



Carmelite Highlights

National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel™

CARMELITES ORDAIN FIRST VIETNAMESE

by *Chris Farlekas, Times Herald-Record,*
Photo by *Tom Bushey.*

A historic event took place on May 7 at the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel.

Stephan Huy Quang Tran, born in Saigon, and Joseph Hung Thang Tran, born in Dong Nai, became the first Vietnamese to be ordained into the 800-year-old international Carmelite order. The two men are not related.

Adding to the solemnity and beauty of the Catholic occasion, more than 100 Vietnamese flew in from around the United States to bear witness at the ceremony held at The National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Middletown, NY.

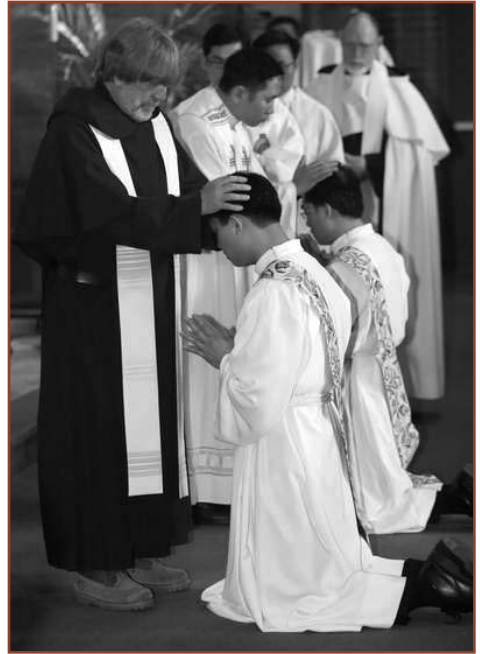
While the men wore formal dark suits, many women wore traditional Vietnamese ao dai dresses, decorated with flowers and patterns spun in gold.

The joy of the moment was tempered for many of the older Vietnamese by memories of a homeland ravaged by war, and the brutality of the Communist takeover 32 years ago.

Vang Cong Tran said, as a youth, he escaped on the last helicopter as the Communists closed in on Saigon in April 1975. Now a Redemptorist missionary in Virginia, he can never go home again because he's a Christian.

A Vietnamese proverb says, "If you swallow the sun, you carry the darkness within you." Although Vietnam has reopened to the world, the "darkness" still affects Christians.

There was sadness in the face of a nun, in her 80s, from the convent in Silver Springs, Md. She said in halting English



In the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel, Stephan Huy Quang Tran and Joseph Hung Thang Tran, kneeling, received church ordination with the laid hands of Rev. Pat McGuigan, standing left, and fellow priests.

that she regrets she'll never see the 3,000 islands jutting out of the sea at the legendary Ha Long harbor in Vietnam — now popular with American tourists.

Several of the Vietnamese at the ordination said they'd been tortured for their faith in "re-education" camps — a system so widespread in the years after the war that every Vietnamese present had family members who suffered.

Behind the altar at the church at St.

CARMELITES ORDAIN FIRST VIETNAMESE (CONT.)

Albert's Chapel at the shrine were two tapestries.

The one on the right carried a Vietnamese symbol of a butterfly, a symbol for new life or resurrection — and for the age-old pageantry that took place before it.

That pageantry was enhanced, not just by the ancient rituals of communion and ordination, but also by remarkable music.

St. Albert's choir, which is composed mostly of women, was joined by a Vietnamese choir from Washington, D.C. The Vietnamese sang two hymns: "Tua Lan Tram Huong" ("Like Incense Rising to Heaven") and "Khuc Cam Ta" ("Song of Thanksgiving").

The combined choirs sang the Latin "Song and the Silence" during the anointing of hands, as Bishop Dominick Lagonegro of Newburgh performed the ancient rite.

During the music, several birds perched outside the church doors, singing in the greening trees. For the Vietnamese, birds singing during an auspicious event is a symbol of joy. The bird-singing was at its loudest when the new Communion hymn by Ragan Courtney and Buryl Red

was sung:

*"In remembrance of me, search for truth.
In remembrance of me, always love.
In remembrance of me, don't look above,
but in your heart. In your heart.
Look in your heart for God."*

That last line was appropriate for the two new priests.

Born in Vietnam, they first heard about Christianity at home, but really began to study the faith when they came to America to go to university.

The two, who both have a Master's in divinity studies, will serve in Middletown. Father Joseph has been assigned to St. Albert's beginning June 14; Father Stephan will be assigned to Mt. Carmel in time to celebrate his 34th birthday on August 19.

Following the Mass, the two new priests gave hugs, blessings and prayers to long lines of the congregation.

Then it was time for lunch, with speeches in both languages.

And a boisterous Vietnamese custom ended the affair, as the two priests went table to table, and with whooping shouts, toasted everyone.

PRIEST HELPS NURSING HOME RESIDENTS SING ALONG WITH THE OLDIES

by Pat Langford, for the Florida Catholic

BOCA RATON — A Carmelite priest who visits shut-ins in Palm Beach County, Florida, takes with him the Word, the Eucharist — and a karaoke machine.

At St. Jude Parish in Boca Raton, Father Richard Champigny's title is parochial vicar, but around the nursing homes and assisted-living centers of Stratford Court, Brighton Gardens and Regents Park, where he visits nearly 50 people at a time, he is referred to as the "karaoke priest."

Residents say they are not only spiritually enriched, but also entertained during his visits.

"It's really very therapeutic for them," said Millie Venak, who accompanies Father Champigny as an extraordinary minister of Holy Communion for the Masses and emcee for the karaoke engagements.

