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## A BLESSED NEW YEAR



to welcome Father John, who made time from his busy schedule to accompany SARA to Vietnam, giving out gifts to leprosy patients, to the handicaps and the orphans. Also, SARA managed to get 1,350 emergency gifts for snow storms disaster in Sapa, Hung Hoa province.

At the leprosy camps, the handicap camps, and the orphanages, just a little gift would lift up the spirit of those unfortunate souls. In the past 20 years, I have visited them 30 times. I thank God, and I am grateful for the donors for giving me

New Year brings happiness, and love swelling up inside of us. Each time the new year comes, representing SARA, I look forward to going back to my hometown to bring love, faith and gifts from our donors to the unfortunates. I was touched when I thought of nature disaster in Phillipines, floods in the Central of VN, snow storms in Sapa VN and USA ect. My heart went out to the people there.

In the beginning, there wasn't enough gifts like we had planned, but because of God's blessing and because of the donors generosity, SARA finally gathered 4000 gifts for New Year event Tet. This time, we were very honored





the chance to do this. This time, I want to give you the good news: SARA has opened 2 more polyclinics. Our doctors and the clinics' personnel gave free examinations and free medicines to 10 thousands families at the remote villages. It was very productive considering how little money we had. Because of your help, those unfortunate souls had blankets to keep the cold away, food to keep the hunger away, and medicines to prevent their illness to get to serious stages.

This year, Buddhist nun Vien Quan came with us to visit and gave out gifts to the leprosy patients and the handicaps. Young catholic nuns also visited and provided entertainment at the leprosy camps. Buddhist nun Vien Quan also took a part in the entertainment with a song. They gave the leprosy patients the time of their lives. This kind of caring cheered them up and encouraged them greatly to continue on their livings.

As you already know, spring in the North is wet and cold, and windy, creating slippery roads. At the remote villages, roads are narrow, full of pot-holes, creating dangerous traffics, very easy to fall into the rice fields. At these villages, when SARA came and provided free services, patients usually had to wait outside because there were no waiting room . Therefore, if it's sunny and warm, it would be a blessing. We have been blessed, for most of our time there, it was nice and warm. Although once at a leprosy camp, the rain seemed like it was sobbing for those unfortunate souls, but at least that camp had a big hall for the patients to shelter through the rain. I do believe God has sympathy for the poor. For the grand opening of Phu Nhai Clinic, it became clear and warm early in the morning after a night of rain and cold, so the grand opening was a success and full of patients.

Let me tell you a story when I visited the leprosy camps at Son La and Lai Chau, to confirm that there are miracles from our loving God above, who always loves the unfortunate.

The leprosy camps in Son La and Lai Chau that SARA visited this time didn't have that many patients, but the camps were far, with difficult access and full of obstacles. Our cars bounced around so bad because of the bumpy dirt roads. The previous years, SARA sent gifts through the nuns. But this year, we wanted to visited them ourselves. We were leaving to Sapa when snow covered the whole area. At 7pm, 9 nuns, Mr. Hai, the driver and I were ready to leave. We all looked chubby because of all the thick layers on us, that made the space in the car tighter, but we were all happy. One nun admitted that she wore 3 layers underneath and a pair of pants outside, 3 pair of socks and many layers of sweaters so it was hard for her to move. That gave us a good laugh.



Our van went smoothly on the winding road. Sometimes with fog so thick impairing our visions. Sometimes it was so cold regardless of how many layers of warm clothes we were wearing. So the blankets for the leprosy patients had their good use for us in the van. We got to Song Ma city at about 3 am. Our driver was exhausted from driving in the fog.

We slept in the van until 6am, then someone came and took us to Son La camp. Amazingly, it turned warm. At this camp, the majority was Thai. Their hair was braided with wrapping on their head. They didn't

wear helmet when riding motorcycles. They each received gifts and 200 thousands Vietnam Dong instead of 100 thousands as people of other camps received.

