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## **The secret lives of Vietnam's Catholic mothers**

***It is traditionally the husband's religion that children are expected to follow in mixed marriages***

La Croix International (28.08.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2KZFgXM> - Mary Nguyen closes the door carefully and says evening prayers with her two children in her room whenever her husband comes home late from work.

And Nguyen, who lives in the house of her Buddhist parents-in-law, quietly takes them to weekend Masses once or twice a month at a church near her own parents' home in Vietnam's southern Ho Chi Minh City. "I have to pretend [to her parents-in-law] that I take the children to visit my parents so that we can go to church," the mother said in a low, strained voice. Her husband and parents-in-law do not want them to embrace Catholicism before they turn 18, when they say the children can decide for themselves what religion to follow. They have threatened to turn her out of their home if she takes the children to church. Nguyen said they do not know their grandchildren are Catholics as she had them — a girl and a boy — baptized while she was living for months at her parents' home after she gave birth to them. She tries to help in still faith in Catholicism while their grandmother regularly takes them to Buddhist temples. Nguyen, who works for a local printing company, said her husband, a Communist Party member, converted to Catholicism when he married her. However, he subsequently jettisoned the Catholic faith and often checks on whether the children have secretly gone to church. "I forgive him and try to be a good Catholic so that I can bear witness to the Good News," said Nguyen, who regularly joins Catholic friends and family members in attending church services and feasts. "Although I feel a bit tense when dealing with my husband and his parents, I have a bounden duty to offer faith education to my children."

Patriarchy still predominates Father James Hoang Quan, pastor of Trieu Son parish in Thua Thien Hue province, said most Catholic women who marry non-Christians, and live in houses of their parents-in-law, run into difficulties over religious practice and education. Father Quan said patriarchy still predominates in many families where women are considered to belong to their husbands' families and are expected to obey family norms after marrying. Their children are often taught to follow the husband's religion. He said these women need advice and encouragement from their co-religionists. Father John Baptist Nguyen Tong, pastor of Phuong Tay parish, said in some cases Communist Party members who marry Catholic women ban their children from embracing Catholicism as they fear their official positions will be adversely affected. Father Tong said local Catholics say "Hail Mary" three times during daily Masses for families experiencing difficulties during this special Year of Journeying with Problematic Families. And parishioners comfort them in times of family illness or death. Anna Tran Thi Ngoc Duyen, whose husband divorced her when her daughter was four years old, carries her on a motorbike for 10 kilometers to attend Mass each week. Her daughter also joins catechism classes, Eucharist adoration, camps and charitable work. "I hope she will openly follow Catholicism when she reaches 18 years of age and her father will accept her decision," she said with a smile. Duyen, who works as a journalist, said her husband, who converted from Buddhism to Catholicism at her family's request, renounced Catholicism

and asked her to take down an altar months after their wedding. "I am wrong to have married a husband of a different religion," she said. "He converted to Catholicism to marry me, not for faith." The woman blames her now broken marriage on herself for not having been active enough in her religious life.

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## **Vietnamese Christians beaten, arrested for refusing to worship Buddha and renounce faith in Jesus**

By Stoyan Zaimov

Christian Post (09.01.2019) - <https://bit.ly/2QRqP7X> - Several Hmong Christians were beaten and arrested by Vietnamese government officials after they refused to renounce their faith and worship a Buddha statue, a pastor has revealed.

Pastor Hoang Van Pa told persecution watchdog group International Christian Concern that government officials threatened 33 Hmong Protestants in Phá Lóm village in November if they refused to renounce their Christian faith.

Police reportedly gathered personal information about the 33 believers and carried out an open trial before the community. The officers presented an image of the Buddha and tried to force the Christians to abandon their faith and worship the Buddha statue instead. Four of the Christians were arrested and beaten, and government officials continued to harass Protestants in several other raids throughout November and December.

As Dzung, the representative of the Interdisciplinary Inspection Team, explained that Vietnam has banned the Protestant Christian faith and seeks to expel those who refuse to renounce their faith in Jesus. In 2018, more than 100 believers were expelled from Yen Bai province and Lao Cai province.

"Due to its ethnic background and high percentage of practicing Christians, Vietnam's Hmong community is often targeted and harassed by both the government and neighboring communities," wrote ICC's Regional Manager Gina Goh.

"In a Communist country where Christianity is often seen as unpatriotic or a threat to the regime, Hmong Christians constantly face discrimination, harassment, land grabs, torture, and imprisonment."

ICC has warned that the persecution of Hmong Christians is expected to continue in 2019.

In 2017, police in Vietnam threw stones and beat a group of Roman Catholic priests who were defending a cross erected on church-claimed land in Thua Thien Hue province.

Thien An priest Khoa Cao Duc Loi said at the time: "They prevented us from putting it back, and priests held on to the cross while police tore at their shirts and dragged them by their hair."

Loi told Radio Free Asia that the local police chief and his deputy were present during the attack.

"I knew them because we had met with them several times before," he said.

Others, such as a believer by the name of Bao, who works with persecution watchdog group Open Doors USA, revealed last year that he has been risking his life to distribute more than 100,000 children's Bibles.

"When I distribute children's Bibles in the big churches, they honor the book not only as a free gift but as material to teach God's Word. They also use this book for evangelism. And I believe that it's going farther, and that its impact will spread wider," Bao said of Open Doors Children's Bible Project.

"God's Word must be easy for people to reach. The children's Bible is one of the easiest ways to let different kinds of people know about Him. I believe this is the job of a sower. We continue to sow, and God continues to make it grow."