

# Cause of Vietnamese priest and martyr opened

*Asia News December 15.2014*



*Fr. Francis-Xavier Truong Buu Diep,  
priest and martyr of Vietnam.*

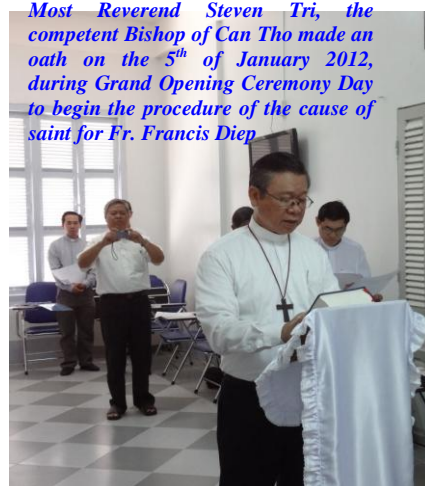
Vietnam may soon have a new saint. The Vatican's Congregation for the Causes of Saints has given the green light to the opening of the canonization process of Francis-Xavier Truong Buu Diep, a priest who was martyred in 1946 during the first Vietnamese War while trying to save his parishioners.

The Congregation informed Bishop Stephanus Tri Buu Thiên of Cần Thơ of the green signal on 31 October, but the news was made public only recently. The news was greeted with joy by the faithful of the diocese and by many pilgrims - both Christians and of other religions - who come from all over the country to pray at the tomb of the priest buried in the Church of Tac Say, in the Diocese of Southern Cần Thơ. The Vietnamese Bishops' Conference has been pushing for the opening of the canonization process, after having launched the proposal during its first annual meeting in 2012, held from 9 to 13 April in the Diocese of Xuan Loc.

Amongst those who have a special veneration for the priest and martyr is also Cardinal Jean-Baptiste Pham Minh Mân, Archbishop Emeritus of Ho Chi Minh City, who knew him when he was eight years old. In the forefront of advocacy for the cause of canonization, the Cardinal points out that Father Truong Buu Diep "was a holy priest, always concerned about the future of the Church and ready to encourage the faithful to commit themselves deeply to their religion." Wherever he went, the Cardinal continued, "he undertook to set up a place of worship and to build houses for the faithful. He lived and died for them."

Father Diep was born in 1897 in a village in the southwest of Vietnam, in the province of An Giang, which at the time was part of the Apostolic Vicariate of Phnom Penh, which is where he later completed his studies at the Major Seminary. He was ordained priest in the Cambodian capital in 1924. From 1930 he was assigned to the Parish of Tac Say, where he continued to work until his death by martyrdom. When the Vietminh arrived in the area, many priests decided to leave, but he chose to stay close to his faithful. He was arrested on 12 March 1946 along with 60 parishioners. He offered his own life in sacrifice in exchange for their release. (Source: Asia News)

*Most Reverend Steven Tri, the competent Bishop of Can Tho made an oath on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2012, during Grand Opening Ceremony Day to begin the procedure of the cause of saint for Fr. Francis Diep*



**NIHIL OBSTAT GRANTED BY THE CONGREGATION OF THE CAUSES  
OF SAINTS IN OCTOBER 31, 2014**

CONGREGAZIONE  
DELLE CAUSE DEI SANTI  
Prot. N. 3134-1113

CONGREGATION FOR THE CAUSES OF SAINTS  
BỘ CÁC THÁNH

Rome / Rôma, 31/10/2014

Excellentissime Domine,  
Litteris, die 3 mensis Septembris anni 2013 editis, Excellentia tua ab hac Congregatione de Causis Sanctorum quaerit utrum ex parte Sanctae Sedis aliquid obsit Causae Beatificationis seu Declarationis Martyrii Servi Dei Francisci Xaverii Truong Buu Diep, Sacerdotis Dioecessani, in odium Fidei, uti fertur, anno 1946 interfecti.

Re explorata, placet mihi Excellentiam Tuam certiore reddere ex parte Sanctae Sedis nihil obstare quominus Causa Beatificationis seu Declarationis Martyrii eiusdem Servi Dei peragi possit, servatis "Normis servandis in Inquisitionibus ab Episcopis faciendis in Causis Sanctorum", die 7 mensis Februarii anno 1983 ab eadem Congregatione editis.