After distributing gifts at Son La, we went on our way to Lai Chau. We got lost because of the unclear directions given to us. Roads were difficult and full of obstacles, so only a few organizations have come visiting them. Our van went through so many hills and had to turn around. When we finally got to the camp, seeing their hardship, we gave them the gifts and 250 thousands Vietnam Dong each, instead of 300 thousands like planned because we were short on cash.

It was near dark, we didn't want to get stuck at the camp, but wanted to get to Sapa in time for Sunday Mass. When we got to Tuan Giao, we were lost. Luckily, we went online and got the directions and mass schedule from a priest from Sapa. He even got someone there to help us with dinner and rooms for the night. As this happened, we even believed more in God's love and protection for us. We were very tired, but I still woke up at 2 am to pray and thank God for this. At 5 am, we left to Sapa in warm nice weather. When we got to Heaven's Gate to see the Silver Lake, we only saw a small stream because all the water was blocked from upstream for electricity. When we got to Sapa, we went to visit a Ho Mong folk's village. On the way there, we had to drive downhill through the clouds, I closed my eyes and felt like our car was going down an abyss. Upon arriving at their village, we saw the adults wore conservative and colorful outfits, but kids showed their buttocks instead.

Leaving Sapa, we got home safe and sound. The next morning, we went on our way to Thanh Hoa and Nghe An. There was some drizzle and north-easterly wind. I was worry when we got to Quynh Lap leprosy camp in Nghe An, because there would be a big number of patients in a small exam area, so I prayed for the rain to lessen. What a miracle, the rain stopped when we got there. So all the patients were excited to come. An old person was touched and thanked SARA for visiting them. That made us warm and fuzzy inside. Their smiles were very genuine. Thank you God. Thank you donors. SARA left 200 pair of glasses for the nuns to distribute to the patients for reading, or for keeping the dust out of their eyes.



The next morning, it was the grand opening for SARA clinic-Anton in Vinh. Because the day before there was rain and north-easterly wind, I was worry that there wouldn't be that many patients coming to celebrate and get examined. So I prayed for better weather. God made miracle again, for around 8am, it was dry and warm, so a lot of patients came. When we were there, the weather forecast said it was snowing in Sapa. We were lucky not to get stuck in the snow. One nun said let's thank God for making it easy for us to do our job. It was such a happy ending, all because of the donors generosity that made God bless SARA to do good work for the unfortunate. It was said "This is the magical spring that God gave to the poor."

Although facing a lot of difficulty, but with God's love through you our donors' help, our mission trip was successfully accomplished. For the next missions, we would still depend on the help from you donors. Due to the long distance to Sapa, gifts cost more and there were more expenses, so it went over the estimated budget. In the beginning, SARA intended to distribute 1,000 portions of gifts, but in the end, it came up to 1,350 portions in the trip to Son La and Lai Chau leprosy camps. Please continue to donate so SARA can pay our debt. Let's pray that God will reward you donors for your generosity that help us complete our mission trip and cover our expenses.

Any contributions please send to SARA: PO BOX 18185, Portland – OR 97213

For purchasing medicines, please call Kim Dung: 503-281-5547



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## THANK YOU LETTER

Dear S.A.R.A Executive,

Dear father John and Catholic church Our Lady of the Lake.

I thank you very much for your 100 presents including of blankets, warm clothes and 140,000,000 VND that have supported the poor who are living in the high mountains affected seriously by the winter storm on the Tet occasion 2014. Your donation is very appreciated.

In fact, I acknowledge with grateful thanks to God's love indicating his mercy through your kindness and generosity on the poor in the diocese of Hung Hoa.

Our Caritas of Hung Hoa have immediately delivered blankets, warm clothes, and rice so that they could overcome challenges of the hard weather.

On behalf of the poor and the victims of natural disaster, I would like to thank S.A.R.A. Non-Profit Organization, Rev.John, and Catholic church Our Lady of the Lake.

May God's blessing be with you all and your loved ones. Please, continue supporting and helping the poor and people who are in need living in our diocese, the largest diocese spreads out on 9 provinces and cities of the North West of Vietnam.

Yours sincerely,

Son Tay, March 17, 2014

Representation



Rev. Paul Nguyen Quoc Anh  
Director of Caritas of Hung Hoa

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