

Preparations for Catholic university in Vietnam

Preparations under way for Catholic university in Vietnam Ho Chi Minh City archbishop cited on 22 December, 2015, improvement of relationship between Vatican and communist government. The doors of Vietnam's first Catholic university under communist rule could open as soon as May.



Archbishop Paul Bui Van

Doc of Ho Chi Minh City told ucanews.com that the government recently granted permission for the nascent institution.

"The relationship between the Vatican and the Vietnam government is becoming better and better, so we asked and they accepted," he said.

Approximately 100 students will begin studying philosophy and theology this year in a few rooms allotted in the bishops' conference headquarters.

"After that, in the future, maybe a lot," he said. "It's possible a thousand or more than a thousand" students will eventually join the university, predicted Archbishop Doc, who said the school would eventually offer a diverse course load.

The Vatican Insider reported that the school will offer bachelor's degrees, licenses and doctorates and will eventually offer courses in psychology, sciences, canon law, among others, and that the university's structure and statutes had also received approval from both the government and Vatican.

While the Catholic Church operated schools from kindergarten through to university level before 1975, it has had little freedom in the education sector since the advent of communism.

When the Communists came to power in the North, nearly a million Catholics fled south where the Catholic president allowed Christianity to flourish. After the fall of Saigon, however, such freedoms came to a crashing halt. As with other religions, church properties were confiscated and their powers severely curtailed.

Since the 1990s, however, the government has become more tolerant. Nuns have successfully set up

kindergartens across Vietnam and wealthy individuals have opened private Catholic schools in Ho Chi Minh City — although the church still does not operate any itself.

The university is a major first step to regaining control of such institutions, Archbishop Doc said.

Such loosening of educational restrictions is virtually unheard of under communist regimes. Across Asia, universities have been immediately and permanently taken over by the government or closed in the wake of communist takeovers. In Eastern Europe, some institutions such as Poland's Catholic University of Lublin were permitted to remain open under communist rule, but under serious monitoring and restrictions.

Ucanews.com reporter, Ho Chi Minh City