

THE GIFT OF UNDERSTANDING GOD IS A BLESSING

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Like many young Vietnamese Catholics, I spent many of my Sundays going to Viet Ngu to learn my language and culture, as well as attend Giao Ly classes to understand the mysteries of God. But at such a young age, I did not understand the gifts God presented to me. The only thing I understood was every Sunday, my parents would drop me off at St. Nicholas church to spend time with other Vietnamese children to learn about God and learn Vietnamese.

I spent years and years at church and eventually I started enjoying the time I was spending with my friends, peers, and teachers. As I grew older, church became my second family. I loved being at church, but I didn't fully comprehend my purpose to come to church. It was not until Confirmation I did I see the blessings that the Vietnamese church community was truly giving me. Confirmation I gave me a chance to utilize all my years of knowledge and act upon my Catholicism. Rather than spending time reading verses from the bible, I could be a true Catholic and spread the word of God to the community. By going to church, I was able give back to the community by volunteering with the guidance of my teachers. I was supported to make good decisions and to become a responsible adult Catholic.

Being in the religious environment every Sunday lit a fire within me that I didn't know I had. I enjoyed being with others I could deeply relate to, learn all about my God, and give back to the community that has given me so much. I was not only changing while I was in church, but I saw my attitude towards life change as well. It changed my entire outlook on life. If times were tough, I knew I could turn to my church family for help. Church became a place outside of my home that I knew I could feel secure. All of these amazing experiences, from being spiritually fulfilled through the Holy Spirit in Giao Ly, to being culturally enriched through Viet Ngu classes, have influenced me so positively that I wish others could experience it as well.

I wanted others to see the beauty of God's work and feel the blessings he had given us. After being confirmed, what better way to spread the love I felt from church than by teaching others what I've learned and share my experiences. Currently, I work directly with Confirmation II candidates as a teacher aide in my parish. I thought the gift of understanding God was already a blessing in itself, but I now know that educating others is an even greater reward. I can spread the light that I had once felt to those not much younger than me. I especially hope to inspire those students who were just like me. Those students who attended class every Sunday but have yet to experience the greatness of God. While doing so, I am also able to keep my own flame and passion for God alive. The Vietnamese Catholic Community has opened up so many opportunities and allowed me to experience more than I could have ever experienced on my own. God plays such a large part of my life now that I couldn't imagine my life without the church community. Church has clearly paved the road to help me become closer to God and become a better person. Now, I only wish to help others join me in this journey and hope that someday, they could feel the love that God has to offer.

