

A New Way of Being Church for Mission: The Transformation of the French Notre-Dame des Victoires into Our Lady of La Vang: Vietnam 1998

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The transformation of the statue of the *French Notre-Dame des Victoires* into the image of a Vietnamese woman, *Our Lady of La Vang*, in the Roman Catholic Church in Vietnam in 1998 was a radical move. It can be seen as a missionary project employed by the Episcopal Conference of Vietnam. The project aimed to incarnate the church itself into Vietnamese culture and engage in dialogue with Vietnamese culture and religions. Although the event of *Our Lady of La Vang* took place within Catholic circles, it was never isolated from other religions in Vietnam. Rather it demonstrates a continuous preference for Mother Goddess's worship, especially the strong devotion to Mother Goddess shared by Vietnamese Buddhists, Hindus, and those who practice Vietnamese indigenous religion known as *Đạo Mẫu* (Cult of Mother Goddess). This paper will discuss the transformation from two perspectives: inter-religious and missionary. The paper will also discuss a new missionary approach proposed by the church in Vietnam in a post-colonial period. The interactions between Christianity and native Vietnamese religious tradition will continue to transform Vietnamese Christianity so that the church can become a church *of* Vietnam rather than a church *in* Vietnam.