

CONSEQUENCE OF THE PROCESS OF THE CONTACT BETWEEN CATHOLICS AND NATIVE BELIEFS OF RESIDENTS LIVING IN THE NORTH VIETNAMESE PLAIN

Nguyễn Hồng Dương^(*)

Abstract: *Since being introduced and developed in Vietnam, Catholicism, both in Vietnam in general and in the Northern region in particular, had not accepted indigenous religions and beliefs. This is true with missionaries. Yet the majority of Vietnamese Catholic, who were born and grown up in Vietnam, is being more or less influenced by Vietnamese culture. Deeply inside of the heart, they are firstly Vietnamese. Despite of following a religion of monotheism, they lead a religious life with the spirit of polytheism. The paper discusses on consequences of the process of contact between Catholicism and indigenous beliefs of the residents living in the Northern Delta. This helps identify the process of cultural integration between Catholicism and Vietnamese traditions.*

The North Vietnamese plain has been region where Vietnamese people manifest clearly Vietnamese native beliefs. Catholicism earliest influenced this region. According to *Crông mục* book, in 1533 clergyman Inekhu was present at Trà Lũ and Nam Chân (Nam Định province). According historical document, a clergyman of Society of Jesus, Alexander de Rhodes was present at Cửa Bạng (Thanh Hóa province) on March 19th, 1627. When preaching in Vietnam, the clergymen who were preaching in the North plain achieved many great results. Now the North plain has 7 dioceses (whole country has 26 dioceses). These dioceses are Phát Diệm, Bùi Chu, Thái Bình, Hải Phòng, Hà Nội, Bắc Ninh, Hưng Hóa with above 1/3 total number of Catholic believers all the country.

Catholicism has been monotheism. When Catholicism was introduced and developed in Vietnam in general and in the North plain in particular, it had not

* Ass. Prof. Dr., Institute of Religious Studies, Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences

accepted native religions and beliefs. This article discusses on the consequences of the process of contact between Catholicism and native beliefs of residents living in the North plain.

When preaching in other countries in general and in Vietnam in particular the clergymen knew little about culture, religions, and beliefs of these countries. In other way, the clergymen always thought they came the regions where residents followed heresy so they had noble mission “to bring light of Gospel’ to residents. So that where Catholicism was present, the other religions and beliefs were annulled.

Holy See knew this problem. In 1659, the Sacred Congregation for the Evangelization of Nations promulgated bull on establishing two dioceses in Vietnam: the South diocese and the North diocese. Two bishops, Lamber de Motte and Pallu were appointed as apostolic vicars to manage these two dioceses. These vicars were advised: “You are not worried, you do not persuade residents to change their rites, customs and habits, on the condition that they are not contrary to Catholicism and its ethics. It is nonsensical we apply usages and customs of France, Italy, Spain or other European countries to China. You only propagate faith. This faith does not reject and harm rites, customs of residents”¹. Nevertheless, two apostolic vicars ignored these above advices. However, some clergymen of Society of Jesus had knowledge of Vietnamese culture. They applied some Vietnamese traditional customs and beliefs to practice of Catholic rite. Later, some clergymen of Dominicans and Mission Evangelical Paris (MEP) did like that. However, their results were not much worth. Their aims were to develop Catholicism strongly.

Vietnamese Catholics were born and grown up in Vietnam so they were little or more influenced Vietnamese culture.

When Catholicism came into Vietnam, Vietnamese native culture had been established for thousand years. In this culture, there were also three religions (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism) and popular beliefs as the worship of deities, Mother Goddess worshipping, ancestral worship....

Vietnamese Catholics have a meaningful saying: before being Catholic, I am a Vietnamese. On religious belief, this saying means although I am a Vietnamese

¹ Trần Lục. The book was sent from a foreign country.

Catholic my deep spirit is Vietnamese spirit. Of course, not that all Vietnamese Catholics are just like but majority of Catholics in the North plain think that.

