders in PhuTho and Thanh An-Pleiku.

## Acknowledgement

We, the Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres in Gia-Lai and Kontum, Vietnam, deeply thank you for joining us in bringing hope and better future to our tribal children, relieving the burden of debt-ridden farmers, assisting the sick, the elders and the marginalized. Indeed, your loving generous support gives us strength to keep us up with the mission we endeavored to fulfill.

Sincerely in Christ,

**Sisters of Saint Paul De Chartres  
Fatima House – H’ Bong, Vietnam**



**"In serving the best interests of children, we serve the best interests of all humanity."** (Carol Bellamy)



## **Together, We Work – Learn & Play**



**"The young are a gift to be cherished and encouraged, an investment that will yield a rich return if only they are given real opportunities for employment and quality education."** (Pope Francis)



Dear Friends:

The Covid-19 pandemic caused for social distancing, but cannot stop us from reaching out and cultivate our good relationship. Thanksgiving is more than two months away, but nothing can stop us to say thanks and show our appreciation on behalf of needy brothers and sisters in Vietnam.

In the midst the worse pandemic in the modern history of the world, most people remained and working at home; however, many others reach out and shoulder the physical burden and emotional pains of others to fulfill God’s teaching, *“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6: 2)*

With the spirit of this letter, we must send our heartfelt thanks to Mr. Gregory Nemetz and his wife, Patricia. Mr. Nemetz is a Vietnam Veteran who served at Da Nang in the US Marine Corps from January 1969 – August 1970. Sr. Marie was then a High School student at the Sacred Heart School in that city at the same approximate time, so that they figuratively “crossed paths” but never met. He states: “I drove past the Thanh Tam (Sacred Heart) orphanage but was never there. The event that moved me to act was an encounter with a child living on a boat near the old French railroad bridge. The toddler was alone and just stared at me. I thought about that little boy’s life and his probable future. I wanted to do something to help the child.

After many years of building an aviation career, the image of the little boy again came to his mind. He felt the need to do something for the innocent children. He contacted the Sisters of St. Paul de Chartres in the United States. God’s providence put Mr. & Mrs. Nemetz in contact with Sr. Marie Thu Hoi Nguyen, the Coordinator of the Paulinian Mission Projects in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and the Nemetz immediately started the fundraising events. Being messengers of God, the Holy Spirit sent them many good friends who have contributed faithfully to many charity projects. Their collective actions and good deeds speak much louder than words. Their good hearts radiated far and many more friends joined them, giving more supports.

Here are the realistic projects successfully achieved through their zealous efforts and generous supports:

- Boarding House for High School girls in Dakglei
- Clean water
- Dormitory for boys
- Nutritious meals for the children at Kon H’Ring
- Fatima Home for the children at H’Bong
- Physical treatments for leprosy patients, the sick and the elderly
- House repair for the poor
- The most significant success is the training of girls who wished to dedicate to the consecrated life. There were four high school students in Dakglei that wanted to become Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres—two are currently at the second year of Novitiate. These vocations are the role models and the connection for the younger generations. They will return to their villages and serve their fellow people.



Vietnamese culture of showing gratitude is very subtle and in various forms. When words are inadequate to express our heartfelt appreciation, we present our sincere and sweet “smile” with head bowed. In such spirit, please accept our sweet smile from a profound heart of thanks and appreciation.

Thanks for using us as a bridge to the needy brothers, sisters and children. Mother Teresa of Calcutta says: *“Spread love everywhere you go. Let no one ever come to you without leaving happier.”* May our Lord who is Love and Compassion be your peace and happiness in every moment of your life.

Yours in Christ,

Sisters of Saint Paul de Chartres

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Marie Thu Hoi Nguyen'.

Sister Marie Thu Hoi Nguyen,  
Coordinator



Before & After



**C**aring for our little ones and for our elders is a choice for civilization. And also for the future, because the little ones, the children, the young people will carry society forward by their strength, their youth, and the elderly people will carry it forward by their wisdom, their memory, which they must give to us all.

(Pope Francis)



“The ultimate test of your greatness is the way you treat every human being.”

St. John Paul II

