

CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF VIET NAM
A Rising Shoot
Opening Ceremony of the New Academic Year 2017-2018

On the morning of September 14, 2017, the *Catholic Institute of Vietnam* (CIV) celebrated the Inauguration of Academic Year of 2017-2018 after one trial year. The ceremony took place at Hang Xanh Church, Saigon Archdiocese.



At the ceremony - besides Archbishop Joseph Nguyen Chi Linh (Archbishop of Hue Archdiocese, President of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Viet Nam (CBCV), and Chancellor of CIV), and Bishop Joseph Dinh Duc Dao (Bishop of Xuan Loc Diocese and Rector of CIV) - there were many bishops of the CBCV¹. It was a great honor to welcome the following distinguished guests: Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai, Secretary of Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, and Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli, non-residential Papal Representative for Vietnam, the current Apostolic Nuncio to Israel, Apostolic Delegate to Jerusalem and Palestine and Apostolic Nuncio to Cyprus. In addition, there were Monsignors, superiors of various religious orders, priests, religious men and women and CIV professors. There was also a government member, Mr. Tran Tan Hung, Deputy Head of the Government Committee for Religious Affairs, responsible for the activities in Southern Viet Nam).

Following Fr. Joseph Ngo Ngoc Khanh's opening prayers, Archbishop Joseph Nguyen Chi Linh greeted the distinguished guests and people who attended the opening ceremony of the new academic year. Archbishop Joseph emphasized the view of the Catholic Church about the role of

¹ Cardinal Peter Nguyen Van Nhon, Archbishop of Ha Noi Archdiocese, Bishop Joseph Nguyen Nang, Bishop of Phat Diem Diocese, Vice President CBCV; Bishop Joseph Nguyen Van Kham, Bishop of My Tho Diocese, General Secretary of CBCV; Bishop Joseph Vu Van Thien, Bishop of Hai Phong Diocese, Deputy General Secretary of CBCV; Archbishop Paul Bui Van Doc, Archbishop of Sai Gon-TP. HCM Archdiocese; Bishop Cosma Hoang Van Dat, Bishop of Bac Ninh Diocese; Bishop Vincent Nguyen Van Ban, Bishop of Ban Me Thuot Diocese; Bishop Joseph Chau Ngoc Tri, Bishop of Lang Son Diocese; Bishop Peter Huynh Van Hai, Bishop of Vinh Long Diocese; Bishop Stephan Tri Buu Thien, Bishop of Can Tho Diocese; Bishop Thomas Aquinas Vu Dinh Hieu, Bishop of Bui Chu Diocese; Bishop Dominic Nguyen Van Manh, Coadjutor Bishop of Da Lat Diocese; Bishop Joseph Do Manh Hung, Auxiliary Bishop of Sai Gon-TP. HCM Archdiocese; Bishop Peter Nguyen Van Vien, Auxiliary Bishop of Vinh Diocese; Bishop Louis Nguyen Anh Tuan, Newly-Elected Auxiliary Bishop of Sai Gon-TP. HCM Archdiocese; Bishop John Do Van Ngan, Auxiliary Bishop of Xuan Loc Diocese, Bishop Dominic Nguyen Chu Trinh, Former Bishop of Xuan Loc Diocese; Bishop Joseph Nguyen Van Yen, Former Bishop of Phat Diem Diocese.

education. According to Vatican II, “Education is the top priority of the Catholic Church. Besides educating Catholic faith for the faithful, the Church would like to contribute to advancement of the people, society, and the country where the Church is present.” Along with the Universal Church, the Church in Vietnam earnestly desires to contribute to the improvement of the country in all areas, in which the highest priority is education. The CIV was established in the midst of difficulties. Although the CIV doesn’t yet have its own campus, it started a trial year on September 14, 2016. Archbishop Joseph called the CIV the “Invisible Institute” because the Institute has neither its own address nor a planned campus. Looking at the Cross, the highest goal of teaching and studies of CIV, Archbishop Joseph invited the audience to recognize the Easter behind the sorrowful Cross. The challenges that CIV has encountered are an inevitable law that CIV must undergo to be formed and improved as an expectation of the Church in Vietnam.

After the speech of Archbishop Joseph Nguyen Chi Linh, a Drum Dance was presented by the Sisters of the Handmaids of Jesus the Priest. With this wonderful dance, the Sisters made the Opening Ceremony more exciting. Next, Fr. Joseph Ta Huy Hoang and Fr. Joseph Ngo Ngoc Khanh, OFM, came to the stage to read the messages that came from the Congregation for Catholic Education and Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples for the Grand Opening of the Academic Year 2017-2018 of CIV.



A distinguished guest, Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai, gave a speech in which he focused on the meaning of the logo and the statement of CIV: the red is the color of happiness and the yellow is the color of the relationship between Vatican and the Church in Vietnam. Based on the statement of CIV: “The Holy Cross is ultimate wisdom,” Archbishop Savio invited people to contemplate, to love, and to carry the Cross to seek the wisdom of Jesus Christ. In this way, the Church in Vietnam will have more workers for its Evangelization.



Next, the *Sowers Dance* was presented by the Sisters of the Handmaids of Jesus the Priest. The Sisters described that the zeal, challenges, and joy of those who are proclaiming the Gospel in Vietnam, as well as the efforts of professors and students in the CIV, must bear good fruits.

Bishop Joseph Dinh Duc Dao, Rector of the CIV, presented the typical characteristics of the CIV: seeking God's wisdom and the spirit of unity. Bishop Joseph emphasized the key point of seeking God's wisdom as the statement of CIV is always quoted: "The Holy Cross is the ultimate wisdom."² In addition, an indispensable thing in the Institute is the spirit of unity in diversity to complement one another: "The Institute is the result of collaboration of dioceses, religious orders, priests, the religious, and lay faithful."



