FOR much of the 18th century, the nation of Vietnam was involved in various domestic conflicts. One of the emperors who followed in that bloody period began a persecution against Catholics, giving the order to destroy all of the churches and seminaries and ordered punishments which varied from burning marks on their faces with branding irons to condemning them to death by the most cruel of methods. It is in the midst of this great suffering that Our Lady of La Vang came to the aid of the population of Vietnam: the first apparition occurred in August of 1798, when the Virgin Mary appeared again in 1954 to two pagan women.

In August of 1798 the associate of the young emperor Cau Thinh ordered the persecution of the Christians, who were accused of collaborating with the French who were present in Vietnam. The Christians took refuge in the forest of La Vang, located about 40 kilometers from Hoi, incurring many risks represented by ferocious beasts, by hunger, and by illnesses. To sustain their courage, every day they gathered around a great tree and recited the Rosary in honor of the Virgin Mary.

In one of those nights, they were visited by the apparition of a most beautiful Lady who held a babe in her arms, and who was accompanied by two Angels: the people recognized the Lady as the Most Holy Virgin Mary. The Madonna gave a sign to those present: they were able to eat and feed themselves with the leaves of the trees of the jungle and she taught them to distinguish and how to use certain plants in the surrounding area as medicinal.

In particular, she proclaimed these words: “Have trust, endure with a good heart the pains and sufferings. I have already heard your prayers. From now on all who come to this place to pray will see their wishes granted.”

After this first apparition, the Virgin Mary continued to visit the people of that place numerous times during the period of the persecutions. Many of the Vietnamese Catholics who were captured and condemned to being burned alive because of their faith made the request to die precisely at the location of the apparitions.

Subsequently, a church was constructed, established by Bishop Guzman, and despite the relative isolated position between the high mountains, very many people have continued to penetrate the deep and dangerous jungle to venerate Our Lady of La Vang. The church was consecrated in a solemn ceremony to which nearly 12,000 people participated, and in which the Lady of La Vang was proclaimed Patroness of the Vietnamese Catholics. In August of 1905, Pope Pius XII elevated the church of La Vang to a Basilica. In 1931, the Holy Virgin appeared again, this time to two women of the area, pagan, indicating to them a font of spring water where they were to immerse the ill son of one of the two seers, who indeed healed instantaneously.