Excellentiae Tuae addictissimus  
in Domino

Your Excellency,

In your letter of September 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2013, you asked this Congregation for the Causes of Saints whether the Holy See would raise any objection to the cause of Beatification, i.e. Declaration of Martyrdom, of the Servant of God Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep, a Diocesan priest who was apparently killed in hatred of the faith in 1946.

After investigating the matter, I am pleased to inform you that the Holy See has nothing to object: the Cause of Beatification, i.e. Declaration of Martyrdom, of the Servant of God mentioned above may proceed. The "Norms to be observed in Inquiries made by Bishops in the Causes of Saints," published by this Congregation on February 7, 1983, are to be followed.

Yours truly in the Lord

Kính thăm Đức Cha,

Trong thư gửi Bộ các Thánh này vào ngày 03/09/2013, Đức Cha đã yêu cầu rằng : Tòa Thánh sẽ nêu ra lý do nào phản đối sự kiện phong chân phước, tức là tuyên bố việc tử vì đạo, của Tôi Tớ Chúa là cha Phanxicô Xaviê Truong Bửu Diệp, một linh mục triều được coi như đã bị giết vì sự căm ghét Đức Tin vào năm 1946, không ?

Sau khi sự việc trên được điều tra, tôi rất vui cho Đức Cha biết rằng : Tòa Thánh không có gì để phản đối, nên sự kiện phong chân phước, tức là tuyên bố việc tử vì đạo, của Tôi Tớ Chúa nêu trên có thể tiến hành. Đức Cha nên làm theo « Quy phạm Giám Mục cần tuân theo khi quản lý sự điều tra trong sự kiện các Thánh », được Bộ này xuất bản vào ngày 07/02/1983.

Kính thư, chân thành trong Chúa

Angelo Card. Amato, S.D.B.  
Praefectus (Bộ trưởng)

+Marcellus Bartolucci  
Archiepiscopus tit. Mevanien.  
a Secretis (Thư ký)

Exc.mo ac Rev.mo Domino  
D. Stephano Tri Buu Thiên  
Episcopo Canthoënsi  
12 Nguyen Trai  
Tp. Can Tho  
Viet Nam

Kính gửi  
Đức Cha Têphanô Tri Bửu Thiên  
Giám mục Giáo phận Cần Thơ  
12 đường Nguyễn Trãi  
Tp. Cần Thơ  
Việt Nam

## Father FRANCIS XAVIER TRƯƠNG BỬU DIỆP 1897-1946



Date of birth: January First 1897

Place of birth: My Loi Hamlet, My Luong Village, Cho Moi District, An Giang Province, VietNam.

Parents: Mr. Michael Trương văn Đăng (1860-1935) and Mrs. Lucy Lê thị Thanh.

Date of Baptism: February 2<sup>nd</sup> 1897 by Father Joseph Sóm.

Place of Baptism: Cồn Phước Parish. Name of Patron Saint: Francis Xavier

After his mother died in 1904, his father brought him to Battambang, Campuchia.

They lived by carpentry.

In 1909, with the help of his pastor, Father Peter Lê huỳnh Tiền, Francis Diệp entered minor seminary in Cù lao Giêng and gradually major seminary of Phnom Penh, Campuchia

*(At that time, all parishes of Mekong Delta belonged to just one Catholic Diocese, the*

*Diocese of Phnom Penh in Campuchia)*

In 1924, Francis Diệp was ordained to Presbyter under the time of Most Reverend Valentin Herrgott, bishop.

From 1924-1927, Parochial Vicar of Hồ Trư, Vietnamese Parish in Kandal, Campuchia.

From 1927-1929, professor of minor seminary of Cù lao Giêng.

In March 1930, appointed as Parish priest of Tắc Sậy. Besides, Fr. Francis Diệp also provided Pastoral work for eight missions: Bà Đốc, Cam Bô, An Hải, Đầu Sáu, Chũ Chí, Khúc Tréo, Đồng Gò và Rạch Rắn. He baptized almost 2000 persons, both infant and adult.