Karaoke is derived from the Japanese word "kara" meaning empty and "oke" from the English word, orchestra. It



Father Richard Champigny, a Carmelite priest of St. Jude Parish, entertains Josephine Brown, Sylvia Goldman, Jeannette Russo and Jennie Devita with his upbeat music ministry and karaoke machine.

incorporates prerecorded music played with a high-tech audio system and a monitor that projects lyrics on a screen to be read by the person singing.

“The people for the most part, most of the day, are just kind of sitting in the chair and staring into space, but when you start doing music, they just come alive,” Father Champigny said. “It’s really sort of a wonderful thing to see.”

The priest performs numbers, such as “Let Me Call You Sweetheart,” “Bicycle Built for Two,” “Always” and “I Left My Heart in San Francisco.” He throws in a bit of Elvis Presley, some rock ‘n’ roll and a few country-and-western songs, such as “The Gambler,” “Always on My Mind” and “Lucille.”

“I do a lot of the old songs and you can see the looks on their (the audience’s) faces — like they’re thinking about the good old days,” Father Champigny said.

“One of the amazing songs that I did on a whim that I’m surprised they not only liked, but they sang along with, was Tom Jones’ song ‘Delilah’ ... and they liked Tina Turner’s ‘Proud Mary.’”

Father Champigny is on the top of the

charts at the area nursing homes.

“The folks just can’t wait for him (to come),” said Venak. “It’s a wonderful deal. He’s great, he’s wonderful and he handles the people so beautifully, he really does. He sings the songs and we sing with him. He’s got a beautiful voice.”

The karaoke bug bit Father Champigny five years ago when he visited his sister, Nannette Stebbins, in Bonita Springs. At that time, he was living in New York.

“Our family has always been a singing family,” said Father Champigny. “Nannette suggested that we attend a karaoke night at the Fort Myers Holiday Inn. The next thing you know, we are singing songs. We ended up doing duets.”

The singing priest was hooked and there was no stopping him.

He has produced several CDs for family members: One recording was a Mother’s Day gift for his mother, and another, which featured 22 love songs, was for his oldest sister’s 50th wedding anniversary.

Father Champigny moved to Florida in May 2004 to work in Boca Raton. That is when he began making trips to nursing homes. At first, he went with only Mass in mind.

“It occurred to me that they might like some entertainment, too,” he said.

“I love to sing. I got some equipment, not the best. I asked the activities directors (at several homes) if they would like to have a little extra entertainment. I said I was going to volunteer my time and services to do this for the people. I was overwhelmed at the response once I got there.”

He recalled a time involving Jennie DeVita, the mother of a St. Jude parishioner, who is in her 80s and recovering from a stroke at Stratford Court.

‘I do a lot of the old songs and you can see the looks on their (the audience’s) faces — like they’re thinking about the good old days. One of the amazing songs that I did on a whim that I’m surprised they not only liked, but they sang along with, was Tom Jones’ song “Delilah” ... and they liked Tina Turner’s “Proud Mary.”’

— Father Richard Champigny

PRIEST HELPS NURSING HOME RESIDENTS SING ALONG WITH THE OLDIES (CONT.)

"She can't speak except to say, 'I love you,'" Father Champigny said. "However, when we started doing the karaoke, she was mouthing the words to 'I Left My Heart in San Francisco.'" I brought a microphone over to her and she was singing as clear and beautiful as anybody I've ever heard. And it was just like an amazing thing to see and experience."

Before coming south to stay, Father Champigny, who is celebrating 42 years in the priesthood, was in residence in Tarrytown, N.Y. Other than five years in Steubenville, Ohio, and trips to the Carmelite retreat house in Hamilton, Mass., Father Champigny has spent most of his priesthood in New York. That includes five years as director of the National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel in Middletown.

"We have a good time," he said. "The people just enjoy it so much that it's a

National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel Regularly Scheduled Events

Monday - Friday

Mass, 11:30 a.m.

Saturday

Confession, 11 a.m. - noon

Sunday

Mass, noon

For more information on Days of Prayer or bus trips, call (845) 343-1879 or email nsolmc@warwick.net.

delight for me to be able to do it for them. It's a great blessing for me to see what music can do for these people who don't have a whole lot to entertain them."

LETTER FROM FR. PAUL DENAULT, O. CARM.

Dear Friend of the Carmelites,

Let me begin by thanking you for the many wonderful responses I have received to my letters to you.

Not only have you been generous in supporting Carmelite ministries, but you have also shared both in our prayers and devotions honoring Our Lady of Mount Carmel, the Carmelite Saints, and in the spiritual life of our Community. We are all enriched by your friendship, your generosity and your kindness.

I am sending you this Newsletter to let you know what is happening now

in our Community and in our missions. Here you can see how your support, your prayers and your gifts help sustain all our ministries and also allow us to develop future works.

Thank you, my friends, for your participation. Be assured that we remember you daily in our prayers and wish you God's blessings and the protection of Our Lady always!

Gratefully yours,



Fr. Paul Denault, O. Carm.

Carmelite Highlights is published by the Carmelite Friars of the Province of Saint Elias to provide information for those interested in Carmelite ministries and spirituality. Communications should be referred to:



Editor/Carmelite Highlights

Carmelite Friars

National Shrine of Our Lady of Mount Carmel™

P.O. Box 868 • Carmelite Drive

Middletown, NY 10940-0868 • (845) 344-0876

(Calling Hours: 8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. EST Mon.-Fri.)