Custom of celebrating the New Year

Vietnamese people have had this custom for thousands of years. Vietnamese people offer sacrifices to heaven in New Year's Eve. On the occasion of New Year, Vietnamese families get together, they worship their ancestors. The first day of year, they visit paternal parents, the second day, they visit maternal parents, the third day they visit teacher.

Vietnamese Catholics celebrate New Year pursuant their particular way. In the first day, they kowtow to Trinity. The second day they pray for Church. The third day they pray their ancestor.

In Thái Bình diocese, some parishes celebrate New Year's Eve in church. Nobody knows exactly when this ceremony came into the world. Some people think that it appeared in 1930s, but others think that it was born many years ago. This ceremony is not an official ceremony so it is held in some churches in Bùi Chu and Phát Diệm dioceses. Fundamentally, the etiquette of this ceremony is similar to the ritual of welcoming New Year organizing in communal house in Vietnamese villages. What a pity, after the August Revolution because of many reasons this ceremony was not held in the churches in Bùi Chu and Phát Diệm dioceses.

In August 1993, we carried out investigation in Châu Bình parish, Tam Châu village, Thủ Đức district. Hồ Chí Minh city. We know that this parish restored rite of New Year's Eve in parish church some years ago.

In Châu Bình parish, there were many north believers. Before emigrating to the South, they lived in Bùi Chu and Phát Diệm dioceses (Châu Bình is compound word of Bùi Chu and Thái Bình). The priests of Co- Redemptix in particular priest Phạm Quang Thiều gathered these believers to live in ground of church then Châu Bình parish was established

The group of sacrificers of Châu Bình parish consists of 15 persons including an official priest, two assistants and 12 members. Musical group serves feast. This feast is carried out in church so it is different from the rite of New Year's Eve organizing in communal house in the villages.

The aim of this ceremony is to honor Trinity, pray Church, Country and Parish. All believers of parish participate in this feast. When Alexander de Rhodes preached in the South, Catholic families often set up New Year's tree (cây nêu) to welcome New Year. A cross was stuck on this tree.

Nowadays, Vietnamese including Catholics and non Catholics do not set up New Year's tree to welcome New Year. The New Year's trees having Cross are set up in the communal houses of Bana, Gia Rai Catholics in Western Highland.

When Church allowed Vietnamese Catholics to worship ancestors, New Year Feast is opportunity for them to worship ancestors. (This problem will be explained in the ancestral worship of Vietnamese Catholics)

The custom of deities worshipping

The cultural space of Vietnamese in general and Vietnamese in the North plain in particular is not only the space of three religions (Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism) but also the space of divine beliefs. When Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism were introduced in Vietnam, Vietnamese had already worshipped many genies. Therefore, the consciousness of divine worship influenced deeply on three religions. Three religions were gradually popularized so popular Buddhism was appeared in Vietnamese pagodas. Taoism was changed into Mother Goddess Religion; the essence of Confucianism is "respect of heaven, ancestral worship".

In Vietnam, there are many genies and saints. Some of them are worshipped in pagodas and temples. Almost saints and genies are worshipped in private places of worship. Vietnamese worship genies and saints, first of all they implore saints and genies for happiness and good luck. The pinnacle of divine worship is festival. The periodic religious celebrations of village are defined by the village's culture.

Although Catholicism has been monotheism, when it was introduced in Vietnam it was influenced by belief of divine worship. We explain some types of Catholic beliefs to be influenced by Vietnamese beliefs of divine worship.

Mother Goddess worshipping

The belief of Mother Goddess worshipping is one of the oldest beliefs of Vietnamese in the North plain. The belief of Mother Goddess worshipping influences deeply Buddhism, in particular Taoism. Because of the influence of belief of Mother

Goddess worshipping, a type that is varied from Taoism to be born - **Mother religion**.

What does the belief of Mother Goddess worshipping influence Catholicism? Catholics worship Mary. According to Catholic creed, Mary does not bestow upon believers. However, the Mary worshipping is gradually influenced by belief of Mother Goddess worshipping in many aspects: the way of calling name, the concept of power and etiquette of worship.