In years 1945-1946 the West-Southern part of Viet Nam was considered a war-torn one: villages were destroyed, people were evacuated. People lived in an extreme fear of war and of fighting happened among different politic groups for power and for land. Father Francis Trương bửu Diệp was warned to leave, however he firmly stated: *"My life and my death is reserved for my flock! Shepherd should be where the flock is!"*

In March 12<sup>th</sup> 1946, Father Francis Diệp and around one hundred parishioners were forced to leave for Cây Gừa where they were kept in the barn of Mr. Châu văn Sự. Father Francis Diệp willingly laid down his life for the life of his flock. They killed him and threw him into a pool of water that it belonged to Mr. Châu văn Mưu, the next door of Mr. Sự. After his death, parishioners were allowed to go home and they had to leave their places right on that night.

The dead body of Fr. Francis was buried in the sacristy of Khúc Tréo Church. In 1969, his remains were moved to Tắc Sậy's Parish where he functioned faithfully the duty of a shepherd during sixteen years. March 4<sup>th</sup> 2010 Most Reverend Steven Thiên, Bishop of Cần Thơ presided a Mass to move his bones to the existing vault.

Pilgrimage Center of Father Francis Diệp now attracts many people, both Catholic and non-Catholic in every single day. Everyone knows him. They come to him from North to South of Viet Nam and from different parts of the world. They come to him for help. Innumerable pilgrim gathers annually for his funeral anniversary on March 12<sup>th</sup>. Most Reverend John the Baptist Bùi Tuần, Emeritus Bishop of Long Xuyên, said "Father Francis Diệp has a compassionate heart to everyone, to both Catholic and non-catholic. He is so loved by everyone!" *(Given in August 6<sup>th</sup> 2011)*. His Eminence, Cardinal John the Baptist Phạm Minh Mẫn, Archbishop of Sài Gòn, considered as a living witness, strongly stated "Non-Catholics and even Atheists have already canonized Father Francis Diệp!" *(Given in August 4<sup>th</sup> 2011)*

August 25<sup>th</sup> 2011, Most Reverend Steven Tri buu Thien, Bishop of the Diocese of Can Tho has granted a decree so that the procedure of beatification of Father Francis Trương bửu Diệp officially would start. Reverend Father Peter Tuyen Tran, originally Diocesan Can Tho's person, was appointed as Postulator of the Cause of Sainthood for Fr. Francis Xavier Trương Bửu Diệp.

January 5<sup>th</sup> 2012 Grand Opening Ceremony took place in the residence of Bishop of Can Tho Diocese presided by Most Reverend Steven Tri buu Thien with all duly officers required by Canon Law. The title "Servant of the Lord" reserved for Fr. Francis Xavier Trương bửu Diệp has been proclaimed to use in Local Churches in Viet Nam.

This makes people in everywhere happy However This is also a big challenge. Yes, it relies very much on Divine support, on eager prayer and on financial support from everyone. Let us join hands to do God's will.

*Issued by Postulator – Father Peter Tuyen Tran*

## Canonical Procedure of Beatification and Canonization of Father Francis Xavier TRƯỜNG BỬU DIỆP 1897-1946

According to the instruction “Sanctorum Mater”, issued on the 17th day of May 2007 by the Congregation for the causes of Saints to instruct for conducting diocesan or eparchial inquiries in the causes of Saints.

