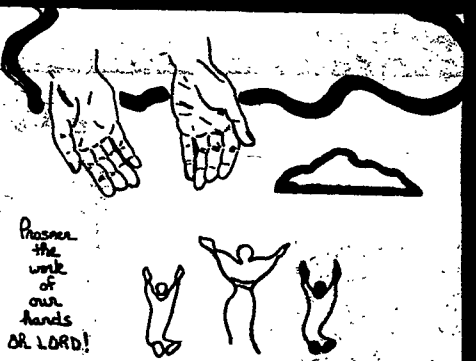
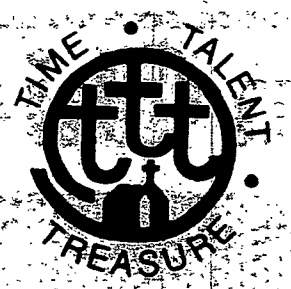


Catholic School Week . . . . . 22-23



Stewardship '79 Begins . . . . . 14-15



# COURIER-JOURNAL

## Elmira is Home to Vietnamese Family

By Martin Toombs Southern Tier Editor

Elmira — As the "Boat People" make their way to freedom and are received in countries around the world, questions arise about the American lives of their predecessors who came soon after the fall of South Vietnam.

One such family is that of Ky Van Dinh, his wife, Hav Thi Ngyen, and their five children, who now live on North Main Street in Elmira.

The Dinh family and their three children escaped from Saigon April 30, 1975, and made their way to the Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania, refugee camp, where Kim, their fourth child, was born, and to Elmira on Aug. 1, 1975.

Their fifth child, Cong, was born last year.

When they arrived in Elmira, they moved in with Margery and Donald Nurnberg for a month. Ms. Nurnberg, who continues to help the family, noted that they had to make many adjustments. They were reluctant to go for walks in the neighborhood, near Arnot Ogden Hospital, for fear they would be stopped by police, and they had no papers. It

took time to convince them that they didn't need papers, she reported.

The Dinh house doesn't stand out in the largely Italian neighborhood; each house, including the Dinh's has a porch and a vegetable garden nearby.

Inside, the children sit in front of the color television set, changing channels frequently much as children who have seen television their whole lives do.

The children speak English fairly well, especially the oldest boy, Son. Their mother has more difficulty. She sits quietly with visitors awaiting her husband's arrival, and then leaves the room.

One daughter, Ha, has cerebral palsy. Ms. Nurnberg recalled that when Ha first arrived in Elmira she was unable to turn herself over. Now, four years later, she walks with braces and attends school.

Dinh got a job at Brady Supply Company, through the help of a parishioner of St. Patrick's Parish, which sponsored the family. Intent on becoming financially independent, Dinh also took a part-time job stocking shelves in a supermarket.

Trained as an electronic technician in Vietnam, Dinh now is a machinist at Harding Brothers. Asked about the change in trade, he commented that it "doesn't matter what kind of work I get," as long as he can feed his family.

Soon he had worked off all government aid, Ms. Nurnberg reports, and 18 months ago bought the house in which the family is now living.

It is difficult being away from his parents, Dinh said, noting that when he left, his father told him that "if I can make it to the United States, I should do it" for the children. After he becomes an American citizen, he said, he hopes to bring his parents to live in Elmira.

Even if the political situation changed in Vietnam, he would not be interested in going back, he said. His children "speak more English than my language," he explained, and "their future is best in the United States."

"Most Americans don't realize what they really have," he said; noting that when he worked in the grocery store, he was amazed at the waste he saw there. That wouldn't happen in Vietnam, he said;



The Dinh family on their front porch. From left, they are Son, Ha, Hong and Kim; father Ky Van Dinh, mother Hav Thi Ngyen and Cong, the baby.

"in my country, we don't have enough."

The children have gone to school and "get used to the way of American living," he said, and American eating habits. Asked if that bothers him, he responded that "I don't care what kind of food they eat as long as they're healthy."

One custom he would like

to preserve is that of respect for parents. He described how in his country the oldest son lives with his parents and is responsible for them. At their death, he inherits his parents' possessions.

A saying in Vietnam, he commented, is "grow up quick and die early," which is what happens if parents don't show proper interest in their

children's friends and what their children do. "That's why you have to keep track of your children," he said.

There is no age in Vietnam at which children no longer pay attention to their parents, he noted; parental views govern children's actions long into adulthood. "That's what I wish to do," he said, "if they (his children) will keep my custom."

## 'I Was in Prison and You Visited Me'

By John Dash and Michael Groden

Two parishes, widely divergent in neighborhood, affluence, and even language, share a common mission. Both are committed to ministry to the imprisoned.

The two are working under theegis of Rochester Interfaith Jail Ministries (RIJM) in a relatively new field of coordinated team activity.

Becky Gifford, the lay pastoral assistant at Corpus Christi Church on East Main Street, heads a group of as many as eight parishioners who have set out, "not to evangelize so much — but to reach out to the poor and the alone."

Ms. Gifford says that the parish ministers to not only the imprisoned, but also the families of the imprisoned.

This takes the form, she said, of contacting attorneys, being present with the accused in court, and

maintaining contact and providing help after release from prison.

"It only begins in the jail," she said. "Afterwards we help find work, not just find agencies."

Part of the effort too, she said, goes into educating the parish itself — and educating other community and church groups. "The work goes beyond the prisoner and extends to others as well," she said.

Ms. Gifford, who holds a degree from the Eastman School of Music and is now pursuing a masters degree in divinity from the Rochester Theological Consortium (Colgate Rochester, Bexley Hall, Crosier etc.) also said "Prayer is an important part of what we do here."

Her sentiment was immediately championed by Margaret Whitman, a parishioner who was drawn into prison ministry by a "notice in the bulletin."

A long-time member of parish societies, she



described herself "incomplete" when she read of the ministry. "I felt incomplete without getting into that area," she said. "I wanted to get into more of what the Church was getting into. These people are our Christian brothers — a neglected part of the body."

The ministry, she added, enables her to "be extensions of them (the imprisoned), to be a part of

them, to feel helpful to those most helpless."

She commented that while she herself never felt frustration on her own part in jail ministry, she agreed with Ms. Gifford who commented that "there are frustrations locked into the whole prison system. Society doesn't change and there are numerous problems."

John Hodgetts, who

attends St. Thomas the Apostle Church on St. Paul Blvd., echoed the frustrations felt by Gifford.

"No one could possibly enjoy going into that jail," he said, "but there are people in there who need help."

Hodgetts, a seasoned RIJM volunteer, has been active in the program for nearly four years. His service includes a six month, full time stint as a volunteer working with the prisoners in the Monroe County Jail.

He was given a six month Social Service leave from Xerox, where he is employed, in order to participate in the experimental program.

Hodgetts said that St. Thomas parishioners have been quite active in Jail Ministry. There are currently four parishioners serving as volunteers and two more are in training.

He said that the volunteers work independently from one another as opposed to the team effort of Corpus

Christi.

Hodgetts credits the parish Human Development Committee and last year's parish Stewardship program for the increased participation.

"Four and a-half years ago our Human Development Committee conducted training sessions in different areas of ministry. One evening members from RIJM and the Judicial Process Commission gave a 3 hour presentation on the Monroe County Jail.

"All through the session I kept thinking what a horrible thing Jail Ministry was to have to get involved with."

The seed was planted, however, and shortly after the session Hodgetts signed up for jail ministry training.

The Stewardship program of last year was also helpful, he said. Jail Ministry was one of the items listed on St. Thomas' Stewardship Commitment Card. It

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