**Pastoral Visit of the Cardinal Prefect**

**of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples**

**to Vietnam**

**HOMILY**

**22/1/2015 – LA VANG**

Throughout my life as a priest, later as a Pontifical Representative, and now as Prefect of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples, I have spoken many times about your National Marian Shrine of La Vang. I am here today and, with great joy, I am a pilgrim here in this holy place visited by the Mother of God.

As a pilgrim - also on behalf of our Missionary Congregation - I beg of Mary her protection for the work of evangelization throughout the world: she who bore Jesus, the living Gospel, the Word of God, and who has accompanied the Church from the Day of Pentecost, being thus the Mother of countless children of the Church, especially in the Continent of Asia. For this reason, I bring you the gift today of three silver roses as a perpetual memorial of this request to her.

Stirring the memory of our Faith, I would like to go with you to the foot of the Cross. Whom do we find there? Mary, a few holy women, and John. Do you recall the last words of Jesus before He entrusted His Spirit to the Father? “*Woman, behold your son! Son,*” turning to John, “*behold your Mother!*” Then, there is a brief remark about this reciprocal entrustment: “*From that moment, the Disciple*,” that is, John, “*took Mary into his care.*” This is most beautiful.

This signifies that Mary also consents to being the mother of John. Thus, she has not abandoned the Apostles; on the contrary, she followed them! This means that Jesus has made a gift of Mary to us, and not a gift that is far away from us, because, over the course of two thousand years, Mary has often appeared in our midst. We think most recently of Lourdes, of Fatima; but here, we think of La Vang. What happened here? You know the beautiful story of the first persecuted Christians, who found refuge, encouragement, and protection in this place. One could say that Mary lives here, and the Bishops have rightly declared this place to be the National Marian Shrine.

Here, you come on pilgrimage; here, you encounter, pray, and listen to Mary, and you receive her caress of encouragement and protection.

I join with you in thanking Mary for this, her “gift”, which is her presence among you; she is here with us today, and together with you, I renew the Act of Entrustment to her for the Evangelization of this Land and of the whole Asian Continent – Hail Mary.