The way of calling name: Mary was mother of Jesus so Vietnamese honored her as Lady or Holy Mother (Vietnamese abstain to call birth name). Vietnamese honor Mary as Holy Mother. In some parish churches in the North plain as Đông Trì (Hanoi), Kê Sỡ (Hà Nam) there is plates with Chinese letters “Phương Danh Thánh Mẫu” (i.e. Good Name of Holy Mother). This plate is red lacquered trimmed with gold. In parish day, parish organizes the palanquin procession. Head of the procession is this plate.

In the regulation of Ninh Phú village, Thanh Liêm district, Hà Nam province, the 3rd clause written that: village has not sacrifices and prayers. Village only has only ‘Phương Danh Thánh Mẫu’ procession in March, May and September without offerings and feast².

Conception of power

Cult of Mother Goddess worshipping influenced catholics so Holy Mother is considered to have three powers: protection, beneficence, and delivery.

Protection: When meeting difficulties in life catholics pray Lady for overcoming all difficulties. Many catholics rub into Lady’s hands or feet then they rub into their children. They hope their children will have good health. The sick often place medicine on Lady’s feet because they hope to recover from illness if they drink this medicine.

Beneficence: Catholics implore Holy Mother for wealth and happiness. Now, many young Catholics write prayers on a sheet of paper. After praying, they burn this sheet. If the statue of Holy Mother has been placed on the rocky mountain, we can see many prayers written on rock.

² Ninh Phú village regulation (Thanh Liêm, Hà Nam).

Delivery: When speaking about Mother Goddess we always think of delivery. Delivery is power of Mother Goddess. Lady Mary has been considered to have this power. Some Catholic who having few children get difficult to bring up will pray Lady Mary for bearing a child or 'sell' them to Lady Mary. When they are 13 years old, their parents will 'redeem' them. This form is similar to consecration of baby to God in pagodas. This custom remains in many regions in North plain.

Ceremonial of worship: Ceremonial of Lady Mary worshipping has some differences. May is called the month of Mary. In this month, the North Catholics carry out Mary procession and rite of singing and dancing with flowers offering. Nobody knows when this rite was born. According to our document, this rite came into the world at the beginning of the 20th century.

The rite of singing and dancing with flowers offering is in honor of Lady Mary. Catholics sing the praise of Lady Mary's merit and virtuousness. Melodies of songs are arranged from Vietnamese folk songs. While singing, Catholics are dancing of flowers offering style. Sometimes they are singing while they are arranging anchor-shaped (i.e. Lady Mary is hope) or star-shaped (i.e. Lady Mary is a star of ocean). A group carries out singing and dancing with flower offering. This group consists of 13 girls from 9 years old to 16 years old. These girls look very nice and they know to dance and sing.

On Sunday afternoons of May, parishes organize the rite of dancing and singing with flower offering. The 26th clause of regulation of Vĩnh Trì village (Nam Định) written that: in month of Mary, we have four ceremonies of flower procession³. These processions are carried out before Masses. Head of procession is palanquin decorated with flowers, picture or statue of Lady Mary is put inside the palanquin. Priests and laities follow palanquin. The procession goes around the church then it stops in church. The rite of singing and dancing with flowers offering is carried out in church.

Before the August Revolution, some parishes of Dominicans organized the rite of flowers offering in May. This rite is carried out by men so it is different from the rite of singing and dancing with flowers offering. The group of flower offering consists of 15 men: one officiating priest, two assistants and 12 members. The

³ Vĩnh Trì village regulation. This regulation was written on December 30th 1937.

officiating priest is elderly and well-behaved. Two assistants are lay religious brothers. 12 members are active people of parish. The songs of this rite sing praise of Lady Mary's virtue. The melody of these songs is similar to *chèo cổ* (Vietnamese folk song). Couple by couple offer flowers respectfully Lady Mary. At the end of the rite officiating priest blesses every body.

