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Nuns help poor people celebrate Tet

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Nguyen Thi Lanh with her bag of gifts

HUE, Vietnam ? Hundreds of poor families will be able to enjoy the upcoming Tet festival a little bit more this year thanks to gifts of food and cash from Catholic nuns.

The Tet festival, or Lunar New Year, is celebrated Feb. 14-16 this year.

Tran Thi Thiep, 53, received a 10-kilogram bag of rice, some cakes and *tien li xi* or ?lucky money? from Saint Paul de Chartres [1] Sr. Ephrem Nguyen Thi Luu.

She was among 200 families in Hue city who were given rice, cake and money by the nun on Feb. 7.

?We are very happy to have enough food to celebrate the Tet festival,? Thiep told UCA News.

She said she and her daughter wash clothes and dishes and transport goods for a living but ?we always lack food.?

The mother of three said she has had to ask for food from nuns many times to support her children and her 80-year-old mother. Her husband abandoned them four years ago, she added.

Thiep said she will use the ?lucky money? to buy pork and banh chung ? sticky rice mixed with green beans, pork fat and spices and steamed in banana leaves, a special Tet treat.

Food and 'lucky money' for the poor

Sr. Luu, 70, who is in charge of charity work at her convent, told the beneficiaries: ?We want to offer you some food so that you can ... enjoy Tet.?

Families were each given 100,000 dong ($5.50) as *tien li xi*, she told UCA News.

The nun also said a benefactor from Ho Chi Minh City donated US$4,000 toward the cost of the food.

Nguyen Thi Lanh, 12, held tightly to the bag containing her gifts from Sister Luu. She is one of a number of

street children and child workers who attend evening classes conducted by Sr. Luu.

Lanh earns 15,000 dong a day collecting algae from rivers and selling it to local pig farmers.

Nguyen Van Co, 60, who received 30 kilograms of rice, said his nine-member family will now be able to enjoy Tet.

He said many poor people struggle to buy food to celebrate as prices soar before the festival.

Four nuns from the Daughters of Our Lady of the Visitation [2]] also handed out food in Hue.

They gave thousands of kilograms of rice, instant noodles, cooking oil and vegetables to people with leprosy and slum dwellers so that they too can enjoy the festival.

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