### Initial stage in Viet Nam

1. **On August 15<sup>th</sup> 2011**, the Association of the Friends of Father Francis-Xavier Truong buu Diep was established in order to conduct the cause of sainthood for Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep.
2. **On August 16<sup>th</sup> 2011**, the Most Rev. Stephen Tri buu Thien, Diocesan Bishop of Can Tho, as the competent Bishop approved the title and the goal of the Association.
3. **On August 19<sup>th</sup> 2011**, the Association appointed Father Peter Tran the Tuyen as postulator for the cause of sainthood for Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep.
4. **On August 22<sup>nd</sup> 2011**, the Postulator officially petitioned the competent Bishop to open the cause of sainthood for Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep.
5. **August 25<sup>th</sup> 2011**, the Most Rev. Stephen Tri buu Thien accepted the Libellus (the Petition) and granted permission for a preliminary investigation.
6. **In September & October 2011**, the Diocesan Bishop of Can Tho, Most Rev. Stephen Thien Tri, discussed this matter with the neighboring Bishops and the Conference of the Catholic Bishops of Viet Nam. All were in favor! This was dated: April 13<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Xuân Lộc during the Annual Plenary meeting.
7. **In November 2011**, the Bishop of Can Tho, Most Rev. Stephen Thien Tri, announced throughout the Diocese the petition to open the cause for sainthood. The Bishop requested the Christian faithful to provide stories and documents related to Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep.
8. **On December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011**, the Bishop of Can Tho requested the Apostolic See (the Congregation for the Causes of Saints) to let him know if there were any obstacles or not?
9. **On December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2011**, the Bishop of Can Tho appointed a professional committee of history to research and to verify the documents of Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep.
10. **On December 26<sup>th</sup> 2011**, the Bishop of Can Tho appointed a Juridical Council in order to receive all testimonies of witnesses.
11. **On January 5<sup>th</sup> 2012**, the Grand Opening ceremony took place in the Bishop's residence of Can Tho . There were 16 officers present (including Bishop Stephen Tri) who had to take an oath. The Postulator handed a list of witnesses (13 witnesses of de Visu and 17 witnesses of auditu a videntibus)





12. **From January 2012 to June 2015**, the Diocesan tribunal for the cause of sainthood for Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep investigated witnesses.

- **In August 2012**, a big problem was caused by the Communist government of Viet Nam: they completely stopped the work of the cause for sainthood of Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep.

13. **In June 2013?** As scheduled, the Professional committee of history would report the results of the research but with the interruption of the Communist Government, the work has not yet been done!

14. **In July 2013?** As scheduled, the Diocesan tribunal and the Postulator were to check evidence and documents, but the Communist Government is causing trouble. This work has not been done yet.

15. **In August 2013?** As scheduled, an Official Closing ceremony at the Diocesan level was to take place in the Bishop's Residence of Can Tho. All documents related to the cause of sainthood for Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep were to be sealed and sent to the Apostolic See in Rome.

*Note: Steps number 13, 14 and 15 should be delayed, for how long? We don't know because of the interruption of the Communist Government of Viet Nam. We know one thing: we still trust in God!!*

### **Proposal Second stage in Rome**

16. **In the year 2016**: the Congregation for the Causes of Saints in Rome will check officially all documents. They will judge whether the work that has been done on the Diocesan level is good or not.

17. **In the Fall of 2017**: the Congregation for the Causes of Saints will appoint an official expert, (it is also called "Relator") to examine all that is pertinent to the beatification of Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep.

18. **In 2017-2019**, This official expert with a cooperator (*not a member of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints*) prepare sufficiently a file of documentation, which is also called "Positio" in order to present to the Apostolic See as follows:

- i. Biography of Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep.
- ii. Summary of the testimony and documents related to the cause.
- iii. Based on that, the Positio is to prove that Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep was a martyr: *How has been killed? Did he really sacrifice his life for Jesus Christ or not? Why did people kill him? Did they hate Catholic Faith? What do people, Catholic and Non-Catholic, think about the death of Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep? Does Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep gain a holy reputation and intercessory prayer?*

19. **2019-2020** The Juridical Committee of history who will be appointed by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints will examine carefully the "Positio".

20. **2021** The Juridical Committee of theology who will be appointed by the Congregation for the Causes of Saints will examine the "Positio".

21. **2022** If both Committees approved it, a group of Cardinals will examine all that is pertinent to the beatification of Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep and submit it to the Pontiff.

22. **2022** Hopefully the Pope would approve the beatification of Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep in Viet Nam and grant permission to organize a solemn Mass of Beatification.



