

Vietnamese Christian Brother drowns trying to save teen girl

HO CHI MINH CITY, Vietnam – A Vietnamese Christian Brother drowned while trying to rescue a 15-year-old girl who fell into a river in Cambodia.

The girl, who fell into the Mekong River, survived, reported the Asian church news agency UCA News.

Brother Dominic Phung The Minh, 28, and his catechism class students had been bathing in the river after Mass when Nguyen Thi Ngoc Giau was caught in a strong current. Brother Minh was swept away as he tried to rescue her.

The incident occurred July 12, about 30 miles south of the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh, said Brother Joseph Nguyen The Anh, the deceased brother's confrere.

Brother Minh's body was found two hours later and taken to Ho Chi Minh City.

His coffin was placed in the chapel at the congregation's Mai Thon center July 14. Eight local priests concelebrated Brother Minh's funeral the next day, and he was buried at the cemetery of the Brothers of the Christian Schools.

Brother Jean Baptiste Tran Dinh Hiep, 38, the head of the Christian Brother community in Cambodia, said Brother Minh loved his work among local children.

"He taught them their lessons and catechism, played games with them, and they went fishing together," he said.

Brother Hiep said the deceased brother offered poor students scholarships and visited poor families, providing food and helping them repair their houses.

"He lived in poverty among poor people and died for them," Brother Hiep said.