The ceremony of singing and dancing with flowers offering in Catholic church makes us remember the ceremony of flower garlands and colored lanterns of Buddhism. The ceremony of singing and dancing with flowers offering has been influenced by Buddhism and Taoism. The typesetting of the ceremony of singing and dancing with flowers offering has been influenced by the typesetting of popular festivals in the North plain.

Worship of saints and deities

According to bibliographic documents (mainly Catholic villages' regulations) and survival documents, we find that, native beliefs have not only influenced the worship of Lady Mary but also the worship of *Thánh quan thầy* (the saint protects the laity of parish from danger), martyrs and the other saints.

Thánh quan thầy

According to Vietnamese catholics, *Thánh quan thầy* is a saint who looks after a believer or community of believers. The cult of *Thánh quan thầy* is influenced by native beliefs. When developing Catholicism in the North plain, the priests found village to have an important role so they tried their best to convert all residents of village to Catholicism. Such village is called Catholic village⁴. The 110th clause of Vĩnh Trị village's regulation written that: All residents of village follow Catholicism ...⁵. The 118th clause of regulation of Lục Thủy village (Nam Định province) written that: All villagers follow Catholicism...⁶. The 94th clause of Trung Linh village's regulation written: All our villagers follow God...⁷.

For Catholic village, parish is related with village on frontier and name. All residents of village are Catholic believers so *Thánh quan thầy* of parish is also *Thánh*

⁴See: Nguyễn Hồng Dương. *Lưu Phương Catholic Village (Ninh Bình) from 1829 to 1945*, Social Sciences Press, Hanoi, 1997.

⁵Vĩnh Trị village regulation.

⁶Lục Thủy village regulation.

⁷Trung Linh village regulation .

quan thầy of village. The 26th clause of Vĩnh Trị village's regulation written that: in church, there are two ceremonies; one of them is the ceremony of *Thánh quan thầy* of village⁸. As changing *Thánh quan thầy* of parish into *Thánh quan thầy* of village makes believers consider *Thánh quan thầy* as Tutelary God of village. Basically, function of *Thánh quan thầy* of parish is similar to Tutelary God's function. This change does not reduce the power of *Thánh quan thầy*. Although name of *Thánh quan thầy* is changed, his power does not change. Why so? The reason is that catholics are influenced by village culture and traditional spirit.

We find many villages' regulations written that the ceremony of *Thánh quan thầy* is one of solemnities of village and parish. The ceremony of *Thánh quan thầy* is organized as village festival⁹.

Martyrs: Martyrs are believers, clergymen, friars sacrifice their whole life to Catholicism. Before 1988, Holy See beatified some people who died for the cause of Catholicism. On 6th June 1998, Holy See decided to canonize 117 martyrs. From the close of the 19th century to the beginning of the 20th century when martyrs were beatified then they were worshiped in parish churches. Some of them were statued or pictured. In the middle of the 20th century, many houses of martyrs worshipping were built. These houses were called *đền thánh* (the place of saint worshipping). We discuss on some priests who were beatified. Priest Peter Lê Tỳ (believers call him father Tỳ) was born in 1733 in Sở Hạ parish, Hà Nội diocese and died on 11th October 1833. Pope Leon XIII beatified him on 25th May 1900. Pope Joan Paul II canonized him on 19th June 1988. The house of worship Martyr Phe-ro Lê Tuy was built in his village. This house was considered to be the temple of saint Tỳ Bằng Sở. This temple is reputed to be sacred so many thousands of people implore him for happy life. The temple of saint Tỳ Bằng Sở and Bằng Sở church have been decided to be the centre of pilgrimage by Superior of Hanoi diocese.

Many people, both catholics and non- catholics think that Saint Father Lê Tỳ is sacred. The book "*Stories on Saint Father Lê Tỳ*" written: when reintering, Father's body was found to lie in sweet smelling water. The poor and the sick

⁸ Vĩnh Trị village regulation.

⁹ Nguyễn Hồng Dương. *Rites and Catholic Lifestyle in Vietnamese Culture*. Social Science Press, Hanoi, 2001.

implored father for helping then they attain their dream. Father Masson and Father Benado recognize the sacredness of Saint Father Lê Tỳ.

