



Spring brings new life! It brings warmer weather. It brings new opportunities! It can bring hope! Even though officially spring is a few weeks away, most of us can't wait!

Winter was overshadowed by the ongoing pandemic, which has affected all areas of our lives: faith, school, entertainment, social life, sports, travel and family life, to name a few. It is our prayerful wish that you and your families have all remained safe during this time.

Our efforts as lay missionaries in the HCA have not ceased. Mission countries have also been affected by the pandemic. In many ways, it has been worse for them because of their lack of basic necessities which we often take for granted. They need our help more than ever. In this issue, we focus on the Southeast Asian country of Vietnam.

SPOTLIGHT ON VIETNAM

As you can see on the map, Vietnam is a very long, narrow country. Its narrowest point is only 48 km, but it is over 1650 km long! The country is in an area of Asia known as Indochina, and is bordered by China, Laos and Cambodia.



Britannica.com

Interesting Facts

- **Population:** 97,338,579 million people live in Vietnam
- **Main cities:** Hanoi (capital); Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon)
- **Official Name:** Socialist Republic of Vietnam
- **Government:** Communist



Lotus blossom (CCA 2.0)



Flag of Vietnam (Britannica.com)

- **Language:** Vietnamese, with English and French the most common second languages
- **Literacy:** 95% of the adult population can read and write
- **Religion:** Folk religions or non-religious (75%), Buddhism (10%), Christianity (7%)
- **National Symbols:** five-pointed star on a red field (represents workers, peasants, soldiers, intellectuals, and businessmen); lotus blossoms (national flower).

TROUBLED HISTORY

Hanoi War Memorial (Wikipedia)



Throughout history, Vietnam fluctuated between Chinese domination and tribal conflicts that resulted in an ever-changing political landscape. European colonial expansion resulted in Vietnam being administered by France by 1890. After the Japanese occupation during World War II, the Communist Party controlled the North. The South fought against a communist takeover, initially with the help of the French and then the Americans (commonly known as the Vietnam War). The North was victorious in 1975, and the country was later unified.



US War Memorial (Seasidesignal.com)

Although Canada was not involved in the war, your grandparents would have memories of it as television brought it very close to everyone. After the war, many Vietnamese refugees made their way to Canada. You may have friends who are descendants of these refugees.

VIETNAM TODAY

Today, Vietnam is a thriving country and a popular tourist destination. It is famous for its food which is a blend of Chinese and Thai styles and uses seafood and local fruits and vegetables. You can find many Vietnamese restaurants in Canada. The most popular sports are soccer, table tennis, volleyball and martial arts. The main agricultural products are rice, coffee, tea, pepper as well as soybeans, cashews, peanuts and rubber. Vietnam's main exports include crude oil, seafood, rice, shoes, wooden products, machinery, electronics, coffee, and clothing. There are exotic animals, such as Indochinese tigers and the extremely rare saola antelope, in the tropical forests.



Popular food (CCA)



Rare Saola antelope (kiddle.ca)

Ha Long Bay (National Geographic)



(kiddle.ca)

DID YOU KNOW?

As in many areas of Southeast Asia, motorcycles are very popular. There are about 45 million of them in Vietnam!

BE CAREFUL!!

Don't cross your fingers for luck in Vietnam. It is considered rude!



HCA PROJECTS IN VIET NAM

The HCA is currently supporting a group of Chau Ma families, members of an ethnic minority in Bon-go village. The area in which they have lived since reunification in 1975 is developing, but the people are still very poor. HCA assistance helps the Our Lady of the Missions group with providing educational needs: tuition fees, pens, pencils, books, uniforms. The children also receive food assistance to improve overall health concerns. The sisters also organise annual excursions to broaden the horizons of the children. This year, all educational programmes have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the mission has continued and worked effectively under the conditions.



Chau Ma children (HCA files)



Covid_19 Pandemic relief for poor families



LENT 2021 - a more mature approach?

As you know, Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 21, with Easter Sunday following on April 4. Earlier, we wrote that we are emerging from a winter like no other. We couldn't even celebrate Easter as we normally do! Perhaps it is appropriate to observe a Lent like no other. Instead of reacting to the things we are used to, like giving up the usual things, we should be proactive and use the lessons we have learned during the pandemic about our lives to prepare for Jesus in a more meaningful way.



On the Holy Childhood Association page of the Pontifical Missions website (missionsocieties.ca), under Education Materials, you will find a **Lenten Calendar for 2021**. Each day has a suggestion for what you can do as your preparation for Easter. All of them ask you to do something that fulfills the 3 main Lenten duties of *fasting, almsgiving and praying*. The pandemic has forced all of us to approach our lives in a more basic manner. The calendar can be a guide for you in making a more basic Lent.

[youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...)

POPE FRANCIS' 2020 LENTEN MESSAGE

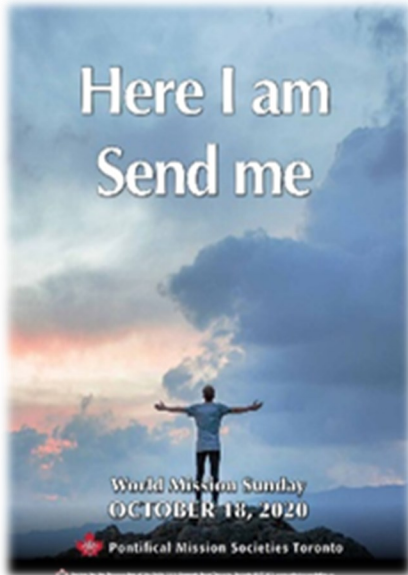
(written before the pandemic. His 2021 message is not available at this time of writing).

I pray that our Lenten celebration will open our hearts to hear God's call to be reconciled to himself, to fix our gaze on the paschal mystery, and to be converted to an open and sincere dialogue with him.

LENTEN PRAYER

Lord, during this time when the effects of the pandemic are still with us, help us to approach this Season of Lent with an increased awareness of our place in your great plan.

WORLD MISSIONARY SUNDAY



World Mission Sunday 2020 was on October 18. It was held during the "second wave" of the COVID-19 Pandemic. People, including you children, have been affected medically, socially, educationally, financially, emotionally and religiously. Your school life has altered.

Because of the hardships normally faced every day, the Corona Virus has made life even harder for children in mission countries. Mission Sunday was an opportunity for young people to reinforce the three responsibilities of members of the Holy Childhood Association (HCA): **prayer, knowledge and sharing.**



The theme of World Mission Sunday was **HERE I AM. SEND ME** (Isaiah 6:8)! This theme focuses on **YOU**. It is all about where you are, who you are and what you can do – not in the future, but now.



diennodemarest.com



pinterest.com



aletela.org

Find the **World Mission Sunday Youth Kit** on the Pontifical Missions website (missionsocieties.ca). Start your missionary career now!