The Rector introduced the administrative team, the faculty of the CIV: Fr. Anthony Nguyen Cao Sieu, SJ, the Head of Academic Department and Support Team; Fr. Joseph Ta Huy Hoang, the Head of Language Department and Financial Department; Fr. Vincent Nguyen Cao Dung, SCJ, the Head of Secretariat; and Fr. James Do Huy Nghia, OP, Director of the Library.

The Rector expressed his deep gratitude to the Bishops and Superiors of religious orders to allow priests and the religious to work for the CIV. Bishop Joseph especially thanked the Education Corporation of Nguyen Hoang Group and the benefactors who have contributed to CIV in different ways. Bishop Joseph also thanked Fr. Joseph Pham Hong Thai, Pastor of Hang Xanh Parish and the faithful of this parish, the Handmaids of Jesus the Priest, the Congregation of the Lovers of the Holy Cross of Go Vap, the Daughters of Mary of the Rosary of Chi Hoa, the Congregation of the Lovers of the Holy Cross of Thu Thiem, the Dominican Sisters of Rosa de Lima, the Orientation Community of Thanh Da, and all the people who participated in making the celebration more beautiful.

² Cf. 1 Cor 1:17-25.



Finally, Bishop Joseph announced the opening of the new academic year. Fr. Anthony Nguyen Cao Sieu, representing all the professors, played three long, rhythmic, and eloquent drums to start the new academic year.

The opening ceremony of the academic year was closed with a gift presentation to the distinguished guests, Archbishop Savio Hon Tai-fai and Archbishop Leopoldo Girelli. Archbishop Girelli expressed his love and nostalgia for Vietnam as he was leaving for his new mission in Israel. Archbishop Girelli hopes that CIV will have a campus soon, and that the students obtain God's wisdom through Jesus' Cross.



After the ceremony, people attended the Holy Mass, the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, with Archbishop Savio as the main celebrant. In the homily, Archbishop Savio expressed his joy when he knew that the goal of the CIV was to enhance the meditation of theology based on reason and faith. He reminded people of the three rules of Saint Pope John Paul II: perseverance, humility, and fear of the Lord. In addition, the Archbishop presented an excellent educational model: "passing knowledge from hearts to hearts." When studying theology, each student lets Jesus touch one's heart and lets Him fill everyone with deep joy. Archbishop Savio wished the CIV to become a missionary community through its joy and its own experience of meeting God.



After the Mass, the Cardinal, Bishops, Superiors, Priest, Religious, Lay persons, all enjoyed having an Agape Meal in a warm and friendly atmosphere. The meal was prepared and served by the Sisters of the Handmaids of Jesus the Priest.

As we know, on September 14, 2015, the Congregation for Catholic Education approved the establishment of the CIV in order to satisfy the learning needs and the desire for more cultivated knowledge of theology and pastoral care of the people of God in Viet Nam and its neighbouring regions.³ A theology degree conferred by the CIV will be valid and certified by all faculties of theology (pontifically recognized) throughout the world.

The CIV started a trial year on September 14, 2016. Eighteen students, priests and religious, were admitted to a one-year preparatory program for the Licentiate in Sacred Theology (S.T.L.) Programs in Biblical Theology and Dogmatic Theology.

With the opening ceremony of the academic year 2017-2018, the CIV is officially in operation. There are 68 students in the three programs. The 5-year Baccalaureate in Sacred Theology (S.T.B.) Program has 40 students, religious men and women, and lay faithful. The Licentiate Program lasts 2-3 years, with two degrees in Biblical Theology and Dogmatic Theology. There are 18 students, priests and religious. In addition, the CIV has opened its one-year preparatory program for S.T.L. students. In this academic year, students will receive more theological knowledge and learn languages that are necessary for their future major. This program has 10 students. Currently the CIV does not have its own campus for teaching and studying. During the academic year 2016-2017, all activities took place in the office building of the CBCV, at 72/12 Tran Quoc Toan Street, Ward 8, District 3, Ho Chi Minh City. This year, the number of students increased from 18 to 68. The rooms at the office building of the CBCV no longer meets the need of the Institute. Therefore, the CIV has moved to the Pastoral Center of Saigon Archdiocese, 6 Ton Duc Thang, Ben Nghe Ward, District 1. Although the CIV facilities are unstable and teaching and studying conditions are limited, professors and students eagerly fulfill their duties. The CIV will hopefully make steady progress in the coming years.

In the shadow of the Cross, the CIV already has a clear direction after a trial year. The efforts of all members in establishing and improving CIV, are so beautiful as the flowers at the foot of the Cross. Although there are many difficulties and challenges ahead, the CIV moves

³ Cf. The Congregation for Catholic Education is “the Pontifical congregation of the Roman Curia responsible for: (1) universities, faculties, institutes and higher schools of study, either ecclesial or non-ecclesiastical dependent on ecclesial persons; and (2) schools and educational institutes depending on ecclesiastical authorities.” (<https://en.wikipe-dia.org/wiki/Co>); “a part of the government of the Holy See. The genesis of this Dicastery can be traced to special commissions created by the Roman Pontiffs for maintaining vigilance over the universities in Rome and other educational institutions in the Papal States.” (<http://www.tand-fonline.com/doi/abs>).

forward with Jesus Christ the Crucified to explore the ultimate wisdom, as well as to contribute to the enhancement of the Country and the Church in Viet Nam. May the love of the Crucified on the Cross always accompany and support all members of the CIV, so that they may evermore help the people to seek the Cross - the ultimate wisdom.



Secretariat of the CIV