The rumor of sacredness of Saint Father Lê Tỳ spreads everywhere; so many people implore Father for support. Parish priest and residents of Bằng Sở village carved a fine cathedra and put Father's bone on it. Since then, few people pray Father. If prayers light candle, the candle is out at once.

Parish priest and residents think that Saint Father Lê Tỳ does not satisfied with putting his bone on cathedra which is sitting side by side Sanctuary where has Eucharist. Parish priest and residents put father's bone in the old place. Since then people flock to pray Father and the candles are not out.¹⁰

Before the August Revolution, Sở Hạ parish celebrated Saint Father Lê Tỳ death anniversary solemnly. In this anniversary people sing the songs in praise Saint Father Lê Tỳ's merits. This parish has *Saint Father Lê Tỳ bible* and two songs: *Hoa thiêng Bằng Sở* and *Mừng cha Thánh Tỳ* were composed by Hùng Lân.

We have just presented a martyr of a concrete Catholic village. In the other catholic villages or parishes there are other martyrs with other ceremonies of worship so the honors of martyrs are multiform.

The martyrs were changed into good genies of village by Vietnamese Catholics in the North plain.

Apostles and some saints

Almost Vietnamese Catholic churches worship two apostles Peter and Paul. Some of churches worship four Evangelists: St Matthew, St Mark, St Luck and St John and St Teresa of Avila....

Some saints are occupied in some levels by people. Basing the merit of each saint so every saint has his private occupation; For example, when living St Roco cured patients so the sick often implore St Roco for overcoming disease. St. Peter was a fisherman by nature so catholic fishermen often implore St. Peter for going to open sea safely¹¹. If you read the book *The ceremonies and Catholic life style in Vietnamese culture*, you can find that apostles and some saints had been explained

¹⁰ The stories on the Saint Lê Tỳ .

¹¹ Nguyễn Hồng Dương. *Rites and Catholic Lifestyle in Vietnamese Culture*. Social Science Press, Hanoi, 2001, p. 318-322.

carefully in the chapter *The worship of apostles and other saints*. Here we would like to say some thing more about St Anton. St Anton was occupied in helping the poor. When investigating in Sở Hạ parish, Hà Nội diocese, we found that St Anton is worshipped in private room. Two pieces of paper writing prayers to St Anton are stuck on the door of this room. For Bằg Sở catholics, St Anton can help all catholics but not only for the poor.

The problem of ancestral worship¹²

Before the Sacred Congregation for Evangelization of Nations promulgated Exhortation *Plane Compertum est* on 7th December 1930, Vietnamese catholics did not have a right of ancestral worship. When Exhortation *Plane Compertum est* was applied to Chinese Catholicism, the Synod of Vietnamese bishops request to carry out this Exhortation. This request was accepted on 20th October 1964 by Holy See. At first, the ancestral worship was only carried out by the South Catholic Church, because our country was divided into two regions before 30th April 1976. However, the ancestral worship was carried out reservedly. When our country has been unification, Vietnamese church has been reconciliation, in particular, the Common Letter 1980 of Vietnamese Episcopal Conference came into the world, and Vietnamese Catholics carry out the ancestral worship freely. Basing on the documents of social investigations were carried out in the end of the 20th century by The Institute for Religious Studies, we find that the rate of catholics who practice the ancestral worship is high, it is about 90-100 %. Another study on Catholics showed that 100 % catholics in Hà Nội, Hồ Chí Minh city, Qui Nhon, Xuân Lộc, Cần Thơ, Đà Lạt have realized the ancestral worship¹³.

The ancestral worship presents morality of Vietnamese when drinking water remembers its source. Vietnamese may not follow any religions but they still worship their ancestors. The ancestral worship is considered a religion- ancestral religion. Vietnamese catholics still worship their ancestors. In Luru Phuong parish (Kim Son, Ninh Bình), some followers have become parochial administrators, they still worship their ancestors. In Đòg Trì parish (Thanh Trì Hà Nội), some men converted to

¹² See the following study works of Nguyễn Hồng Dương: *The Problem on the Ancestral Worship; The Cultural integration of Vietnamese Catholicism; Rites and Catholic Lifestyle in Vietnamese Culture*.

