

ST. GABRIEL

CATHOLIC RADIO
AM 820



MESSENGER



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FROM PRISON CAMP TO GOD'S VINEYARD

Joy, gratitude, and surrender to Jesus pour out of the presence of Duy Lam. He is amazed by his own transformation when he reflects on the road he has traveled. His story spans 40 years, from the atheism and reeducation (brainwashing) forced on society by the Vietnamese Communists, the years of hard labor and beatings that he received in a Communist prison camp as a teenager, to a life today touched by God's grace.

Five years ago Duy heard God's call, gave his life to Christ, and became Catholic. He realized that he needed to connect with the concept of Who Christ is. Soon afterward, he found St. Gabriel Catholic Radio. "I saw an AM 820 bumper magnet and discovered that it's a great way for me to learn about the Faith. I taught myself to speak English and as an engineer, reading English isn't my strength. I discovered that listening to Fr. Riccardo, Fr. Larry, and *Catholic Answers*, gave me guidance on where to find out more and what to read."

"I hated the people who tortured me."

Today, Duy is an active member of Sts. Gabriel and Augustine parish. But for 35 years, he was consumed by anger and hatred for the people who tormented him under the Communist regime. Duy says, "Now I understand that God has a plan for my life." Duy is living proof of Jeremiah's blessing. "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the Lord, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future," Jeremiah 29:11 (NIV).

Duy went through many trials, starting in Vietnam, before he found the Peace of Christ. Communists took over South Vietnam in 1975 when Duy was still a boy. He began to experience the atheism and reeducation imposed by the Vietnamese Communists. Duy, along with other school children, prisoners, and the general public, was pressured to embrace collectivism, serve the State, and "confess" outlawed beliefs. This reeducation included chipping away and eventually liquidating moral teachings through propaganda, intimidation, and brute force.

When Duy was a teen, he was caught trying to escape from Vietnam. He was sent to a prison camp deep in the Mekong jungle. After a year and a half, he tried to escape again. This time, the Communists beat him severely and put him back in prison. His mother feared for Duy's life and cautioned him, "Don't try anything stupid like that again."

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Conversion
of heart

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"You have to escape now!"

Duy's parents, Buddhist mother and faithless father, worked for the U.S. Government. Duy passed months in prison. One day, he received word from his mother, "You have to escape now." A U.S. Government and a United Nations' committee coordinated to help the Lam family emigrate to America legally but the Vietnamese Communist government would not let a family leave if a member was in jail.

His family sold everything to help Duy escape from prison by arranging a boat waiting for him on the other side of the river, but Duy was terrified to try a second escape. "I felt the weight of the world on my shoulders to escape again for the freedom of my whole family. Many times my knees buckled at the thought of the beatings and torture."

But escape he did; Duy and his family finally arrived in America. In 1983, Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Toledo sponsored his family. There, Duy married into a Vietnamese-Catholic family in 1993. He built a family with his wife, Han Lam and they now have a 9-year-old son, "God's gift." Duy promised his father-in-law, a devout Catholic and former high-ranking officer in the South Vietnamese military, to raise their son Catholic.



"I would have to believe in God and I don't."

For two decades, Duy attended Mass and participated in the Catholic community, but when his family invited him to be baptized and enter the Church, Duy could only say, "I love you but I cannot lie to God. I would have to believe in God and I don't believe."

Duy continues, "This was a long struggle. I put myself through college, was working as an engineer, and making money. I bought the American dream where people are their own god. I burned with hatred and anger over the tragic experiences in Vietnam and suffered terrifying nightmares. I was way out of touch with God.

"Finally, I found Jesus through the 'God people' around me. The kindness of the Catholic community perplexed me. For example, parish families took refugee boys like me into their homes for weekends to help us adjust to the new culture. I couldn't understand why they would do this!"

"My father-in-law had a huge effect on me. He, too, had been captured by the Vietnamese Communists, tortured, and forced into hard labor in a Communist prison camp for 13 years. I saw how he didn't hate his tormentors. He actually forgave them and prayed for them! His serenity astounded me.

"Christ is the Answer has helped me so much. I have come to love Fr. Riccardo!" Duy says with feeling.

"How could you forgive your tormentors?!"

"I would ask my father-in-law, 'How could you forgive your tormentors?!' I listened to him over time – many years – and little by little realized that it was his faith that saved him.

"*Christ is the Answer* has helped me so much. I have come to love Fr. Riccardo!" Duy recalls Fr. Riccardo's talk about the 21 martyrs who were beheaded by ISIS. "This

spurred me to learn more about the power of faith,” recounts Duy. “ISIS put 20 of the men to death for being Christian. When the executioners reached the 21st man, they said, ‘Renounce Christ and we will spare you.’ The condemned man had learned from the other prisoners’ faithful witness. He was not even a Christian at the time but he proclaimed Christ to the terrorists and was the last one executed. As a new Catholic and still learning to improve my faith, I wonder if I’d have enough courage to go through such a horrific experience.

“I was healed through the Godly people around me,” repeats Duy. “I spent so many years trying to forget how the Communists had tried to control not only my body, but my mind. It’s impossible to forget and I was unable to forgive – until I found faith in Christ.”

His faith in Christ healed him.

St. Gabriel Radio is truly a God-sent gift for Duy because of his language challenges.

“In Engineering School, I didn’t learn the language of philosophy or theology, so I’ve had to learn on my own and I learn through listening. AM 820 is especially helpful for people like me who are not raised in Catholic families – or even in the American culture.

“I started listening while driving from Baltimore, Ohio, to my job in Newark. We’re all so busy, so I started making time on the road to learn about faith. Changes in radio reception at work make it possible for me now to listen all day! I share my AM 820 radio experiences with people in my parish. I put a bumper magnet on my car. In fact, I put bumper magnets everywhere! I want to tell people about the great opportunity to learn about faith from AM 820.”

“My life has changed dramatically,” avows Duy.

“Constant worry and preoccupation with material things, selfishness, hatred from the past, have been lifted from my heart. I want to share the Gospel because I see so many people suffering. I want to share my knowledge that you don’t know what freedom is until you lose it. We take freedom for granted in this country. We confuse freedom with license and that leads to abuse of the gift.

"We take freedom for granted in this country. We confuse freedom with license and that leads to abuse of the gift," concludes Duy.

Duy's goal: Bring Christ into hearts

“I converted three years ago and I’m still fighting to stand up. I need to share my struggle of how I got to God.”

Duy wants to help the young. “I want to introduce young people to more than the rituals. I want to help bring Christ into their hearts!”

Duy understands how hard it is to reach young people. “All my life I was surrounded by Catholics. My parents sent me to Catholic school in Vietnam and everything they taught about the Faith went in one ear and out the other! I left school understanding nothing about the Faith.” Duy asks himself, “How can we help young people understand the struggle they face? How can we equip them, especially second generation children of immigrants? In many ways, Christianity is complicated for people like me who were not raised in Western culture. This is now my mission in life because I want my own son, whom I love deeply, to develop a deep love of God. AM 820 is a tool that I can use to help educate young people.

“My story is nothing compared to what other Vietnamese have suffered under the Communist regime. I pray every morning: ‘Jesus, I give my life to You. Help me throughout this day,’ ” says Duy.