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Pilgrims pray by the tomb of Blessed Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep at Tac Say Pilgrimage C

Pilgrims pray by the tomb of Blessed Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep at Tac Say Pilgrimage Center in Vietnam's Mekong Delta on July 1, 2026. (OSV News/Joachim Pham)

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Tac Say, Vietnam — July 4, 2026

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Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle urged Vietnamese Catholics to become "messengers of truth" July 2 as the church beatified Fr. Francis Xavier Truong Buu Diep in the first beatification ceremony held in Vietnam.

The historic celebration at Tac Say Pilgrimage Center in Vietnam's Mekong Delta drew more than 70,000 pilgrims, while another 1 million watched on Church YouTube channels. Tagle, Pope Leo XIV's special envoy, presided over the Mass with 40 bishops and about 1,000 priests.

Tac Say is located in southern Ca Mau province, where Blessed Diep's remains are enshrined.

Authorities closed the national highway running through the pilgrimage center to accommodate the crowds, many of whom slept overnight on sidewalks surrounding the shrine. Vatican and Vietnamese flags lined the route alongside images of the newly beatified priest.

Tagle, a pro-prefect in the Vatican's Dicastery for Evangelization, said Blessed Diep's life offers a timely witness in a world increasingly clouded by falsehood.

"I hope Blessed Francis Xavier will inspire not only Vietnamese Catholics but also many others to return to the truth of Jesus Christ," he said in an interview published on the website of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Vietnam before the beatification, noting that "being a martyr means bearing witness to the truth about Jesus."

"Today there are too many messengers of lies and fake news, and we no longer know what the truth is. Therefore, we need messengers of truth," Tagle said.

The cardinal said Blessed Diep proclaimed that truth not only through his preaching but especially through his pastoral care of the poor and his willingness to remain with his people despite grave danger.

"Even in moments of peril, he did not abandon his flock but bore witness to the love of Jesus Christ," Tagle said.

He emphasized that genuine devotion to Blessed Diep means far more than honoring his memory.

"True devotion to Blessed Francis Xavier means imitating him in daily life through justice, charity, compassion for the poor and commitment to Jesus — not only when it is convenient but also when it is difficult," he said. "Let devotion to Blessed Francis Xavier become a way of life."

In his homily, Tagle said the new blessed "is inviting all of us not to deny Jesus, but to be witnesses or martyrs of his truth."

He urged Catholics to choose honesty over corruption even if it meant remaining poor, to share their possessions with those in need rather than hoarding wealth, and "to be united" with Jesus "even when it is dangerous, and not only when it is convenient."

Tagle also revealed that the Holy See wanted the beatification to be celebrated in Vietnam so local Catholics could experience its significance firsthand.

The ceremony marked a milestone for the church in Vietnam. Since Christianity reached the country nearly 500 years ago, all previous beatifications of Vietnamese martyrs had taken place in Rome, including that of Blessed Andrew Phu-Yen in 2000. St. John Paul II canonized 117 Vietnamese martyrs in 1988.

The church designated March 12, the anniversary of his death, as the liturgical memorial of the newly Blessed Diep.

Archbishop Marek Zalewski, the pontifical representative to Vietnam, called the celebration "a special grace for the universal church."

"The greatest meaning today is not that the church has a new blessed," he said. "It reminds us that the path to holiness remains open to every one of us."

Bishop Peter Phan Tan Loi of Can Tho described the beatification as "a miracle," noting that hundreds of thousands of people, including followers of other religions, came to honor Blessed Diep.

Addressing non-Christian pilgrims, Loi stressed that Blessed Diep belongs to everyone.

"He is a meeting place of compassion," he said. "Millions of people from different backgrounds and different religions honoring him together is a great miracle of harmony and unity."

He expressed hope that Tac Say would remain "a peaceful home for everyone," where Blessed Diep's spirit of boundless love would inspire mutual care and help people discover God.

Born in 1897, in An Giang province, Diep was ordained in 1924 and served Tac Say Parish from 1930 until his death, earning a reputation for caring for the poor and protecting Catholics during the First Indochina War.

Despite repeated pleas to flee, he refused, saying, "I live among my sheep, and if I must die, I will die among them." He was killed March 12, 1946, by two Japanese deserters, according to a Can Tho diocesan investigation, which also concluded his death was unrelated to the communists, correcting decades of misconceptions.

His remains are enshrined at Tac Say, now one of Vietnam's largest Catholic pilgrimage destinations, attracting millions of visitors each year.

Among the pilgrims was Mary Nguyen Thi Lai, who traveled from Binh Thuan province for the beatification.

"The beatification ceremony brought people from all walks of life together in honoring Blessed Diep and a bright future for local Catholics," she told OSV News.

"We hope local people will follow Diep's example and work together for the common good."

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