¹³ Phạm Thị Bích Hằng. *The Problem on the Ancestral Worship in Contemporary Culture of Vietnam*.

Catholicism in order to marry girls of Catholic village but they still worship their ancestors.

The regulations of Catholic villages in the North plain show that many villages worship their predecessors who had founded village. Almost villages in Kim Son district worship men who opened new land for establishing a new village. Many villages worship Nguyễn Công Trứ. He was a mandarin, in 1829, he recruited labors to exploit the wasteland and establish 60 new villages. These villages made up a new district - Kim Son district.

In the 7th lunar month Lưư Phương catholic village worship predecessors. This ceremony lasts two days. The rite of predecessors worshipping is organized in Lưư Phương temple. Many elder village notables take part in this rite, most of them are catholics. Văn Hải catholic villagers (Kim Son, Ninh Bình) worship predecessors in Văn Hải temple. Tử Nê catholic villagers (Lưưng Tài, Ninh Bình) worship their ancestor in the last day of year and the second day of Lunar New Year. According to custom, catholics go to God's acre to redecorate their ancestral graves. In the New Year's Eve, all catholics concentrate in the head of clan's house to pray ancestors. This is an occasion for descendants to meet each other. In this evening, they pray catechism and 50 Hail Marys. They pray about one hour then they talk each other. In the second day of Lunar New Year, parish organizes Mass with the content of praying ancestor. In Mass priest solemnly makes a present. After Mass, believers wish priest a Happy New Year. The worship of ancestor was written in regulations of some catholic villages. The 94th clause of the regulation of Trung Linh village (Xuân Trường, Nam Định) written that: Our villagers are catholics. We have two rites:

1. The rite of prime minister: commune council should discuss on preparing offerings.
2. All souls (on 2nd November): praying ancestors and visiting anesters' graves¹⁴.

The 26th clause of regulation of Vĩnh Trĩ village (Nghĩa Hưng, Nam Định) written that: the worship of predecessor is carried out in the church¹⁵.

Catholic Church resolved to choose 2nd November of each year as praying day for the dead and spirits in Purgatory. According to Catholicism, all those who had committed minor crimes, when they died their spirits must not be in Hell but their

¹⁴ Trung Linh village regulation.

¹⁵ Vĩnh Trĩ village regulation.

spirits cannot be in Heaven, their spirits are in purgatory. If their relatives pray, their spirits can be in Heaven.

The regulations of some catholic villages in the North plain deal with the feast day of all souls on November, 2nd. It is the solemnity of village. The 94th clause of regulation of Phú Nhai catholic village (Nam Định) also deals with All Souls' Day¹⁶. The 118th clause of regulation of Lục Thủy catholic village (Nam Định) written that: all our villagers are catholics, we have four solemnities a year: The Resurrection, Feast of St Peter and Paul, All souls, the ceremony of praying for long peace¹⁷.

Beside All souls' Day (November 2nd), Vietnamese catholics have the other days' praying. In anniversary of death, catholics often meet priest to ask for worshipping the death. At the end of the ceremony priest will announce holly name of the departed. In the anniversary's evening descendants of the departed gather and pray.

All those have not son to take care of worshipping, they often *cúng hậu* (donates some thing to church; when they die the villagers will worship them) land or money to rectory. Basing on the stele in Phùng Khoan parish (Thanh Trì, Hà Nội), we find that: Madam Vũ Thị Lý whose native land was Thọ Xương, *cúng hậu* 100 quan tiền (ancient Vietnamese monetary unit worth 100 coins) and an acre of land to Phùng Khoan parish. Madam Vũ Thị Lãng *cúng hậu* 16 pieces of rice field to rectory for her parents and brothers. The stele of Tiên Đồi Ngoại parish (Hải Phòng) shows that: Đinh Bá Cốc was considered as generous man because he *cúng hậu* many thing to rectory. Xuân Hòa stele (Hải Phòng) shows that: in New Year Festival, parish wishes Phạm Thị Ân a happy New Year. She was 95 years old and considered as generous woman. When she died, her parish carries out requiem for her in her death anniversary¹⁸. In Từ Nê parish (Lương Tài, Bắc Ninh) Madam Tình *cúng hậu* a bell which was bought in pagoda to church so villagers call her *Hậu Tình* (generous Tình)...

