

Parishioner Profiles

In 1979, Thich Nguyen was born in a small, poor village near Dong Thap, Viet Nam. At age 10, he and his family flew from Viet Nam to New York City, an 18 hour flight with a stop in Japan,. He spoke no English. The family joined Thich’s older brother, a “child of war, in Connecticut and quickly attended St. Peter Church in Bridgeport. Monsignor Frank Wissel, the pastor, took the boy under his wing and renamed Thich “Charlie” because it was easy to say. Charlie called Monsignor “Pop” because it was easier for *him* to say. “Pop” bought Charlie his first meal in America—a Big Mac.



Charlie, Cindy and Katie Nguyen

Charlie was a lonely kid, with little support to learn English. He attended Bassick High his freshman year, but then, Monsignor Wissel led him to Kolbe Cathedral HS. “Pop changed my life.”

Charlie attended Housatonic Community College and left to work as a baker at Stop & Shop (in Darien, Norwalk, Westport and Wilton) where he’s been for 25 years.

Diem was also born in Dong Thap, Viet Nam, but remained there. She is the daughter of Charlie’s dad’s best friend back in the village. Charlie started to talk long distance to her in 2004. For one year, they talked. Well before Skype or Zoom, Charlie had only a photo of Diem. But that was enough. Charlie flew back to the village where he was born and married her. When she came to America, Diem became Cindy. Cindy does nails at Stratford’s Tammy Nails.

Billy, their 17 year old son, is a senior at Bunnell High School where he plays football. Although unsure of his future, Billy looks to attend a state college after graduation. Katie, 11 years old, will be in the sixth grade. She has served as a reader of scripture in Vietnamese at our masses.

Every morning and evening, the family prays together in Vietnamese. They moved to Stratford in 2013 and joined Holy Name of Jesus.



Carmen Cotto has a daughter, son and about 20 grandchildren and *great* grandchildren.

Carmen lived in Bridgeport and moved to Melbourne, Florida, where she stayed for 18 years until her husband passed. She returned to Connecticut to be with her family and has been a parishioner for five years.

Her favorite prayer is the *Our Father*. “I love my Lord,” she said. “I pray to Him every second of the day.”

She has made a small altar in her home where she “prays the *Our Father* 50,000 times a day,” to remember her husband, parents and 27 year old son, who also passed.