

Vietnam church to be rebuilt half-century after destruction

Church built on martyr's shrine was destroyed by US air attack in 1967



A diocese in northern Vietnam has begun construction of a church dedicated to Dominican martyrs replacing the ruins of an earlier one destroyed during a US air raid in 1967.

Bishop Joseph Vu Van Thien of Hai Phong celebrated a special Mass on Nov. 6 to begin the construction of the new church at the Hai Duong Martyrs Shrine in Hai Duong City, some 60 kilometers southeast of Hanoi.

Seventy priests concelebrated at the Mass attended by 7,000 people from throughout the country. Representatives from government agencies and Buddhists were also present at the event with many offering congratulatory flowers.

"Today, 50 years after the destruction of the martyr shrine, we are happy to begin the construction of the new church. This is a historic landmark of our diocese," Bishop Thien said during the Mass.

The bishop said the event was the end result of diocesan officials who patiently had dialogue and cooperation with local government levels for years. Government authorities helped relocate 43 households who had illegally set up in the shrine area and granted the diocese a land-use certificate and building permission.

Bishop Thien said the shrine was a place where many Catholics and missionaries were executed for their faith. Among them were three Spanish Dominicans – Bishops Jeronimo Hermosilla Liem and Valentino Berrio Ochoa Vinh, and Father Pedro Almato Binh – who were killed Nov. 1, 1861 and Vietnamese Dominican Brother Joseph Nguyen Duy Khang who was killed on Dec. 6 of the same year.

The feast day for the four martyrs, among 117 [Vietnamese martyrs](#) who were canonized on June 19, 1988 by St. Pope John Paul II, is observed by the diocese on Nov. 6.

Local Catholics built a church dedicated to the martyrs in the shrine area in 1927. That church, considered the biggest one in Indochina, was destroyed by a US air attack on July 1, 1967. Just part of a tower and some walls remain standing.

Father Joseph Duong Huu Tinh, a member of the construction board, told [ucanews.com](#) that the new church will have an area of 464 square meters and two bell towers of 17.8 meters in height. A new museum will also be built to keep the martyrs' relics.

Father Tinh said the government requested the diocese to retain a 25-square-meter old wall as evidence of what occurred during the [war](#).

Bishop Thien said the new facilities aim to express the local Catholics' deep gratitude to the [martyrs](#) and show the heritage of their faith.

"I would like to call on all of you to follow the martyrs' shining examples by loving and working with other people to build a society of [peace and justice](#)," he said.

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