Cúng hậu is a long type of belief of Vietnamese. This type has influenced Vietnamese catholics in the North plain.

¹⁶ Phú Nhai village regulation.

¹⁷ Lục Thủy village regulation.

¹⁸ Nguyễn Hồng Dương. *The Life of Catholics in Stele and Regulations in the North Plain in the End of the 20th Century*, Religion Press, 2004.

Some other ceremonials

Vietnamese catholics in the North plain are not only influenced native beliefs but also some other ceremonials as: the ceremony of praying for long peace, Double five festival (the 5th day of the 5th lunar month), New Rice ceremony, Farm –work initiation ceremony (to be observed every year in honor of Agricultural God). By the way we would like to correct a following paragraph in *Luu Phuong catholic village (Ninh Binh) from 1829 to 1945*¹⁹: “Catholic villages have not Farm –work initiation ceremony, New Rice one and the sacrifice which dedicated to the God of Earth at the beginning of farm work”, because we had not complete documents at that time.

On the ceremonies of praying for long peace and rain, bishop Puginier spoke of these ceremonies in the Common Letter dated April 26th, 1872 to send to the North Diocese. The end of the Common Letter bishop Puginier pointed out:

1. From now on parishes should carry out palanquin procession to pray for long peace and good harvest in Saint Mark’s day (April 25th)²⁰ and three days before the Feast of Ascension.²¹

2. This palanquin procession goes to field.

3. Native priest announces believers to open up a path for palanquin procession²².

In regulations of some villages in North plain written that the ceremony of praying for long peaces is one of solemnities of villages. Regulation of Nam An village (Hải Phong) written that the ceremony of praying for long peace is one of 8 solemnities of village²³. Luu Phuong catholic village organizes the ceremonies of praying for long peace and good harvest pursuant the Common Letter dated April 16th 1872. This feast is held annually in church. The end of feast, parish organizes palanquin procession from parish church to field. Priest sprinkles rice field with holy water and catholics implore God for good weather and good harvest. In 1930s rice

¹⁹ Nguyễn Hồng Dương. *Luu Phuong Catholic Village (Ninh Binh) from 1829 to 1945*. Social Sciences Press, Hanoi, 1997 p. 184.

²⁰ Saint Mark’s Day on April 25th.

²¹ The Feast of Ascension has not a concrete day.

²² The Collection of Common Letters in the North.

²³ Nam An village regulation.

fields of Tân An parish (Luu Phuong) were worm-eaten, villagers organized the ceremony of praying for long peace in the evening. Believers walked in procession with palanquin to field. Everybody asked God for wiping out insects²⁴.

We find many catholic village regulations deal with Farm –work initiation ceremony, New Rice one, for example the 28th clause of Mỹ Đình village regulation (Thái Bình) written that on July 29th villagers annually concentrate in church to pray for good harvest²⁵.

The ceremony of New Rice: Phú Nhai and Lục Thủy villages' regulations deal with this ceremony.

On the *Double Five Festival*, the catholic of the North plain carry out this festival with new content. It is time for people give present to their grandparents, their parents and visit their relatives. New year's presents are often products of agriculture as beans, rice, peanuts and chicken...

According to us, the influence of native beliefs towards each catholic villages is different. We shall discuss further this problem when we have new documents. /.

²⁴ Nguyễn Hồng Dương. *Luu Phuong Catholic Village (Ninh Bình) from 1829 to 1945*. Social Sciences Press, Hanoi, 1997, p. 185.

²⁵ Mỹ Đình village regulation.