# Who killed Father François-Xavier Trương Bửu Diệp

From the Archives of the Foreign Missions of Paris

Taken from a collection of letters in March 2012 By Roland Jacques, o.m.i., vice-postulator

## I – Record « Chabalter, Jean-B., 3164, 1930-1939 »

*This record includes many complaints about the indigenous priests who are “poorly formed at the major seminary”; about them, Msgr. Chabalter mentions mainly business problems (buffalos...) and problems with women. Father Diệp is the only one who is mentioned in a positive light.*

*Manuscript letter from Phnom Penh, May 27 1938*

I am “a quia” (= *I don't know what to say*) about the personnel, European as well as indigenous. Even in the case of natives, not only am I short of quality people, but I do not have the numbers I would need. I have few good people but they are exhausted and I have no one to replace them.

*Manuscript letter from Phnom Penh, October 17 1938*

The personnel situation is my heaviest cross. From the number of the native priests, take out the old people, take out also the ill-famed, there is almost no one left.

*Manuscript letter from Phnom Penh, October 18 1938*

In spite of all the obstacles, the ascension movement, that of progress, has not slowed down because of the zeal of the priests of the mission and of their auxiliaries. The number of Christians has increased and I believe it is higher than we usually say (...) In the province of Bac-lieu, **Father Diệp** develops his district.

*Typed report dated from Phnom Penh on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939*

(p. 3) Some time ago I had travelled from Cai-Trâu to Cà-Mau – about 70km – without seeing a single church. **Father Diệp** has now succeeded in starting two small Christian communities along this unending canal. I hope and wish that those foundations may keep on going.

Official statistics from the Vicariate of Phnom Penh, in the year 1939

Population around 4 500 000; 97 000 Catholics

Annamite priests: 27 MEP (Paris Foreign Missions); 37 brothers (18 FSC, 19 Holy Family)

Sisters: 451 Sisters of Providence of Portieux; 84 Amantes of the Cross; 18 Carmelites

Major Seminarians (in foreign countries) 23; younger seminarians 42; probanists 117

**Grand Opening Ceremony took place at Bishop Residence in Can Tho, January 5<sup>th</sup> 2012**



## II – Record «Chabalter, Jean-B., 3164, 1941 – 1949»

*Manuscript letter of September 1946*

I am just coming in from a visit in Lower Cochinchine: I was able to go as far as Cà-mau. In Cà-mau, Bac-lieu, the ruins are essentially repaired. There is only a burned façade of the post of Khuc-treo to repair now.

*Report on the Mission, dated December 20, 1947, from the bishop's residence in Phnom Pehn.*

(p. 3) It is also toward the end of 1945 that fires started. In April and September 1946, Msgr. (Chabalter) could twice visit chief towns of Cochinchine, with the help of military trucks. In Chaudoc, Longxxyên, Rachgia, Soctrang, Bac-lieu, all the administrative buildings, all the French or pro-French houses were burned down. Hospitals, schools, even water reservoirs, nothing is saved or valued in the eyes of those patriotic so-called "friends of the people"... to whom they brought the most atrocious misery ....

In March-April 1946, assassinations took place in great and appalling numbers. I have already mentioned the assassination of Rev. Father David \*. On March 6, 1946, the two French Sisters from the Bac-lieu hospital were brought to the region of Camau and murdered along with eight other ladies and some sixty men. On March 12, **the annamite Father Diêp**, because he remained with his Christians, is also murdered ...

During my visit of April 1946, at each station, I was hearing about the murder of some good people of our Christian communities; the bodies are thrown into the river. Ever since, those assassinations became more numerous; we will never know the number of victims.

(\*) *Pierre-Marie David, m.e.p., detained and gunned down by the Japanese on August 22 1945 in Gratié, Cambodge.*

*Manuscript letter from Phnom Penh, December 27 1947*

Bac-lieu: we maintain no other post in the province.

*Typed report : "Report on the state of the Mission of Phnom Penh, 1949 ", signed "J.-B. Chabalter, vic. Ap.*

(P. 1) On the road from Cà-mau to Bac-lieu, there are only ruins of our Christian communities: Khùc-Tréo, Tac-Say, Phong-Thanh, Cà-huru, Vinh-My. I do not speak of all the Christian communities of the Cà-mau region.

