

Roma, 26 June, 2001

FRATRES ORDINIS PREDICATORUM

CURIA GENERALITIA

Fr. Joseph Nguyen Cao Luat OP, Provincial

190 Le Van Sy Phu Nhuan

HO CHI MINH CITY SOUTH VIET NAM

Dear Fr. Joseph,

Greetings to you from Rome!

Over the last few years, we have been working towards the foundation of a monastery of contemplative nuns in Viet Nam I talked about this with the brothers and also with the sisters during my canonical visitation in 1998, and mention of this was made in your Province Acts in 1999 (as you will see below). As well, I am aware that Sisters Marie Rose Huong and Sister Theresa Tam have been at the Farmington Hills Monastery in Illinois for this purpose, and that they are coming to the end of their canonical novitiate. We are now in a position to begin looking into the formalities necessary for the foundation of this monastery. It is for reason that consult you, as part of a wider consultation with the Monastery at Farmington Hills, and of the Vietnamese Sisters' Federation.

The whole of Chapter I 1 OF section Two of Book of the Constitutions of the Nuns (LCM) entitled "Government Itself", nos.229-234, deals with New Foundations. The usual requirements for a foundation are:

1. That there be a founding monastery. In this case, I am asking the Farmington Hills.

Monastery to assume this responsibility for the new Vietnamese monastery, and have written asking their formal acceptance of this. (LCM 229,1).

2. That there is reasonable hope the new monastery will develop regular life by means of vocations and economic sustenance from its own area. (LCM 230.I)

3. That the monastery has a sufficient number of nuns (nine nuns, five of whom are solemnly professed) to sustain itself, and the founding monastery must be able to maintain that number for ten years (LCM 230, II & 232, I).

4. Certain clear permissions are needed also before the Holy See will grant its permission (LCM 229). It is important to accept that in this very difficult situation it is not possible to follow these norms easily. The Holy See knows this

and accepts it. For example, nuns from other parts of the world would not be able to come and help in the foundation. Only those who are Vietnamese citizens would have that opportunity...

Taking this a model for the case in Viet Nam, I suggest that we follow this procedure:

1. that Farmington Hills accepts formally to be the founding monastery (LCM 229, I) and that it continues to assist the sisters in every way possible over the next years, especially in helping with formation.

2. That you, as the provincial of the friars in Viet Nam, apply to the local diocesan bishop on behalf of the two sisters, who are going back to Viet Nam now, for them to become Public Association of the Faithful, according to the norms of Canon Law (CIC 312 ff). The sisters will live according to the LCM from the beginning.

3. When sufficient numbers of nuns have been gained by the new monastery to become a monastery proper (LCM 232, I), an application can be made to the Congregation for Religious, all the other conditions being fulfilled (LCM 229). On the granting of this permission by the Holy See, the sisters' vows would become automatically solemn vows. Is this procedure acceptable to you? I would be grateful for your considered opinion soon. Presuming that the monastery, the sisters' federation and yourself are all in agreement, then my successor would ask you to take the formal step of applying to the local diocesan bishop, on behalf of Sister Maria Rose and Sister Theresa Tam, for them to become a Public Association of the Faithful, living the rule of life of the Nuns (LCM), with the intention that as soon as it is feasible they will form a monastery of the Order in their own right.

I am very grateful for all the work that has been done by the friars in buying the land for this monastery and taking the initiative in so many ways to ensure that this project, which is dear to my heart, will come true soon.

Two other things are important. First, I am enclosing as well a copy of a draft document drawn up by the prioress of the monastery in consultation with Sister Maria Rose Huong and Sister Theresa Tam concerning:

1. Setting up a commission inside Vietnam to promote vocations, to evaluate candidates, to promote fund raising, and ensure that the new house will have a chaplain, and

2. Giving a plan of formation for those who may transfer from existing Dominican Congregations.

Secondly, in his letter of 30 June 1999 accompanying the letter of approval of your Provincial Chapter Acts, my Vicar, fr. Chrystian Finn OP, wrote among other

Dominican Monastery of Nuns can found a monastery. How this will work out for the new Vietnamese monastery is somewhat complex, and must also be helped by using the expertise of Fr. Viktor Hofstetter, the Promoter General of the Nuns.

Fr Manuel Merten, who has succeeded Fr. Viktor in this important task, will have the delightful privilege of being the one who works with you in canying this out. And I commend his expertise to you now in these next stages of the process of foundation.

Your brother in St. Dominic,

Fr. Timothy Racliff Timothy Racliff

Prot: Farmington Hills