

Convegno
FRANÇOIS-XAVIER NGUYỄN VĂN THUẬN TESTIMONE DI SPERANZA

Palazzo Apostolico Lateranense
25 marzo 2026

“The Road of Hope”

Mrs. Élisabeth Nguyễn Thị Thu Hồng

Eminences, Excellencies, Members of the Clergy,
religious Brothers and Sisters, Family and Friends,

Today I stand here, in communion with my sister Agnes Anh Tuyet from Australia, the unique sibling of mine still alive, all our children and grandchildren, extended family from different corners of the world, and with my husband and cousins from USA and Europe, here present in this beautiful hall.

Together we would like to express our deep gratitude for the opportunity to bear testimony on this memorable 50th Anniversary of the completion of the **1001 Meditations** written by my brother Francis van Thuan, under house arrest in Cay Vong, in August 1975, and completed on March 19, 1976, Feast Day of St Joseph.

In the late 70s, when our family, by then refugees in Sydney, Australia, started to receive the hand-copied meditations from boat people who arrived there, before resettling in various refugee camps in different parts of the world, our mother broke down in tears.

These, however, were tears of joy and gratitude towards God. She immediately contacted everyone to tell them: “... my son remembers the legacy of his ancestors”.

As you can recall, during the period of 1845 - 1862, our ancestors were among those living through the harshest persecution of Christians, who had their faces branded with the words “Tà Dao” (evil religion). Villages were destroyed, and properties confiscated. Christian families were forcibly split, their members, parents, sons and daughters, were separated from one another, and sent to live with non-Christian

communities far away from their homes. The plan at the time was to make them eventually forget their faith. But these Christians remained emotionally and spiritually united throughout the long years of separation by clinging on to prayers or a sentence of the Gospel written on scraps of paper and hidden among their belongings.

For those who didn't know how to write or read, like our great-great-grandmother, they would repeat each day, by heart, lines of a prayer of their choice. Through perseverance, they managed to hold on to Jesus' presence, and that kept them united in their faith, even when physically separated.

Decades later, in 1975, from a house in Cay Vong, under conditions of house arrest, *1001 Meditations* were written and sent out clandestinely, bringing the presence of Jesus to the faithful in distress. They started the journey of evangelization from one family to the next, to prison cells, to re-education camps, before finally crossing the oceans, journeying with boat people to different parts of the world. In the early 80s, these meditations became the *Road of Hope (Il cammino della speranza)*, which was first published in Australia in both Vietnamese and in English, thanks to the concerted effort of the Christian communities in Australia and the dedication of Peter Bookallil, who wrote the first translation from Vietnamese to English.

Today, together with you, in a spirit of gratitude, we witness the power of God's presence through the story of a shepherd separated from his flock, all the while remaining intimately united with them all through the Word of God.