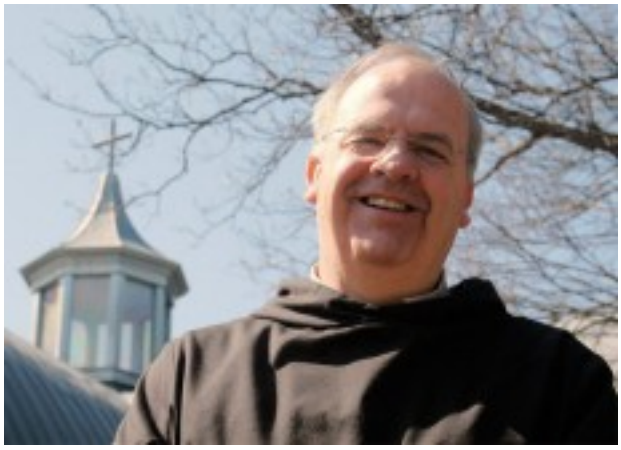


I heard that the temperature dropped to 27 degrees in New Hampshire on Thanksgiving Day. I guess that it wasn't much warmer on 'Black Friday' when some went shopping or continued to spend time with their loved ones. Even if it had been warmer, I wish we would have had that kind of "warm" here in Saigon. The rain early Thursday made the morning somewhat cooler. It was around 70 degrees in the morning, but it changed quickly and rose to 80 when the sun appeared before anyone made it to their office at 7:30 AM.

I wanted to be with the community at the first moment of the day as they gather for mediation. Later, Dennis and I took a walk through the neighborhood. As we walked along the road, because Dennis could not hide who he is compared to me or other Vietnamese: short, slim, dark hair, etc., so people said hello to us when they saw us walking and we immediately became the topic for their conversation.



We chose a local "Pho restaurant" for our breakfast. Dennis had a small bowl of Pho and a coffee and I had a glass of homemade soy bean milk. On the way, I tried to introduce Dennis to the way of life we were seeing as we walked. I think Dennis would be better suited than me to describe what struck him as so different. You may have heard about "crossing busy streets in Vietnam" – Dennis had that 'eventful' experience today.



You may have seen the picture of “people selling their goods on the street” – Dennis saw that today as well.

You may have had difficulties understanding the “Oriental way of explaining things” – Dennis had that experience right here in an Oriental country. You may have given some Asian people the “impression of how strong individualism is in Western countries” – Dennis witnessed how communal life affects people here in Vietnam. I would say the list of his experiences could be much longer….

After breakfast, we took a taxi to the center of Saigon. We visited the Basilica, Independence Palace – you may see the picture of “the tank at the gate of this palace” from April 30, 1975. We witnessed the contrast of wealth and poverty, the busyness of the city as well as the relaxation of people at work, the beauty of art work and the filth of pollution, modern technology in the hands of a farmer, etc. Life moves on. It does not stop to wait for anyone. It silently marks the heart and mind of those who pause to think, to reflect with the lines and dots of these images and they become the inspiration for life, love, art, poems, with all laughter and tears.