### **III – Report “ Common Letters 1941 – 1947 ”**

*Cambodge - Lower Cochinchine: Report from Msgr. Jean-Baptiste Chabalter, Apostolic vicar 1946)*

(p. 76) On March 6, the two French Sisters from the Bac-lieu hospital were brought to the Camau region and murdered with eight other women and some sixty men.

On March 12 (1946), M. Diêp, annamite priest, was murdered because he remained among his Christians.

... During my visit of April (1946), in each post, I was hearing about the murder of some good people of our Christian communities. Ever since, the murders (p. 77) multiplied; we will never know the number of victims.

### **IV – Report “Common Letters 1949”**

*Cambodge – Lower Cochinchine: Report from Msgr. Jean-Baptiste Chabalter, Apostolic vicar (1949)*

(p. 102) From Cà-mau to Bac-lieu, all our little posts are nothing but ruins.

(p. 103) Soctrang ... All the devastation has been done by united caodaïsts, but the administration declares to be powerless to stop them from committing those atrocious activities.

### **V – Bulletin of the Foreign Missions of Paris – Year 1948 - Phnompenh 1946-1947)**

.... Especially in April 1946, assassinations began; the dead bodies were thrown into the river. Will we ever know the number of victims? At times, those murders are absolutely atrocious. We have to mourn the



death of Father David (\*) mentioned above; that **of an annamite father murdered by a dissident Japanese, because the priest did not want to abandon his** (p. 108) **Christians (\*\*)**; that of two French Sisters murdered around Camau...

(\*) Pierre-Marie David, m.e.p., detained and gunned down by the Japanese on August 22 1945 in Gratié, Cambodge.

(\*\*) The Servant of God F.-X. Diep. Cf. Report “Common Letters 1941 – 1947”

#### Final comment of R. Jacques.

Before 1945, Father Diep is mentioned as an example of a good priest, among an aboriginal clergy whom the bishop judges severely. He is the only one who receives such an approval. In the letters and reports from 1946 and on, Father Diep is always mentioned apart from the other missionaries, priests, religious or Christians, murdered it seems because of confused politico-military events. Every time his death is mentioned, a special reason is given: “Because he stayed among his Christians”.

The Viet-minh is never said to have caused or ordered his death, from 1946-1947, *the persecutor is identified as “a dissident Japanese”*.

### **Prayer to Father Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep**

O God, almighty and merciful! Dear Father Francis Xavier! When you were living among us, you loved people around you and all who were coming to you for help. We believe that you are now very close to the merciful Lord whom



you loved so much as a disciple and as a priest among your people. We turn to you in prayer, especially for these intentions that we mention in our hearts... (*silent private prayer*). We seek to find happiness in living as you did, in loving our sisters and brothers and in trusting in your love for us all. We pray this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen (*From Postulation Office*)



### **Prayer for the beatification of the servant of God, Father Francis Xavier Truong buu Diep**

O Almighty and eternal God. We thank you for giving the Church of Viet Nam a great shepherd in the person of Father Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep.

As a Christian, he lived as a true son of yours the call given to the children of God; his faith was strong always, his hope was firm, his love was generous towards all people.

As a priest, Father Francis made visible in the Church the presence of Christ your Son by laying down his own life so that his people may have the abundant life offered by our Savior;

As an Apostolic missionary, Father Francis was interested in evangelization through the Divine Mercy shown by his love for the poor, the sick and the sinners, and especially his prayer for the gentiles, begging you, Lord, to pour out your grace upon them. His openness to their conversion invited so many to come to him for help.

We ask you, Almighty and eternal God, to grant us your blessings through the prayers we offer you by the intercession of Father Francis, especially what we mention to you in our hearts..... Kindly increase our hope of seeing soon the day on which the one we love and honor will be glorified among the saints in heaven. Amen.

*Nihil Obstat - Can Tho, April 21<sup>st</sup> 2012 + Rev. Charles Ho bac Xai, Vicar General of the Diocese of Can Tho*  
*Imprimatur – Can Tho, April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012 + Steven Tri buu Thien, Bishop of Can Tho*

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