

For seven years, this smiling Vietnamese patiently prepared himself to return to his homeland in order to reinforce the young Assumptionist community by studying at the Catholic Institute of Paris and sharing the life of his brothers in France.

«"When you see Pierre in his community or bump into him in the corridor at Catholic University here in Paris, you can't miss that happy smile that says so much. It sets the tone: meeting him is something simple, like meeting a brother. Pierre Tran Van Khue is one of the first Vietnamese Assumptionists. 31 years old, he was born after the Vietnam War, one of those children they call "peace babies" there. He came to France to undertake his spiritual and intellectual formation as a young religious."

Called to "leave his homeland"

Born into a peasant family in the region of Vinh (north central Vietnam), the eldest of eight children, Pierre learned to enjoy this simple but demanding life. It shaped his character and his faith. In Vietnam there is no such thing as a non-practicing Catholic (99% of the Catholic population practices its faith); it is a faith that is deeply ingrained. When he reached college age, he went off to study English in Saïgon. While there during six years, he lived with 15 other young men in a youth residence, partially supported by the Assumptionists. It was intended to give young men an opportunity to discern a Christian vocation: to the priesthood, religious life, or marriage. The residence, together with several others, were under the direction of a Vietnam Franciscan, Fr. Jean Bosco. Here it was that Pierre met the Assumptionists and was drawn by the Congregation's charism. Even though religious life has a long history in Vietnam, Pierre detected something new in this Congregation. And so it was that he, in a land suffused with

Confucian wisdom, responded to a call once heard by Abraham to "leave your land". This adventure, as Pierre, explains without hesitation was none other than a call to meet Christ himself.

A Love for Meeting People

During his seven years in France, Pierre had an opportunity to meet lots of Assumptionists in different communities....whether it was at a youth residence in the Paris suburb of Cachan, an Assumptionist spirituality and cultural center near Lyon, a formation community in Paris itself, or the novitiate on the outskirts of the French capital in Juvisy. Pierre enjoyed all these experiences. He has a deep sense of gratitude and responsibility. As he says, "What I found in all these communities was the same family spirit, one of being among brothers. This spirit comes across in the simplicity that exists in brother's relation with brother. After all, the Kingdom for which we constantly pray isn't so complicated!" Pierre likes to meet people. He speaks of brothers that he has met that remain examples of a deep inner life or of a zealous apostolic commitment. But he also recalls so many faces encountered in his various ministries --- in youth ministry, hospital ministry, parish work, or among the Vietnamese community in London. Not that all these encounters were without their challenges.... "I still think about questions that people in hospitals would ask me, people facing serious illness and even death, questions about the very meaning of life."

«Pierre (Peter)», a foundational rock



Don't ever lose touch with the men and women of today --- this is how Pierre articulates Assumption's ever-present challenge. To do so, we have to be able to transcend the limits we set for ourselves. On the eve of his return to Vietnam, he said of his dreams for the Assumption there, "we could do so much in terms of the Catholic press and in the formation of priests for the local Church --- and lay-people as well. There is still so much to do." Working side by side with

lay-people strikes him as essential if one is to stay in touch with the reality of men and women today. For Asian society which has always been proud of its love of harmony, new challenges have been presented by the rapid changes introduced by globalization. Pierre remarks in amazement, "My country so changing so fast. To be sure, it is developing. But, is it a lasting development? Does it respect the dignity of each human being? And, in the end, what is this development leading to ... the building up of society?" It was a question that he posed as well for Western society as he completed an advanced degree in moral theology at the Catholic Institute in Paris.

Pierre has now become one of the foundation stones (a rock like his name Pierre, i.e. Peter, signifies) of the Assumption in Vietnam, a foundation begun only 10 years ago in 2005, now flourishing with four communities and nearly 50 religious worldwide.